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Modern trends in the development of communication technologies distance learning in the context of professionally oriented approach

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to develop and implement a comprehensive project to improve communication technologies, in the context of a professionally oriented approach to distance education of academic English in technical faculties. The research methodology was related to the development and testing of the project, aimed at improving skills in the formation of students' communicative competence. To estimate the quality of the project, two stages were carried out in the application of the survey to the students. The first phase of the survey was carried out in March 2020 before the start of the project. The second stage of the student survey was carried out at the end of the first semester (in January 2021), being implemented remotely. The analysis carried out and the results of the survey indicate that the development of communication technologies and online learning are substantially related. The world of communication technologies should definitely be considered as a tool to improve communicative competence, self-organization, self-development and personal growth.

KEYWORDS: distance education; electronic learning; English; pandemics; information and communication.

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Tendencias actuales de las tecnologías de la comunicación en la enseñanza a distancia en el contexto de un enfoque profesional

RESUMEN

El propósito del estudio consistió en desarrollar e implementar un proyecto integral para mejorar las tecnologías de la comunicación, en el contexto de un enfoque orientado profesionalmente para la educación a distancia del inglés académico en las facultades técnicas. La metodología de la investigación se relacionó con el desarrollo y la prueba del proyecto, destinado a mejorar las habilidades en la formación de la competencia comunicativa de los estudiantes. Para estimar la calidad del proyecto se realizaron dos etapas en la aplicación de la encuesta a los estudiantes. La primera fase de la encuesta se llevó a cabo en marzo de 2020 antes del inicio del proyecto. La segunda etapa de la encuesta estudiantil se llevó a cabo al final del primer semestre (en enero de 2021), implementándose a distancia. El análisis realizado y los resultados de la encuesta indican que el desarrollo de las tecnologías de la comunicación y el aprendizaje en línea tienen relación sustancial. El mundo de las tecnologías de la comunicación debe considerarse definitivamente como una herramienta para mejorar la competencia comunicativa, la autoorganización, el autodesarrollo y el crecimiento personal.

PALABRAS CLAVE: educación a distancia; aprendizaje electrónico; inglés; pandemias; información y comunicación.

Introduction

Online learning (or so-called “distant education”) and communication technologies have become an integral and essential part of the educational standards both in Russia and abroad even prior to the COVID pandemic. The factors contributing to the online learning development include shortage of time, increasingly faster life pace, busy work schedules, spread of broadband Internet connectivity and facilities, shift from desktop computers to the mobile devices (on-the-move learning), popularity of “edutainment” (i.e., integration of entertainment and gaming elements into the learning process), cutting of the travel costs, information accessibility etc. While being questioned and debated as a principal education core, online learning is widely embraced as (at least) a supplementary and additional tool that is to be inherent to any higher educational organization. According to A.V. Lebedev et al. (2020): the rise in global collaboration, business, travel industry and migration processes cause the focus of both philologists and teaching staff dealing on the theoretical and pragmatic aspects of e-learning and distant teaching technologies.

Lockdown safety, pandemic conditions and healthcare regulations have recently added a completely new dimension to online learning. Now it is temporarily being considered as a principal tool of education due to pandemic restrictions. Although the limitations vary from one Russian region (territory) to another, online courses are partially or fully implemented almost in every higher educational organization, including Ogarev Mordovia State University (Saransk).

The anti-pandemic measures and digitization of the education courses have reshaped and rearranged the learning process, as well as professional thinking and perception. Teaching staff and faculty were forced to quickly acquire the new skills (or improve the existing ones) to master the online learning software, deal with technical issues, introduce new teaching techniques, organizing classes in a completely novel environment. The new and unexpected realia challenged education experts and technical specialists to improve the digital environment and online facilities to control both education process and academic work. This required the update and further development of the university websites, personal online profiles, online attendance and grades, digital workflow connecting them to the existing messaging, audio / video conference software (e.g., Skype, Zoom, Viber, WhatsApp) and social media. The overall situation raised multiple issues. First, it led to the re-evaluation of the online resources and forced the teaching staff to make them a key element of their work, at least temporarily. Second, it also highlighted a growing need for an instructor's individual approach to the broad diversity of students' needs and demands. Third, it "rekindled" a debate on the topic of traditional versus contemporary teaching methods (i.e., can online courses substitute the offline classes?). Fourth, it limited the capacity for offline activities – both curricular (e.g., conducting experiments in natural sciences' disciplines, teaching practice, medical internship etc.) and extracurricular (sports, drama, academic conferences, international exchange programs).

While having a non-negotiable advantage in education, the online learning process is also viewed as a source of potential risks and vulnerabilities. Consequently, it demands constant discussion and improvement to meet personal, educational and professional requirements. These issues are of special importance, especially in the sphere of foreign language learning. There exist multiple ways to use digital technologies and Internet resources in foreign language learning, including the implementation of existing

applications and materials, as well as joint resources created by teachers and students. Kirgintseva and Nechaev (2013) argue that the use of various types of multimedia in teaching a foreign language facilitates the cognitive activity within students, forms a culture of creative operational thinking and the ability to navigate the rapidly changing information flows of modern society.

The purpose of the study was to develop and implement a comprehensive project to improve communication technologies at the Mordovian State University named after V. I. Ogareva in the context of the implementation of a professionally-oriented approach in distance learning of academic English at technical faculties. At the same time, the following tasks were solved:

- the formation of the ability to apply modern communication technologies in the process of professionally oriented academic communication;
- the setting of communication abilities as the major element of studying the academic language;
- the improvement of professional and general language habits for achieving the academic goals in e-learning at technical faculties / departments / institutes;
- the introduction of the professionally-focused communicative self- and group learning as a kind of cooperative activity for achieving the desired academic purposes;
- the organisation of the Academic English learning by implementing the professionally oriented approach in the context of the development of modern trends in media education at technical departments.

1. Literature Review

Certain aspects of the problem under study were touched in several works discussing below. The researchers suggest that the professionally oriented approach is an integral and inherent part of teaching Academic English in a higher education institution, as well as the initial step in the formation of prospective specialists in various fields.

Andreev (1999) underlines the importance of having such a bonus for students as "freedom" when learning online. It implies a free schedule, comfortable conditions, etc. At the same time, to use this "freedom" correctly students should demonstrate perseverance, purposefulness, independence and honesty.

The international researchers have also contributed to this study, providing insights into the different aspects and elements of the issue of Academic English teaching. For instance, Gao and Zhang (2020) from Hong Kong Baptist University and University of Electronic Science and Technology of China analyze foreign language teachers' cognitions of online training due to the sudden global outbreak of COVID-19 in late 2019. The authors analyze the methodology and practice dealing with the way EFL instructors were facing the challenges, what knowledge they own and acquire on characteristics, perspective and limitations of online EFL teaching, as well as how they obtained data and communication technology literacy by becoming aware of students' learning demands.

The study survey by Gleason and Manca (2020) attempts to conduct research on how social media may support educational goals with specific reference to larger classrooms. In addition, the researchers provide practical advice on using Twitter (despite its limitations) from the experience teaching in a typical higher education setting: a large, undergraduate program in a public university.

The survey by Martin (2020) is aimed at discovering how distance language learners' pronunciation abilities grow (or deteriorate) both with and without targeted pronunciation training over their freshman term. To accomplish this task, an innovative computer-assisted method of pronunciation learning was designed and implemented, and its efficiency, as well as learners' experiences with the method, were evaluated. The study was carried out over the one-semester course with 67 distance learners. It assessed the comprehension abilities and oral production skills on the word and sentence level at the start and end of the semester for a group under study that acquired the targeted pronunciation instruction and a control group that did not receive pronunciation instruction, but otherwise followed the same curriculum.

Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge of ESP Teachers in Blended Learning Format have become a theme for the research conducted by the scholars from University Muhammadiyah Semarang, Indonesia. The article (Mulyadi et al., 2020) is dedicated to an effort to discern ESP teachers' skills and professional competencies according to the Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) tool in a blended learning format. The modified online survey covered 28 closed questions that were administered to 70 ESP instructors from 35 Universities in Indonesia. The data were

statistically analyzed to be presented in descriptive statistics (percentages of frequencies, means, and standard deviations). The findings indicate that three out of four TPACK subdomains, including technological content knowledge (TCK), and Technological Pedagogical Knowledge (TPK), Technological Pedagogical and Content Knowledge (TPACK) have been mastered by the majority of ESP teachers.

Over three academic years, the research by Founq and Chen (2019) has been focusing on the usage logs for over 7000 students that could be accessed via the university's learning system. The study identifies and examines students' assessment component scores, online activity completion rates, and online behavioural patterns. Among the other methods, descriptive analysis, bivariate correlation analysis, and multiple regression analysis were applied. The findings reveal insights into various (as well as the alternative) online learning behavioural patterns that would benefit blended course designers.

Ho et al. (2020) provide the analysis of the structural model showing that under COVID-19 conditions, computer self-efficacy (CSE) has a positive impact on perceived ease of use (PEOU). There is also a positive relationship between system interactivity (SI) and PEOU. The authors documented that PEOU has no significant impact on students' attitudes (ATT). The results show that SI can moderately affect ATT. Finally, it is noted that the social factor (SF) directly affects the student's attitudes (ATT).

Finally, Marcum and Kim (2020) research the use of oral language skills in the context of e-learning of the English language in the United States institutions. Methodologically, the curriculum for the program is based upon the transactional distance theory, with an emphasis on interpersonal dialogue as a key tool in promoting oral proficiency. To acquire the research data, students participated in synchronous and asynchronous interaction with their peers, tutors, and instructors. The American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) computer-assisted Oral Proficiency Interview (OPIc) allowed to conduct the pretest and posttest measures for this study. To supplement this data, course surveys provided information concerning student feedback of course activities.

2. Methodology

The current research uses methodology for the formation of communicative competence in distance education by identifying modern trends in the development of

communication technologies at Ogarev Mordovia State University in the context of implementation of the concept of the professionally oriented approach in distance learning of Academic English at technical faculties. In accordance with the goals and objectives of the study, a project was developed that provided for the formation of communicative language competence of students of technical faculties of the Ogarev Mordovian State University on the basis of: clarifying the concept of distance education in the formation of communicative competence through the creation of modern communication technologies and appropriate linguistic definitions; analyzing and determining the role, place, content and methodological possibilities of distance education in the educational process; creating a methodologically sound and technologically developed model for the development of foreign language communicative competencies in the process of distance education.

The developed project included imply the practical use of communication technologies in the implementation of distance education; the definition of the major didactic aspects and principles of the application of modern communication technologies in Academic English learning by bachelor students of technical faculties on the basis of experimental teaching; the ability to manage communication technologies within the framework of a professionally oriented approach in the conditions of academic communication of bachelor students on the basis of innovative principles for the development of language competence; the analysis of the experience of using information and online technologies by researchers of Ogarev Mordovia State University in teaching Academic English to students of technical faculties; the conducting of the survey among students in order to comprehend and consider the importance, necessity and prospects of distance learning in Academic English and draw appropriate conclusions; the determination of the methodological principles of distance education in teaching English in order to predict the organisational structure of modern communication technologies; the development and theoretical justification of the methodological principles of organising distance learning in Academic English; the implementation of the modern communication technologies, including educational and methodological multimedia and online complexes.

The study it included the following steps:

- analysis of domestic online Academic English educational programmes for students of technical faculties;

- study of special literature on information technology and the structure of computer networks;
- consideration of psychological, pedagogical and methodological data on the research problem;
- development and implementation of the project for the formation of communicative competence in the context of distance learning;
- evaluation of the effectiveness of the developed project based on a survey of students;
- analysis of the results of the survey of students and the formation of proposals for improving the educational process.

To improve the quality of education under the pandemic conditions, the project was proposed and tested aimed at improving skills and abilities when forming the communicative competence in students. The main provisions of this project are given in the next section of this article. Two stages of the survey were conducted for students of technical faculties of the N. P. Ogarev Mordovian State University. The first phase of the survey was conducted in March 2020 prior to the start of the project. The second stage of the student survey was conducted at the end of the first semester (in January 2021), which was conducted remotely. Students were trained using the developed project on the development of communication technologies in the context of the implementation of a professionally oriented approach in distance learning of academic English.

The form of the questionnaire that was used in the first and second stages of the student surveys is shown in Table 1. Respondents were asked to assess the degree of satisfaction with communication competence and image in the context of distance learning based on the choice of one of the answers given in the questionnaire.

3. The main provisions of the developed project

Under the current conditions of the global pandemic, the existing traditional methods of teaching English to undergraduate students are in strong contradiction with the contemporary educational model based on professional competencies. The principles of individual approach and implementation of the professionally oriented competencies in distance learning of Academic English at technical faculties stimulate seeking the other teaching methods and technologies in the higher education system. Priority is given to modern trends in media education in students' independent educational activities. Distance

learning plays an important role in contemporary education, so one should not ignore its opportunities in the development of modern science.

Table 1. The degree of satisfaction with their communicative competence and image in the context of distance learning

Questions	Choose one of the possible answers: +2 (very large extent); +1 (greater extent); 0 (more or less); -1 (small extent); -2 (very small extent)
1. I am fluent in communication rhetorical tools under the conditions of e-learning	
2. I do not encounter any language barriers in studying the material; I am able to paraphrase and re-consider due to the developed communicative skills	
3. I possess the well-developed communicative habits, an extensive vocabulary, a stock of linguistic forms, collocations, enabling me to rapidly adapt to the existing learning conditions	
4. I am aware of both students` and teachers` rhetorical culture while using online tools	
5. My teacher is a partner, and I try to communicate on an equal ground in the Internet environment	
6. I grasp the significance of speech etiquette in communicating with teachers and fellow students	
7. I possess communication skills; I am not afraid to deliver public speeches at online seminars and discussions	
8. I am satisfied with my teacher's skills, their communication habits and personal traits demonstrated in working with students in the distance learning atmosphere	
9. I am diligently searching for knowledge, ready to self-develop and improve under online learning conditions	
10. The ethical component in my rhetorical culture is a reality	
11. I am familiar with the notions of the addressee and the interpretive direction in student speech	
12. I have mastered the ability of public speech by participating in e-learning	

The study of the problem is associated with the search for new approaches in teaching Academic English for developing cultural competencies and the introduction of

the project method in the context of the search for modern trends in distance education at technical faculties resulted in creating the curriculum "Modern trends in the development of communication technologies in the context of implementation of the professionally oriented approach in distance learning of Academic English at technical faculties", contributing to the improvement of educational institutions' activity. The project justifies the essence and introduces the principles of individualisation and the implementation of the professionally oriented approach in the context of the development of modern trends in distance education at technical faculties. The study features the model for managing the development and improvement of communication technologies, which includes content, socio-cultural and technological components. The project is designed to implement a set of development strategies in a competency-based approach. The survey is an inherent part of the new type of educational programs formation, combining classroom and online learning, based on the principles and main stages of the development of communication technologies. The authors state that the project was developed for bachelor students of technical faculties (departments and institutes) of Ogarev Mordovia State University. The study analyses the experience of integrating two aspects - English for Academic Purposes and English for Special Purposes.

The project considers introducing electronic educational technologies into the university environment using the model of language programs for full-time and part-time undergraduate students studying online. The authors of the project present the types of educational resources, introduce their typology, highlight the educational potentials of each type as a means of teaching, identify the risks and ways to avoid them for the implementation of the professionally oriented approach in the study of Academic English in the context of distance education at technical faculties.

Risks, threats and vulnerabilities associated with the project implementation:

1. Risks associated with monitoring and evaluating the project. In order to avoid it, it is necessary to include quantitative and qualitative control indicators that facilitate open and transparent recording of intermediate results.

2. Non-balanced integration in the implementation of the project by the participants. In order to avoid it, it is critical to balance the distribution of tasks and responsibilities of

each partner of the group; fair distribution of responsibilities, avoiding duplication of other partners' functions.

3. Difficulty in understanding the causal relationships between intermediate results, goals and objectives of the project. In order to avoid it, it is significant to form a professionally oriented plan during the implementation of the project.

4. The risk associated with the sustainability of the relevance of the project. In order to avoid it, it is vital to ensure smooth implementation and the duration of the positive effects that the project will have even after the completion of its implementation period; carrying out a detailed analysis of the expected results in the formation of competencies; ensuring institutional sustainability through structures that allow project results to be sustained beyond the project completion.

5. The risk associated with determining the relevance of the problems that the project is going to solve. In order to avoid it, it is crucial to clearly and thoroughly define the goal, objectives, expected intermediate results, assumptions, deviations and indicators that are fundamental to the project, leading to positive implementation of the project.

It should be noted that Khodyreva (2017) associates difficulties in risk management with the large scale of innovative educational projects, the implementation of which takes place in the context of the continuous modernization of education.

The study on the current trends in the development of communication technologies at Ogarev Mordovia State University in the context of implementing the professionally oriented approach in distance learning of Academic English at technical faculties is an attempt to improve the quality of distance education. For those who have been under influence of the traditional educational system with its typical attributes (going to lessons or lectures, sitting at the desk, communicating with the teacher in the classroom, etc.) the formation of the online communicative competence can be especially difficult to comprehend, master and effectively implement. This can cause problems with acquiring information through remote means of communication or with organization of their educational process without the instructor's strict control.

However, the current harsh conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic, the development of communication technologies in a distant format is an important task not only for our state, but for the whole world. The transfer of the modern community to the information-

educational environment in various fields since March 2020 has become a turning point in the development of communication technologies. The development of information communication technologies of a country depends on the level of its economic development and the availability of resources. While these areas are successfully developing, the Russian Federation is actively taking measures to develop and improve this sphere, National Research Ogarev Mordovia State University being no exception.

In this regard, the modern educational process has a tendency to actively use distant learning in education as an important component of the developing system of open education within the framework of the Bologna process as well as in the circumstances associated with the pandemic. Scholars define the concept of "distance education" in different ways. This is due to the complex nature of the modern processes, as well as implementation obstacles associated with high degree of negative risks on the quality of educational online activities. At the same time, Vaks (2021) admits that "distance learning is the first stage of adaptation of students to social and professional interaction in the context of the digitalization of the economy".

It has recently become obvious that the introduction of modern trends in the development of communication technologies at Ogarev Mordovia State University in the context of implementing the professionally oriented approach in distance learning of Academic English at technical faculties is a necessity and we are witnessing a rapid development of this insufficiently studied process. Thus, efforts of many linguists, researchers, theorists and practitioners of education today are focused in the field of innovative digital, multimedia and online technologies and, in turn, the development of principles, techniques and methods, in particular, the organisation of distance learning, which is aimed at creating projects to improve and modernise teaching communicative technologies.

Distance learning can be viewed as a kind of "mechanism" for adaptation and optimisation of the professional educational process in the conditions of the current pandemic situation. This process is characterised by a transition from passive to an active phase of acquiring knowledge, a paradigm based on the interactive and constructive joint activity of a student and a teacher.

The concept of the distance education system in the Republic of Mordovia connected with improving the communicative competence of learning English implies the rejection of the “authoritarian”, “dictatorial” aspect in the teaching style, which implements the concept of the professionally oriented approach in the study of Academic English in the context of distance education at technical faculties and is focused on individual’s personal qualities. The fundamental idea of the development and implementation of modern communication technologies is seen by linguists of Ogarev Mordovia State University as a plan to transfer from traditional forms of teaching communicative competence and a monologue as a prevailing form of educational activity to such a form of teaching as polylogue (dialogue, discussion, communication, conversation), while encouraging the partner to speak implies the formation of communicative competence, when the understanding of information is presented not as “traditional memorisation”, but as “thirst for knowledge”, actualised in the communicative activity under the conditions of distance education.

It should be noted that distance learning forms of communicative competence are implemented through online dialogues, seminars, conferences, round tables, webinars, quizzes, etc., assuming the use of electronic information sources training platforms (Internet databases, virtual libraries, consulting services, e-learning materials, etc.).

However, under the pandemic conditions it became clear that the use of distance learning and the Internet resources at Ogarev Mordovia State University for improving communicative competence in teaching Academic English to technical students are inadequate in relation to the educational process. Teachers faced the problem of inefficiency of their communication skills and abilities, based on the traditional forms of education. As a result, it became critical to introduce modern trends in the development of communication technologies at National Research Ogarev Mordovia State University in the context of implementation of the professionally oriented approach in distance learning of Academic English at technical faculties.

Therefore, despite a huge number of works on the problems of information communication trends, the current interest to this topic is due, first, to the continuing demand to improve methodological techniques, tools and approaches to information communication technologies; second, to the rapid change in the structure and spatial

configuration of a foreign language in the global information and communications technology (ICT) industry; third, to the lack of comprehensive research in the field of regulation of ICT creation processes, taking into account the specifics of this sector; fourth, to the significance of studying the modern trends in the development and regulation of the Russian academia in the context of the mobility of the language platform in the conditions of the pandemic. The project implementation led to a number of additional activities related to understanding the essence of the studied issues from students and teachers' perspective. Researchers developed a methodology, the results are taken as the basis for creating a project for the development and implementation of modern communication technologies that contribute to more effective implementation in the educational process, to form and improve communicative competence within the framework of distance learning.

According to Murneva et al. (2018a), the basic principle of training which is close connection of theory and practice is frequently forgotten. The gap between these two components leads to a number of errors in producing speech. In order to master communication skills and abilities, a student should master ways to improve, self-organise and develop intellectually, sufficient time and resources should be devoted to exercises that develop speech habits and improve both active and passive vocabulary. The accomplishment relies on the adequately determined goal, therefore, originally, students are required to clearly anticipate the result to be expected.

General eloquence and speech proficiency is not merely a useful skill, but also an opportunity to feel comfortable when communicating with peers and instructors. The assignments facilitating the development of students' speech habits serve the following goals:

- enhance communicative competence and communication skills when learning online;
- learn speech etiquette;
- form speech behavior culture online;
- establish basics of oratory in students learning online;
- overcome fear of public speaking.

To facilitate the efficient development of communication skills, the formation of the relevant competence for online work, it is vital to adopt a set of contemporary

communication tools and techniques. Murneva M.I. et al. (2018b) state that one needs to analyze the students' individual traits and motivate students to view the proposed tasks not as usual assignments, but treat it as a speech act. The integrated approach implies methods and exercises that provide the development of communicative competence in students of technical faculties who study Academic English in the framework of distance learning. The examples are given below:

- consulting explanatory dictionaries (underdeveloped vocabulary is one of the most common problems for speech expressiveness, therefore it is recommended to have an individual personal vocabulary);

- learning clichés and expressions of Academic English;

- participating in online groups, student and youth forums and communities to eliminate fear of communication, find additional virtual communities on thematic forums or groups in social media, participate in webinars, videoconferences, forums of interest. Such informal communication also provides a lot of useful information and allows to feel comfortable at the new platform of distance education;

- writing out words from different areas of knowledge with their definitions, invent stories using these words and use them in a valid situation. Once the story is represented, it is assigned to be reviewed and rendered to the fellow students, who are to try their best to select the proper equivalents, expressions, collocations etc. The assignment is aimed to practice vocabulary, develop meaningfulness, clarity, precision and expressiveness in speech, as well as facilitate relieving of tension and fear while speaking publicly;

- oral presentation. A student is required to constantly practice his or her oral skills, consequently, it is recommended to daily pronounce pieces of literature, business letters, contracts, technical manuals for a household appliance, etc. The major objective is not to memorize the text, but reproduce it from memory, using synonyms;

- presentation (one of the most effective methods of developing communication and oratory skills on both simple and complex subjects;

- choosing a book or a story to read and retell, trying to avoid filler words that clog speech;

- composing an academic text (scientific conference, academic event, thematic report). This could help to expand the passive vocabulary;

- summarizing texts using the previously mastered cliché plan for rendering the text.

4. Survey results and discussion

The survey involves 159 full-time undergraduate students of the Institute of Mechanics and Power Engineering and 22 full-time undergraduate students of the Institute of Electronics and Lighting Engineering.

Below (in Table 2) are the results of processing the questionnaires completed by students at the two stages of the survey. The first stage of the survey was conducted in March 2020 before the implementation of the project discussed in this article, and the second stage - in January 2021 after the implementation of the project.

According to the research results, the number of students who scored from 16 to 24 points increased from 33 (18,2%) to 136 (75,1%); the number of students who scored from 8 to 15 points decreased from 40 (22,1%) to 30 (16,6%); the number of students who scored from 0 to 7 points decreased from 108 (59,7%) to 15 (8,3%). At the same time, the trend of increasing the number of students who noted an increase in the efficiency of the educational process after the implementation of the project discussed in the article was noted in all for all specialties and courses.

According to the results of the survey conducted in January 2021, the following characteristics of the achieved level of communicative competence of students studying online were formed, as well as recommendations for eliminating the identified shortcomings. These characteristics and recommendations for the three groups of students listed in columns 5, 6, and 7 of Table 2 are given below.

Group 1. Students with the high competence level (16-24 points). They have an excellent opportunity to acquire and enhance communication skills or even master new knowledge in the course of online learning. They experience no obstacles in gaining competence; distance learning is easily accepted and becomes students' major assistant along with the traditional education methodology, which could not completely perform its functions under the conditions of the Covid-19 pandemic. This type of students have properly adapted to the given circumstances, which have led to a major change due to the fact that the modern education system has begun a transfer to blended learning, and the future quantity and quality of distance technologies will only increase.

Table 2. Results of surveys of students of the N. P. Ogarev Mordovian State University

Specialty	Course	Number of students surveyed	stage	Student groups		
				from 16 to 24 points	from 8 to 15 points	from 0 to 7 points
Agroengineering	1	21	first second	5 15	5 3	11 3
Heat power engineering and heat engineering	1	23	first second	3 18	4 4	16 1
Power engineering and Electrical engineering	1	22	first second	2 18	3 3	17 1
Operation of transport technological machines and complexes	1	15	first second	1 11	4 2	10 2
Technosphere safety	1	22	first second	5 16	5 4	12 2
Agroengineering	2	21	first second	6 14	5 3	10 3
Operation of transport technological machines and complexes	2	20	first second	4 14	6 3	10 3
Technosphere safety	2	15	first second	2 12	2 2	11 1
Informatics and computer engineering	2	22	first second	5 16	6 6	11 0

This group of students have sufficient satisfaction with distance learning. They are aware of ways to acquire knowledge at their own pace, according to their individual schedule. They have learned to focus on the most important aspects of learning, avoiding unnecessary distractions. This respondents group clearly understand what knowledge and skills they need to improve the communication competence. Their intellectual and cognitive abilities prove that they are enthusiastic students capable of solving the most difficult communication problems. Their personal traits allow to get maximum satisfaction

from distance learning. Considering each question in detail will help to improve professionally oriented aspects of learning, and can also contribute to a more comfortable and effective study process.

Group 2. Students with the intermediate competence level (16-24 points). Anxiety occurs while delivering an online public speech, which indicates that students do not have sufficient components of communicative, rhetorical and speech culture. Not enough attention is paid to the listed aspects that constitute the phenomenon of the students' communicative image in online learning atmosphere. All this does not allow to be completely expressed as a student who possesses the skill of public speech, a rhetorician who uses the word as an instrument of speech. This group of students need to be aware of the reasons for the insufficient level of self-development and -improvement by meditating on how to deal with setbacks and diminish disadvantages in educational activities within distance learning practice.

Group 3. Students with the low competence level (0-7 points). These students have the kind of personal traits, communication habits and abilities, which, to a large extent, inhibit their growth and limit their actions to solving a number of simple tasks through studying a textbook. They are unable to interpret the online material so that it is clear and efficiently received by an addressee. The students may be aware of certain aspects of online communication, but it does not create the communicative image of a student as an integral and holistic personality. They have difficulty practising self-discipline and independent search for information. Their initial enthusiasm for the implementation of communicative competence is quickly replaced by indifference, fear and unwillingness to overcome difficulties. In such conditions, without good self-organisation, self-discipline, distance learning is unlikely to be successful and effective. Such students need to overcome the lack of interpersonal communication, which plays an important role in psychological support. Another important problem of the communicative competence formation in the context of distance learning is the lack of a clear and deep understanding of the action plan to eliminate communicative shortcomings. To practise this, it is necessary to study Internet resources, training platforms that are in the public domain, master the list of available modern teaching communication methods and techniques. The lack of a structured scheme for obtaining information is becoming an acute problem, as well as the shortage of clear

goals, tools and time-scale. The sequence of the algorithm for obtaining information is blurred, it is difficult to have a comprehensive and holistic worldview, which ultimately leads to the understanding that it is impossible (or highly unlikely) to efficiently apply the acquired knowledge / skills.

This respondents type needs to study a number of exercises, methods, modern communication technologies that are able to eliminate communication problems in distance learning. The obstacles may occur due to the lack of knowledge of modern technologies that contribute to the formation and improvement of communication skills and abilities in studying Academic English in the conditions of online learning.

The lack of the communicative culture and of the ability to overcome fear of online public speaking gives evidence of their incompetence. It is necessary to learn how to overcome and eliminate communicative shortcomings in the current challenging conditions of distance learning.

To increase the communicative competence and culture, improve the communicative image, one needs to master modern communication methods and technologies that will help in understanding educational activities, allow to see the results of students' work, and also assist in giving a critical assessment of the individual self-realisation, receiving knowledge, addressing the other academic fields, taking into account the format of distance education. This requires self-improvement, diligent labour on communicative competence, speech etiquette, as well as the relentless elaboration of communication skills and abilities under the conditions of e-learning.

Conclusion

The conducted analysis and the survey results obviously indicate that the development of information technologies and online learning has substantial prospects. IT-sphere should definitely be considered as a tool for improving communicative competence, self-organization, self-development and personal growth. It contributes to the understanding of education in the sense far from pointless attendance of lectures and seminars, but helps to predetermine the role of education for the formation of subsequent professional competencies and the development of new areas of knowledge, having

developed individual and independent motivation without the constant need of outward pressure.

We are currently witnessing the beginning of the development of virtual learning with its imperfections and shortcomings, so it is necessary to show maximum responsibility and creativity to improve the quality of online education. Online education stimulates both the work of students and teaching staff. To achieve mutual understanding with the audience online and maximum compliance with innovations, any teacher needs to motivate students to seek for new ways of acquiring knowledge, be able to constantly develop their courses, regularly improve and extend their professional qualifications and encourage students to be creative.

The results of the experiment shows that the formation of communicative competence in the process of online learning is especially effective when integrating it with traditional education, as well as applying a curriculum of traditional education together with that of distance learning. The survey analysis shows that students are open to knowledge and strive for innovative, more effective forms of education, which are aimed at developing cognitive activity, expanding their horizons and knowledge in the field of a foreign language, cultural studies, philosophy, rhetoric, as well as improving their communicative competence.

The study puts forward the theses postulating the effectiveness of modern methods and technologies in the formation of communicative competence in the process of distance learning for undergraduate students of technical faculties with the interaction of three levels of personality (individual, cognitive and intercultural), which have shown their effectiveness. It consists in the formation of the communicative competence of a student as a highly educated person, a person of culture, mastering communicative and intercultural competences, having critical and creative thinking, according to the pattern of the speech activity formation: goal - motive - creativity - self-control - action - means - result.

The academic and practical experience, acquired in the process of online Academic English teaching, allow to develop a number of methodological recommendations for the formation and improvement of communicative competence in the format of online education. The provided research results assert that the set research tasks have been solved. The introduction of the modern communication techniques for the formation of the

communicative competence in students' online learning determines the effectiveness of their implementation and predicts its organizational and methodological structure. On the basis of the developed and theoretically justified methodological principles, the integrated model of methods is presented, including interrelated educational and methodological complexes.

Experimental testing of techniques is carried out in independent work of students when acquiring knowledge online, which ensures the gradual formation of communicative and educational-cognitive competencies as the student's ability to consciously independently search and manage their activities in mastering Academic English. The reliability of the results of the ascertaining experiment was proved, which was methodically verified and tested in the educational process, with the aim of proving the feasibility of integrating traditional and online methods of forming communicative competence integrating modern information technologies, methodological techniques.

The conducted theoretical and experimental research fully confirmed the methodological effectiveness of the presented methodology for determining the degree of student satisfaction with their communicative competence and image in the conditions of distance learning and the feasibility of combining the forms of traditional and online Academic English learning. The results allow to assert that the set research tasks have been solved. The survey presents the current trends in the development of communication technologies at Ogarev Mordovia State University in the context of the professionally oriented approach in distance learning of Academic English at technical faculties. The study of a professionally oriented approach in the implementation of distance education determines the methodological possibilities of online English learning and predict the organizational and methodological structure of projects for the implementation of curricula.

Experimental testing of the project is carried out while observing the independent work of students, which ensures the gradual formation of educational, cognitive and communicative competencies as the ability of a student to consciously independently search and manage their activities in mastering the English language at technical faculties of Ogarev Mordovia State University over the pandemic period. The reliability of the results is proved, which has been methodically verified and tested in the educational process at

Ogarev Mordovia State University since March 2020 with the aim to prove the feasibility of integrating traditional and online methods of teaching English using modern information technologies and the introduction of techniques to improve communicative competencies in the conditions of distance education.

The conducted theoretical and experimental research fully confirms the methodological effectiveness of the presented modern trends in the formation and development of communicative competencies in technical students and the feasibility of combining traditional and online English learning.

Analysis of the research results on the problem of online formation of the communicative competencies in students of technical faculties in independent work allows us to draw the following conclusions confirming the initial hypothesis:

1. Based on the analysis of methodological, pedagogical and specialized literature on the problems of teaching technology, on Russian and foreign experience in using distance technologies in teaching English, a methodology has been developed for introducing modern trends in the development of communication technologies at Ogarev Mordovia State University in the context of the implementation of the professionally oriented approach in the study of Academic English in distance education at technical faculties allowing to study the overall professionally oriented approach of non-linguistic specialties students.

2. The didactically justified project provides a positive teaching effect in the system and interaction with traditional forms, techniques and means of teaching, which provides a full-fledged individual approach in developing communicative skills of independent work in mastering English at technical faculties.

3. It is revealed that the proposed modern trends in the development of communication technologies at Ogarev Mordovia State University in the context of implementing the professionally oriented approach in the study of Academic English in the conditions of distance education at technical faculties ensure the effectiveness of improving communicative competence, provided that the process is phased and gradual.

4. It is proved that the effectiveness of modern trends in the development of communication technologies at Ogarev Mordovia State University in the context of implementing the professionally oriented approach in the study of Academic English in the

conditions of distance education at technical faculties is provided with the mandatory inclusion of an information aspect, instructions for independent work with the project, materials for general independent work, self-control and self-assessment of results.

5. The developed and introduced tools of the development of communication technologies at Ogarev Mordovia State University are effective and productive, which is confirmed during testing and implementation both theoretically and practically.

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