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**BLENDED LEARNING TECHNOLOGY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT
OF ENGLISH COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE
OF MILITARY-SPECIAL SUBJECT TEACHERS
AT HIGHER MILITARY EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS**

The main trend in the global transformation of the educational process lies in the integration of distance learning formats and digitalisation tools, particularly online communication. Consequently, contemporary scholars are actively investigating effective ways of interaction between participants in the learning process under conditions of continuous technological advancement. The key aspects of implementing distance learning technologies have been presented and further developed in the research conducted by foreign scholars such as Dean and Mansour [2], Hura et al. [4], Kumar [6], and Míguez-Álvarez et al. [7]. They draw attention to the potential of interactive learning and the specific features of cognitive-linguistic learning strategies, as well as examine the impact of educational innovations on the formation of a positive psychological microclimate, and on increasing students' motivation and engagement in higher education. The researchers maintain that a modern, competent specialist can be developed through a combination of individual and group interaction formats, the maximum integration of discussion practices, project-based learning, and training sessions - including both synchronous and asynchronous modes.

The foundation of distance learning lies in innovation, the individualisation of the educational process, and the variability of content delivery, which are combined within both online and offline formats. At the same time, traditional requirements for the structure, coherence, and educational value of learning materials remain relevant.

Thus, among the key advantages of distance learning are the adaptability and

flexibility of educational programmes, as well as the opportunity to master a complete module of study material within the framework of informal education [1]. It is worth noting that the rapid development of digital learning technologies occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, when educational institutions at all levels swiftly adapted to the exclusive use of distance learning technologies in the educational process.

Based on the theoretical analysis of the issue under consideration, we have identified the following components of blended learning technology aimed at developing the academic communicative competence (ACC) of foreign language instructors in higher military educational institutions:

1. **Face-to-face component** - traditional in-person learning, which includes practical sessions employing case methods, project-based methods, and other approaches that encourage active interaction between participants in the learning process under the teacher's guidance.

2. **Distance component** - distance learning conducted in both synchronous and asynchronous modes, facilitated through the use of the electronic educational environment (MOODLE). This platform provides access to authentic materials (videos, articles), discussion forums, and enables testing and other diagnostic activities.

3. **Independent component** – self-directed learning activities (completion of practical tasks, preparation of mini-glossaries and presentations, maintaining reflective journals and ACC development checklists, etc.). In this context, the “*flipped classroom*” blended learning model is applied, which implies that learners study theoretical material independently, while teacher-led sessions are used for developing practical skills, consolidating knowledge, providing individual consultations, and conducting group work [10]. This model contributes to enhancing the engagement and motivation of foreign language instructors and to creating a positive psychological microclimate.

During the face-to-face component, it is considered appropriate to discuss complex aspects of mastering the study material or to practise key skills in a practical setting. In turn, during interaction within the distance component, it is advisable to use multimedia technologies, educational online platforms, and mobile applications, as well as to organise virtual conferences and forums. The potential of online platforms such as Microsoft Teams, Zoom, and Google Meet facilitates both real-time communication and distance learning by overcoming geographical barriers. Researchers [5] particularly emphasise the significance of video-hosting websites, especially YouTube, which has become a popular means of sharing educational content. Furthermore, scholars highlight the importance of creating online communities where students can exchange experiences and insights.

In addition, the distance component ensures continuous feedback with the instructor and enables the implementation of diagnostic activities [8]. Consequently, the assessment process can be carried out by the instructor with the use of digital tools integrated into educational platforms. The evaluation of learners' progress in mastering the study material is primarily conducted through a variety of exercises employing a

point-based accumulation system, which allows participants to advance to higher levels within the online platform. This approach stimulates the value–motivational component of ACC and promotes the engagement and reflection of foreign language instructors.

The third component of the blended learning technology - the independent component - emphasises the priority of self-directed activity among foreign language instructors and enables the design of an individual trajectory for developing their ACC. During independent study, interactive video lectures play a crucial role, as they ensure effective interaction between participants in the educational process and include interactive elements such as tests, hyperlinks, and supplementary materials [9]. We share the view of researchers who argue that the advantage of interactive video lectures lies in their ability to adapt to the pace and individual learning needs of foreign language instructors. This format allows for the independent selection of the sequence of study materials, provides immediate feedback, and facilitates the identification and correction of personal errors [3].

At the same time, virtual laboratories make it possible to work with equipment in an online environment, freely and without restrictions, from any location and at any time. The ability to create various scenarios and levels of complexity enables foreign language instructors to further develop their ACC. The aforementioned digital tools effectively facilitate remote access to learning materials for participants in the educational process and significantly reduce spatial and temporal barriers.

The main stages of implementing blended learning technology for the development of ACC among foreign language instructors in higher military educational institutions are as follows:

1. **Preparatory stage** – involves setting objectives (the development of instructors' ACC), analysing the needs of foreign language instructors, and designing a comprehensive educational and methodological framework.

2. **Main stage** – focuses on the direct development of ACC through the implementation of the three blended learning components described above. The development of instructors' ACC was achieved through the introduction of innovative methodologies such as **Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL)**, which implies mastering subject-specific content through a foreign language. Additionally, the principles of **Task-based Learning (TBL)** were actively applied, involving the completion of communicative tasks using English. These communicative tasks are closely aligned with real-life situations, motivating instructors to use the language for professional communication and to solve occupation-specific problems in a simulated foreign-language environment with conscious attention to lexical and grammatical structures.

The core principles of the above-mentioned methodologies are defined as follows: systematicity, gradual progression, task orientation, active participation of instructors, and an individualised approach to learning.

3. **Assessment stage** – the final stage - includes formative assessment (tests, discussions, project tasks) and summative assessment of the levels of ACC development among foreign language instructors.

Thus, it can be argued that the integration of blended learning for the development of ACC among foreign language instructors in higher military educational institutions is regarded as an effective solution that enables the creation of a learning process oriented towards the needs of its participants.

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