EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL TRAINING: BLENDED LEARNING IN MARITIME ENGLISH TEACHING

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INTRODUCTION

Education and professional training are considered to be dynamic phenomena and, thus, they need to adapt to the new global tendencies, changes and social challenges. The global aim of today's education is the development of key competences which will enable the graduates to effectively perform their professional duties, to easily adjust to new trends and changes in their professional sphere, to readily develop and grow both as professionals and personalities.

The situation today in the sphere of higher education demands for the improvement and advancement of foreign language mastery. It is especially true for the professional training of future seafarers as they usually work in multilingual crews and with multinational shore personnel. Due to the reason that poor communication between crewmembers coming from different countries and, thus, speaking different languages can, through misunderstandings and mistakes, be a threat to the overall safety of a vessel and pose an additional threat if one considers the risk of subsequent pollution, the International Maritime Organization (IMO) has introduced common working language – the English language – with the aim to enhance maritime safety (HUGHES, 2000).

Though the English language is nowadays introduced into all professional training courses in Ukraine and abroad, there are still discrepancies between the minimum required standard of training and the real readiness of seafarers to perform professional duties with the use of the English language, between the supposed language training programs outcomes and the actual English-speaking skills the seafarers have. This shows that the language training of future seafarers is still far from being perfect and there is a great need of improving teaching and learning process to develop professionally-oriented communicative competency. It has been acknowledged that the last-century “traditional” grammar-translation methods of teaching foreign languages are not effective any more (EUROPEAN COUNCIL, 2001). Rapid technological advancement and intense growth of information lumps in all social spheres result in the aggravation of clashes between the amount of the information produced by society and the possibility of its uptake with the help of traditional educational technologies. The need to uptake more and more amount of information demands for the search and use of new learning and teaching technologies and approaches (SHARPLES et al., 2014).

The conceptual idea of the research is that the use of electronic learning resource can actually enable the creation of interactive learning environment and contribute to the effectiveness of maritime training and education. As the communicative competency is acknowledged as one of the key professional competencies for future seafarers (STCW, 1995) the authors set the aim here to describe its main components and suggest the effective techniques and methods of their formation and development by means of Blended Learning approach implementation at different stages of professional maritime training. Meeting the objective demands the accomplishment of the following tasks:

(1) to specify and characterize the aims of professional foreign language training of seafarers at the first and the second levels of education in compliance with the prescribed standards or levels of knowledge, understanding and demonstrated skills stipulated by the STCW Code;
to provide methodological guidelines and recommendations as for the blended learning implementation peculiarities at each level depending on the specific learning needs;

(3) to develop the system of tasks and exercises for professionally-oriented communicative competency formation by means of Blended Learning approach through the course “While Ashore” intended for the first year cadets of maritime institutions.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

The conceptual ideas which form the grounds of the research come from three methodological areas: the study of the professional communicative competency role for the maritime industry, the global European and world-wide tendencies in the sphere of higher education and the key concepts of Blended Learning approach. The modern period in the history of shipment is identified by Cole and Trenker (2012) as ‘era of mixed crews’ because nowadays more than 80% of the merchant fleet crew consists of the representatives of different nationalities. The work in multilingual crews and with multinational shore personnel can result in inability to get the message across for safe and efficient ship’s operations (BOCANEGRA-VALLE, 2010). If one adds the additional variables of crews using English as a second language and the cultural differences which may be experienced, then the odds of miscommunication may be increased (JOHNSON, 1999; PYNE & KOESTER, 2005). Intercultural communicative competence is vital because people’s communication styles are inherently culturally bound (Grech at el., 2008). The STCW convention and its amendment in 1995 theoretically dissolve such divides as value and culture in training and education, but in reality these factors still thrive. According to the emergency situation analysis research (European Commission, 2001) almost 75% of all cases happen due to the lack understanding and poor English speaking skills.

Most expert consider multilingual crews who don’t have sufficient command of the English language ‘hot topic’ or ‘key elements’ of the accident risk rate (HORK, 2004; SAFETY and SHIPPING REVIEW, 2015). The level of seafarers’ readiness to communicate their ideas fast, clear and correctly using English as their working language determines the level of safety of life at sea, safety of navigation and safety of the environment (SAMPSON & ZHAO, 2003; Hetherington at el., 2006). That is why IMO has added to the demands of the English language proficiency of the ship crew and shore-based personnel involved in the provisions of maritime and environment safety. This fact necessitates the improvement of professional language training of seafarers and the search of more modern and efficient teaching methods and approaches.

Considering the fact that Ukraine has joined the Bologna Process with the aim to implement European goals and policies in the national education system, the global European tendencies in the sphere of higher education are also important for the research. The proposed approach complies with the requirement to further develop and fully implement of student-centred learning and open education in the context of lifelong learning stipulated by the PARIS COMMUNIQUÉ (2018). Such type of education becomes the objective demand of today’s modern rapidly changing world (BLASCHKE, 2012) and the essential component of the social and economic policies of the country as it provides the possibilities for the constant deepening of academic and professional knowledge, of achieving the integrity and succession of the educational process, transforming the education in the process that never finishes and lasts as long as person lives. Alongside with that the European Council has published the Council recommendations on key competences for lifelong learning (2018) which stipulate the need to develop not only the professional competencies but also some basic competencies such as the ability to speak a foreign language, the ability to work in a team, the ability to learn, the ability to use new information technologies so that it would provide for the transit from the education in the closed teaching-learning environment to the “knowledge networks” of the open learning environment. These basic competencies will enable them to form and effectively use the mechanism of deliberate information search, analysis, transformation and usage for the achievement of specific practical purposes, to act independently and improve their knowledge, to master new skills and new technologies remaining flexible, up-to-date and competitive specialists.
Due to the active IT introduction, it is almost impossible to imagine the work of both teachers and students without the use of computer-based technologies that appear to be a powerful means of active learning and research processes. A lot of scientists emphasize the essential role of ICTs, multimedia tools, computer databases at all stages of the teaching / learning process. As shown by the research results done for the NMC/CoSN Horizon Report the use of computer-based tools and devices is considered a crucial condition of making future professionals ready to function fully in the digital world. Today both higher education and the contemporary workforce call for digital savants who can seamlessly work with different media and new technologies as they emerge (FREEMAN at el., 2017).

The conceptual idea of the paper is grounded on the recognition of digitalization potential to transform how higher education is delivered and how people learn at different stages of their lives and on the call, expressed by the Ministers of higher education in PARIS COMMUNIQUÉ (2018), to prepare their students and support their teachers to act creatively in a digitalized environment. It makes the provision of educational sphere with the theoretical and practical guidelines and recommendations on how to effectively use the IT for teaching purposes a key priority for higher education and professional training improvement.

The innovative teaching and learning approach – blended learning – is on the way for creating a more successful education policy for the next generations. Singh and Reed (2001) describe blended learning as being ‘a learning program where more than one delivery mode is being used with the objective of optimizing the learning outcome, when a more explicit definition from Valiathan (2002) suggests they may include ‘face-to-face classrooms, live e-learning, and self-paced learning’. With reference to blended learning in higher education, it has been defined as: “a combination of technology and classroom instruction in a flexible approach to learning that recognizes the benefits of delivering some training and assessment online but also uses other modes to make up a complete training program which can improve learning outcomes and/or save costs” (BANADOS, 2006). Similar definitions to Banados’s (2006) are given by de Gregorio-Godeo (2005) and MacDonald (2006). The program has been implemented in a blended-learning (b-learning) pedagogical model that includes: (a) learners’ work with UdeC English Online, software conceived as the backbone of the entire Communicative English Program, (b) online monitoring, (c) face to-face EFL teacher-led classes, and (d) conversation classes with native speakers of English (BANADOS, 2006).

More specifically, blended language learning (BLL) is a particular learning and teaching environment that combines face-to-face (f2f) and computer assisted language learning (CALL). In this instance, the “blend” consists of learners’ independent self-study phases via computerized tools and soft-ware and traditional f2f classroom learning. RebeccaLaunerdefinedblendedlearningasthecombinationoftechnologysupportedselfordistastudysettingsand face-to-face settings (Launer, 2010). As determined by Harmer (2012), the blended learning is when students use traditional learning aids, such as books, together with more modern technology such as websites and apps with computer technology (online and offline activities/materials). Sharma and Barrett (2007) suggest that Blended Learning refers to a language course which combines a face-to-face (F2F) classroom component with an appropriate use of technology.

The overview of previous research allowed concluding that despite its widespread use in education many claim that the term blended learning is inconclusive to define. In the context of higher education the blended learning can be referred to any combination of online and face-to-face teaching; using online resources and books, implementation of online and offline activities both for training and assessment purposes. The issues on BL are so compelling that the researchers continue to define its concept and determine its potential for academic purposes (DZIUBAN, 2016; JEAN-FRANÇOIS, 2013; GARRISON, 2013), to determine the interrelation of BL effectiveness and the individual learner characteristics, to assess its effectiveness in terms of grades and course completion rates (KENNEY, 2011; GARRISON & KANUKA, 2004; TOMLINSON & WHITTAKER, 2013).
To achieve a “principled approach” to blended learning the following four guiding principles should be kept in mind. Firstly, separate the role of the teacher and the role of technology as the roles are not interchangeable, but they are complementary. Secondly, teach in a principled way using means that best suit the learners’ needs, i.e. pedagogically driven. Thirdly, use technology to complement and enhance face-to-face teaching meaning that the two modes should complement each other, and which seems to suggest face-to-face is exclusively the lead mode. Lastly, remember that it’s not so much the program itself, but more what you do with it (an individual using it alone at home, to follow up practice in self-study or at home after a class, to actually using it in class as part of a presentation) (DZUBAN, HARTMAN AND MOSKAL, 2004).

The compelling benefits that an educator can gain from blended learning can be summarized as follows:

- students can access online courses anytime, anywhere, and at any pace that encourages student initiative to learn. By putting course materials on the platform, the students can access the material at any time of day and review it as needed. Due to the fact that many high school students are working, blended courses help to ensure their flexibility, the need for work.

- blended courses promote critical thinking and collaborative learning

- with the blended learning scheme, students will acquire the competence with individually tailored teaching syllabus

- students are provided with audio, video and text versions of the modules and a variety of ways for students to use the material

- students who need more repetitions and exercises can get this opportunity without taking time off from classes who might not need the extra reinforcement

- blended courses have the potential to facilitate community and help students to be independent and control their learning

- through blended learning, students have the opportunity to progress at their own pace, becoming active, involved, and more independent learners.

The analysis of the benefits proves that the use of the blended learning approach will contribute to the effective of marine English teaching. However, for the purpose of the research we support the definition of blended learning provided by Garrison and Kanuka (2004) that states that it is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences. Authors believe that the effectiveness of its implementation depends greatly on the careful course design and planning where face-to-face and online teaching and learning should complement each other, by combining different advantages of each. Though nowadays technology and digital tools have become ubiquitous, they can be ineffective or even dangerous when they are not integrated into the learning process in meaningful ways. So, this research is intended to reveal the pedagogical potential of computer-based tools and blended learning approach in Maritime English classroom.

**THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Communicative competency is one of the key professional competencies for future seafarers as their professional activity is carried out on board vessels in mixed crews and in ports worldwide, so to effectively carry out their professional duties, cooperate with other parties of maritime industry they need to be able to understand and use English which is recognized by IMO as a working language. The key concept that underpins the specific requirements of the STCW Code is that seafarers need to be competent in using English for professional purposes which vary depending on the level of responsibility crewmembers act at. For the aims of the research two levels of responsibility are described.

The **support level** means the level of responsibility associated with performing assigned tasks, duties or responsibilities under the direction and supervision of an individual serving at higher levels. The shipboard personnel performing duties at this level are ratings who need to be able to understand and adequately interpret the orders from higher level personnel
and to know how to execute them. They also need to be able to report about the tasks completed or to ask for additional instructions or details, know the basic maritime terms, vocabulary and be able to combine “the building blocks” of language (IMO Model Course, 2015) (grammar, vocabulary, phonology) to produce meaningful utterances. For that purpose, the main learning objective at the first stage of professional language training must be concentrated mainly on the linguistic component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency, i.e. the focus of attention should be on vocabulary, phonology and grammar skills development because without mastering the linguistic system of a language it is not possible either to use or understand it.

The operational level means the level of responsibility associated with servicing as officer in charge of navigational or engineering watch. Carrying out the duties on the operational level (the 2nd stage of professional training of future seafarers) as officers in charge of navigational or engineering watch requires collaboration and cooperation of crewmembers with the aim of developing the most efficient action plan in current situation with specific conditions of sailing area, weather conditions, type of cargo onboard, draft, etc. It means students at this stage of education need to learn how to communicate professional ideas, arguments and judgments, how to give clear and convincing reasoning, how to question and challenge politely the ideas expressed by other communicants. To be able to do so, the mere knowledge of the language system is not enough. That is why another important component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency is the cognitive one. It comprises the knowledge and skills required for performing specialized tasks, finding solutions for professionalized tasks and solving professional problems. The formation and development of this component implies the provision of professional knowledge, ideas, concepts and facts crucial for carrying out professional tasks. Besides, it is also the key element for the range of mental operations, critical thinking development and the basis for the analytical activity and decision making.

Depending on the learning needs specific for each of the levels described there are some peculiarities of blended learning implementation. To be able to understand, correctly interpret the orders from high level shipboard personnel and to be able to report about the tasks done, the seafarers servicing at the support level of responsibility must be able to operate the basic elements of the linguistic component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency – grammar, vocabulary (including professional terminology), phonology. To complete this task successfully by means of blended learning approach some methodological recommendations are suggested in this research.

First of all, the presentation of each new chunk of language material should always be done in the classroom, in face-to-face mode of cooperation. At this stage a teacher needs to facilitate students’ conceptualization of the input (IMO MODEL COURSE, 2015), work out the meaning of the items presented and ensure the correct understanding. Another important stage here is to make sure students pronounce the language items correctly as phonology is also an important element of the linguistic component. For that purpose, such activity as choral drilling which is a must have component of a traditional face-to-face education would be extremely important just after the presentation stage.

But, as soon as a teacher ascertains that all students have understood the meaning of the input and can pronounce it correctly, he needs to move to the practice stage where students practice how to manipulate the structure correctly and try to use the new language within a wider context. And this is where the process of language training can be assisted with computer-based tools and devices. The thing is, that students have different skills and require different amount of time for remembering and mastering new language items and this is where the integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences can help to solve the problem and enable students to work at their own pace.

The work inside the classroom may continue at this stage with the application of synchronous multi-media programs designed for Maritime English mastering such as MarEng and MarEng Plus. The programs may be characterized as professionally-oriented learning apps that have comfortable interface providing for the fast navigation and choosing the appropriate topic.
This computer mediated software provides for the possibility of controlled practice in language use with multiple repetitions and the possibilities for grammar rules revisions if necessary. For example, when studying the topic “Ship arrangement” students may keep individually practicing the new professional vocabulary using the soft and their gadgets doing different types of exercises suggest by the program: Label the ship part, Fill in the gaps with appropriate terms, complete the sentences, Match the terms and the definitions and the like. Students work on their own with new concepts which frees teachers up to circulate and support individual students who may need individualized attention.

It is extremely important after such individualized computer-based training to come back to face-to-face mode for a teacher to assess the level of language master by assigning communicative tasks with the input to make sure students did well during the practice stage and to integrate the new language item in communication activities that involve free speech and writing. This will enable teacher’s understanding of what to do next and if it is possible to move on and how much more practice students actually need. This stage will help a teacher to assign individual computer-based tasks (asynchronous element of blended learning) for students to deal with at home before the next lesson. For that purpose might be used different learning platforms.

In Kherson State Maritime academy the educational process is mediated via LMS Moodle which enables the implementation of Blended learning. So, on the platform a teacher may create a necessary amount of training tasks for developing linguistic component of students’ communicative competency and monitor the progress on-line. This approach has a great advantage if compared to traditional home-tasks in student books as it allows, first of all, for creation of as many tasks and activities as it is needed for each individual student to master the input unlike the printed student books where the exercises are limited. Students can access the task any time from any place as they all have their lightweight portable devices (smart phones or tables) with Internet access which is much more convenient then carrying a book. It also allows for the personalized learning as the tasks may be assigned both for the whole group and for individual students only. The key idea here is that the outcomes are what matter, not how long it might take various learners to achieve the outcomes, and that given enough time, all learners can master the competencies.

Having mastered the key linguistic elements, students need to be trained to develop their abilities to solve professional tasks and problems by means of foreign language. They need to learn how to communicate professional ideas, arguments and judgments, how to give clear and convincing reasoning, how to question and challenge politely the ideas expressed by other communicants so that as a result a final professionally-oriented communicative product is ready. So, at this stage of education the use of the training multimedia programs and software is proved to be of little effectiveness and must be replaced by the application of network technologies.

The ICTs here should be viewed as an immense and plentiful source of information. Students should be allowed for the sufficient time to search for and process necessary professional information related to the topic studied. It is claimed in the research that asynchronous on-line learning is more efficient and productive for the purpose of the cognitive component formation and development as the amount of the information to be processed is quite huge and that should be done individually, i.e. the process doesn’t actually require much of interpersonal cooperation.

The classroom time, on the other hand, must be given to collaborative task completion based on active interpersonal cooperation aimed at producing appropriate solutions for the given professional problems, situations or tasks. For example, when learning the topic “Passage planning” it is reasonable enough to set a task to study the information relevant to passage planning (area of sailing, weather forecast for the nearest few days, possibilities of pirates’ attacks, depth and currents of the water body etc.) at home using the on-line Internet resources.
Then, in the classroom, based on the information gained, students can have a possibility to work in groups (imitating the real-life situation of Bridge team cooperation) and together work out the best passage plan for “their ship” considering the type of ship, her draft and stability, the cargo she transports and the like. Though the relevant information has presumably been studied before the lessons, the groups should anyway be provided with the possibility of on-line learning in the classroom because they might need to cross-check some details or find out the necessary pieces of information they haven’t paid attention to before.

Such provision of individual search for the necessary information instead of giving them all the important facts enables the shift of the focus from what we need to know on how to learn. This shift is, in our opinion, a crucial one for the up-to-date education system because the process of learning is itself a fundamental part of life that helps shape us as human beings and gives purpose to much of what we do (ROSEN & STEWART, 2015).

In learning to learn, which is acknowledged as one of the Key Competencies for lifelong learning (COUNCIL RECOMMENDATIONS, 2018), success is not linked to the content a person acquires but to their development as a learner, so that when faced with situations in the future they have the personal capability to find new approaches or fresh information, and they are able to apply these in an effective manner. So, it is argued that instead of providing our students with the ready-made content, knowledge and facts it would be much more efficient, considering the speed with which things change and the information becomes obsolescent nowadays, to apply Blended learning and thus develop their skills of open communication and teamwork, being flexible in approach and creative in new situations, teach them to become confident in their ability to take appropriate and effective action in changing circumstances (ROSEN & STEWART, 2015).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the research done and taking into consideration the need for the possibility of distance learning provoked by the COVID-19 pandemic situation the attempt was taken to develop the on-line course in Maritime English which is complemented with the face-to-face traditional classroom learning and, in such away, is an example of the blended learning approach practical implementation. The described course is designed for the first year students who study Maritime English at Kherson State Maritime Academy. They have five 90-minute lessons a week. Groups are normally heterogeneous, from ten to fifteen people and the levels range from B1 to B2. The study covers the period from September 2020 to December 2020. The course consists of five modules in General Maritime English and is suitable for the professional training of future seafarers going to operate at the first, support, level of responsibility.

The online elements of the course are conducted through learning management system Moodle, which offers the on-line support of the learning process. It is a place to share knowledge and experience; it enables flexibility of work mode and variety of work styles.

The course “While Ashore” is designed by teaching staff of English Language Department for Deck Officers. It provides training materials for developing and improving English language communication skills required from cadets of navigation department for their shipboard practice in ports and at sea.

The learning materials on the Moodle are available in three main options: the ones for on-line activity, the ones for downloading and the ones in the form of links to other sites with useful supplementary materials (see Table 1). Online modules are a good way to have everything about course organised and kept in one place. Thus, blending may include a learning program that provides study materials and research resources over the web while providing instructor-led, classroom training sessions as the main medium of instruction.
Table 1. The example of the tasks for studying researching material from course “While Ashore”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modules</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Module 1 Maritime</td>
<td>Read the web-site advertisement of Warsash Maritime Academy and tick three most important characteristics of the educational establishment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 2 Career Awareness</td>
<td>Visit the Virtual tour of the Academy and describe the facilities and simulators mentioned in it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 3 Ship Arrangement</td>
<td>1) Study the ship 3D models and describe the location and functions of equipment on their decks (by link or QR Code). 2) Surf for information about a ship on <a href="https://www.marinetraffic.com/">https://www.marinetraffic.com/</a> and complete column A. Ask and answer questions to complete column B.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 4 Bulk Cargo</td>
<td>Surf for information about a bulker on <a href="https://www.marinetraffic.com/">https://www.marinetraffic.com/</a> and compare the bulkers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Module 5 Unitized Cargo</td>
<td>1) Read the situations and discuss the cargo properties to be taken into consideration. 2) Search for the information on the accidents that had happened to the ships from ex. 1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Search data.

Students are able to read articles, news, technical texts and watch professionally-related videos on-line at the convenient time and as many times as it is needed to fully comprehend the information presented. Such options as a news forum and a course discussion forum enable the learners to share ideas. Students gain greater awareness of issues because they can watch videos of experts who talk about different things and follow links to many other related websites, use a number of tools such as tasks, blogs, chats and forums. Quick on-line quizzes help to check learners’ knowledge on the topic studied and, thus, decide if she can proceed further on the course or needs to explore the topic better. For example, having studied the topic “Document requirements” learners are suggested the 9 question quiz to assess their knowledge about documents needed for the voyage (see Picture 1).

Picture 1. Quiz from the course “While Ashore”

Source: Search data.

Students are also encouraged to use blogs to reflect on their learning and collaborate on the group pages to share information during meeting times. Through the Moodle, students can interact informally with those inside and outside the academy by taking part in topical forums using the chat and familiarizing with resources. The later enables the students to increase work hours and help students learn more independently. Access to the Moodle is unlimited despite of the course duration.

Additional tasks help students improve their skills (grammar, pronunciation etc.). The resources are language exercises, vocabulary activities, listening activities, pronunciation activities designed by the teachers in compliance with the students needs, i.e. the teacher can create exercises for the whole group or for individual learners who show the low results and, thus, require more training. The following example shows listening task (see Picture 2).
The blend is designed to start the course with the more practical training and to increase the initial stages where participants are building up their skills. The interaction types in these resources are gap-fill type-in, true/false choices, gap fill drag and drop, rearranging words, phrases or sentences, multiple choices where students select one choice from a list of two or more options, checklists where students can select more than one choice from a longer list of options, and matching words, phrases or sentences (see Picture 3).

**Picture 3. Task for practical training from the course “While Ashore”**

*Source: Search data.*

The on-line component of the course deals with both theoretical issues (such as on-line curriculum and syllabus description, provision of professionally-related information in the forms of texts, videos, presentations or useful links, description of expected outcomes of the course and the guidelines on how to improve learners’ performance) and practical ones (by means of language training activities, chats, forums, assignments and the like). Each module of the course is assessed by means of on-line computerized tests (Stop & Checks) (see Picture 4) and in the course of face-to-face teacher-student interaction.

*Source: Search data.*
CONCLUSION

This study aimed to exemplify the implementation of blended learning approach in the course of Maritime English teaching. The research hypothesis was based on the professional requirements to seafarers’ communicative competency and on the recognition of digitalization potential to transform how higher education is delivered. Regarding the fact that for seafarers to be able to communicate effectively they need to be able to use and understand English in a range of professional situations, i.e. they need to be able to express themselves using appropriate language and interpret messages that they hear or read correctly, it was concluded that the key element of the first stage of education should be the formation and development of the linguistic component of the professionally-oriented communicative competency. Though, having noticed in the course of own teaching experience the difference in the pace and manner learners acquire language skills, the assumption was made that there is an urgent need to implement a more effective approach that will enable individualized education mode. Thus, it was decided to develop an on-line computer mediated course to be used together with the face-to-face classroom English teaching.

The findings support previous literature regarding blended learning approach implementation which stresses out that it is the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences (GARRISON AND KANUKA, 2004) and if well and carefully designed it might provide the whole range of benefits for the teaching-learning process. Integrating classroom activities with online study is aimed to foster more independent and collaborative learning by encouraging the students to review lesson content, collectively interact with follow-up material and prepare for next lessons better. The on-line element of the course is developed around specific learning objectives and encourages the learners to actively practice the language skills as much as they actually need by providing multiple types of activities at any convenient time and at convenient pace which adds to the comfort and positive attitude towards learning.

The findings suggest that the learners get more engaged into the studying process as the introduction of on-line studying materials has provided more flexibility in how, when, and where they can learn. The provision of learning materials and posting the initial disputable questions for provoking further discussion encourages students to take greater charge of their own learning. This also helps the teacher to take on the role of a facilitator during the off-line classroom sessions promoting and guiding the collaborative discussions instead of a lecturer being viewed as a source of information.

In general, the use of electronic learning resource can actually enable the creation of interactive learning environment and contribute to the effectiveness of Maritime English teaching.
teaching. It is argued that the application of blended learning while teaching Maritime English has proved to be an effective and up-to-date approach which allows for the effective formation and development of professionally-oriented communicative competency of future seafarers if the integration of face-to-face and on-line components in learning environment is done thoughtfully and comply with the learners’ needs and teaching aims.

The study showed that the professionally-oriented communicative competency is a complex phenomenon that should by studied in terms of system approach and thus requires the specific conditions of blended learning implementation depending on the objective of each specific lesson or task. The authors suggested the methodological recommendations as for the blended learning implementation peculiarities at each level depending on the specific learning needs. The practical implementation of the blended learning approach is exemplified by means of the system of computer-based tasks and exercises designed for the first year learners of Maritime English through the course “While Ashore” delivered via LMS Moodle.

Despite these findings, this research has some limitations. First, it provides the general overview of the blended learning approach without specifying any peculiar models which are actually numerous. Depending on the learning needs, age and professional experience of learners, their language skills the choice may be made in favour of this or that blended learning model. Second, the samples of on-line tasks and activities provided in the research are limited to the first course learners only thus they do not demonstrate the possibility of the cognitive component formation and development.

Thus, future research should specify the variety of blended learning models, explain the methodology of choosing this or that model and provide for the practical guidelines of blended learning implementation on the example of a set of lessons on the topic. The paper may be of a particular interest to the specialists in Maritime English Teaching.

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Education and professional training: blended learning in maritime english teaching

Resumo
Este artigo explora as peculiaridades da abordagem de aprendizagem combinada no ensino de inglês marítimo. A pesquisa tem como objetivo revelar o potencial pedagógico da abordagem Blended Learning no ensino de Inglês Marítimo. A ideia conceitual do artigo é baseada no reconhecimento do potencial da digitalização para transformar a forma como o ensino superior é oferecido e como as pessoas aprendem em diferentes fases de suas vidas. A pesquisa revela o potencial pedagógico das ferramentas baseadas em computador e da abordagem de aprendizagem combinada na sala de aula de inglês marítimo. A tentativa foi feita para fornecer as técnicas e métodos eficazes de formação e desenvolvimento de competências comunicativas orientadas profissionalmente por meio da implementação de Blended Learning em diferentes estágios de treinamento marítimo profissional. O curso on-line de Inglês Marítimo, ministrado aos alunos via LMS Moodle, que é complementado com o ensino presencial tradicional em sala de aula, é descrito na pesquisa para exemplificar o uso da abordagem de Blended Learning para o ensino de alunos do primeiro ano de instituições de ensino marítimo.

Keywords: Blended learning. Innovative english. Professional foreign. Language training.


Abstract
This paper explores the peculiarities of blended learning approach in teaching Maritime English. The research is aimed to reveal the pedagogical potential of Blended Learning approach in teaching Maritime English. The conceptual idea of the paper is grounded on the recognition of digitalization potential to transform how higher education is delivered and how people learn at different stages of their lives. The research reveals the pedagogical potential of computer-based tools and blended learning approach in Maritime English classroom. The attempt has been made to provide the effective techniques and methods of professionally-oriented communicative competency formation and development by means of Blended Learning implementation at different stages of professional Maritime training. The on-line course in Maritime English, delivered to the learners via LMS Moodle, which is complemented with the face-to-face traditional classroom learning, is described in the research to exemplify the use of the Blended Learning approach for teaching first year students of maritime educational institutions.

Resumen
Este artículo explora las peculiaridades del enfoque de aprendizaje combinado en la enseñanza del inglés marítimo. La investigación tiene como objetivo revelar el potencial pedagógico del enfoque de aprendizaje combinado en la enseñanza del inglés marítimo. La idea conceptual del documento se basa en el reconocimiento del potencial de la digitalización para transformar la forma en que se imparte la educación superior y cómo las personas aprenden en las diferentes etapas de sus vidas. La investigación revela el potencial pedagógico de las herramientas informáticas y el enfoque de aprendizaje combinado en el aula de inglés marítimo. Se ha intentado proporcionar las técnicas y métodos efectivos de formación y desarrollo de competencias comunicativas de orientación profesional mediante la implementación del Blended Learning en las diferentes etapas de la formación marítima profesional. El curso en línea en inglés marítimo, entregado a los estudiantes a través de LMS Moodle, que se complementa con el aprendizaje tradicional presencial en el aula, se describe en la investigación para ejemplificar el uso del enfoque de aprendizaje combinado para la enseñanza de estudiantes de primer año de las instituciones educativas marítimas.