Distance learning of students through informational and educational blogs

ABSTRACT
The present study aims to disclose the structure, content, and stages of creating a teacher’s informational and educational blog designed to serve the cognitive component of professional and communicative culture during distance learning of students of psychological and social university faculties. Different stages of the present study involved deploying the following methods: in addition to the scientific literature, a questionnaire allowing the authors to determine the degree of formation of the cognitive component of the professional and communicative culture in future specialists; in addition to other procedural axes. The objectives and functions of a said blog, as well as the stages of creating one, are determined and its structure is developed. The requirements for the content of a blog and the format of content delivery are established. Information should be presented in the form of clips; vivid visual presentations with clear and figurative language are to be used; visual images in the form of slides of animated videos are also recommended for use.

Keywords: Distance learning. Blogging technology. Informational and educational blog. Humanitarian students. Professional and communicative culture.

Enseñanza a distancia a través de blogs informativos y educativos

RESUMEN
El presente estudio tiene como objetivo dar a conocer la estructura, el contenido y las etapas de creación del blog informativo y educativo de un profesor diseñado para servir al componente cognitivo de la cultura profesional y comunicativa durante el aprendizaje a distancia de estudiantes de facultades psicológicas y sociales universitarias. Las diferentes etapas del presente estudio implicaron la implementación de los siguientes métodos: además de la literatura científica, un cuestionario que permite a los autores determinar el grado de formación del componente cognitivo de la cultura profesional y comunicativa en futuros especialistas; además de otros ejes procedimentales. Los requisitos para el contenido de un blog y el formato de entrega del contenido son establecidos. Las informaciones deben ser presentadas en forma de clips; se utilizarán presentaciones visuales vívidas con un lenguaje claro y figurativo; imágenes visuales en forma de diapositivas de videos animados también se recomiendan para su uso.


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The modern development of higher education is aimed at forming a competitive specialist who is successful in the electronic informational environment, can think critically, and not only reproduce actions but also make non-standard decisions (NIKIFOROV et al., 2020; MISHIN et al.: 2019; GANYUSHINA et al., 2019). This result can be attained if the educational practice of universities implements information and communication technologies that would ensure the most favorable conditions for the development of cognitive interest and creativity in student youth and the identification and active use of their individual characteristics in distance learning (BELDARRAIN: 2006). The modern Net Generation chooses information technologies over the print media (DOLZHENKO et al., 2020; ROSSHIN, FILIPPOVA: 2020). The electronic form of presenting educational information presents a convenient alternative to traditional paper-based learning materials such as textbooks, manuals, and magazines. The rapid development of information technologies results in new electronic learning tools emerging every year and the spheres and ways of its further implementation becoming more numerous (SKRIPAK et al., 2020; KARTSEVA, TAVBERIDZE: 2020).

The orientation of the system of teaching humanitarian disciplines on the implementation of the communicative approach in the process of learning prompts the search for new modern technologies of revising the content, goals, forms, and means of learning (GAZILINA et al., 2020; MARTYNOVA et al., 2020). Communication is growing more complex and requires specialists to be able to meet the constantly growing demands of the world and society. The realization of a university student as a subject of targeted professional communication is only possible provided that the means of information and communication technologies are implemented. Work with Internet technologies can be considered one of the ways to optimize the learning process for the formation of professional competency in a future humanities specialist (PEREVERZEEVA et al., 2020; GOLUBEVA et al., 2020). The modern tendencies in the development of the Internet call for a revision of the processes of personality development and the ways of obtaining knowledge in the new socio-economic reality in which interactive technologies are becoming a universal communication tool. Internet technologies present a platform for communicative interaction rather than merely acquiring information. Studying the methodological literature on the matter allowed us to identify several reasons to use the Internet technologies. Active implementation of computer technologies facilitates the comprehensive formation of communicative competencies, promotes learning a language as a real means of communication rather than an academic discipline, raises the level of students’ creativity and self-confidence, and forms the ability to independently create strategies for solving educational and practical problems.

The Internet currently provides instant access to any information resource and mobile Internet devices open up ample opportunities for obtaining educational, methodological, and scientific information at any time of the day regardless of one’s location. The Internet technologies have conquered all the spheres of life of modern society and many people use them daily as a means of communication and to search for information. Therefore, using it in schools appears quite reasonable. Moreover, V. Bykov notes that combining traditional pedagogical technologies and the means of information and communication technologies improves the effectiveness of developing and enhancing a person’s natural capabilities (ALT, 2017). In the modern society where the information technologies create a new educational reality, learning that incorporates information technologies has to become one of the essential parts of the educational process in higher education institutions. Among the most common Internet technologies, we highlight the blog technology which has significant pedagogical potential as a means of presenting educational material and attaining and assimilating knowledge outside of classrooms.

Recently, the pedagogical community has been showing an increased interest in blogs as one of the most popular social networking services. Using blogs in the educational process has many benefits, but causes some problems as well. This calls for a theoretical substantiation of the complex of opportunities for the effective use of blogs for organizing students’ learning and cognitive activity. Teachers’ professional blogs have spread not so long ago. It can even be said that they have only started forming. Creating a professional blog is the most natural way for a teacher to subscribe to continuous self-education. The web environment promotes the formation and development of the type of communicative skills most vital for a teacher, namely the self-presentation skills. Using the capabilities of information and communication technologies can significantly expand the potential space of the educational environment. The use of e-learning tools allows one to significantly increase the learning motivation, individualize and differentiate the learning process, and provide the students with an opportunity to choose the mode of operation independently. These tools create favorable conditions for professional self-development and self-realization of students and present the means of individually oriented
learning. In our opinion, the significant advantages of using the blogging technology in the distance learning of students majoring in psychology and social sciences include the following opportunities:

- to focus on a specific topic;
- to quickly provide a significant amount of relevant information;
- to divide information into logically systemized sections;
- to present information in different ways — in the form of texts, images, and audio or video recordings improving its perception and memorization;
- to access information from any location at a time convenient for the user;
- to ensure the simultaneous use of educational information by an unlimited number of students;
- for users to independently determine the pace of information assimilation that suits them;
- to reinforce the learning motivation by implementing the latest technologies and multimedia visualization of material.

The present study aims to disclose the structure, content, and stages of creating a teacher’s informational and educational blog designed to ensure the effectiveness of distance learning; to determine the criteria for selecting the material for such a blog; to identify the strategies for organizing students’ learning activity using the blog; to prove the effectiveness of implementing an informational and educational blog to fulfill the cognitive component of professional and communicative culture during distance learning of students of psychological and social university faculties. The study hypothesis: fulfilling the cognitive component of professional and communicative culture through the means of an informational and educational blog can be considered one of the pedagogical conditions for the formation of said culture in future humanitarian specialists. As a result of the study, we can conclude that its goal was achieved.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The relevance of the idea to use the blogging technology in the educational process is indicated by many scientific studies. In particular, the creation and implementation of a university teacher’s blog were studied in the works of such researchers as L. Deng and A.H. Yuen (2011, 2013) and D. Churchill (2009). The distinctive characteristics and didactic capabilities of a blog are covered in the studies by S. Hung (2011), H.N. Kim (2008), and J. Robertson (2011). The method and conditions for the effective use of blogs in the process of training future specialists are described in articles by C.Y. Wang (2010) and L. Noel (2015). The significant potential of this technology in teaching various disciplines is unveiled in the studies by M. Maag (2005) and I. Macduff (2009).

As many studies note (ANDERGASSEN et al., 2009; HUANG et al., 2011; KILIÇ, GÖKDAŞ, 2014), educational blogs that can be used in teaching any discipline as a means of organizing the educational process and the interaction of its subjects are widely used in the educational practice. Students are provided with an opportunity to share their ideas and additional materials with their classmates and random visitors. J.B. Williams and J.J. Jacobs (2004) and B. Farmer et al. (2008) distinguish three types of educational blogs by authorship:

- A tutor blog is a type of blog that is created and moderated by the teacher. A. Prikhodko suggests using various external applications on such pages, for instance, flash videos, news feeds, and a chat. Collections of widgets are widely presented on the Internet and one can easily choose the ones most useful to both the teacher and students.

- A learner blog is a type of blog that is created by a student, a personal space for creating one’s portfolio of written works in English, keeping a journal on individual home reading, and documenting individual work on listening. To ensure greater interactivity in blogging, the student should be guaranteed the freedom to choose the material for posts and their length. The materials can include reports on the student’s hobbies, links to their favorite websites, pictures, videos, and discussions of relevant problems that are of interest primarily to the blog members held in the English language. Therefore, the meaningful orientation of a blog presents the priority while the language accuracy is secondary to it and can be perfected in the process of maintaining a blog. At the initial stage, students are suggested to upload new information on a weekly basis while reading the blogs of their peers and commenting on the information provided in them. We have to note that at this stage, the uploaded material has to
preliminary be checked by the teacher for language mistakes but grading should be avoided as it can reduce students’ motivation.

- A class blog is a type of blog created by a teacher and moderated by the specially assigned students. It presents a common space for teachers and students to discuss the discipline topics where all publications of the students of the group are exhibited allowing one to increase the significance of work, show the students the works of their peers, accumulate the examples of outstanding works, increase the competition effect, and reduce the time required for the teacher to check the information.

H. Hall and B. Davidson (2007) highlight a “blog project” as a type of a class blog used for exhibiting specific projects and student cooperation. Research on Internet blogs created by teachers shows that the majority of teachers create personal information resources to present the results of their work (PARK et al., 2011). However, researchers indicate that a blog as a means of online communication can be used by a teacher in the following ways:

1) as an informational and educational subject environment as a component of the open environment of an educational institution (GARCIA et al., 2015);
2) as a teacher’s electronic portfolio as a way of evaluating professional competencies and an instrument for reflecting on one’s professional activity (TANG, LAM, 2014);
3) as a personal educational environment (personal educational surroundings), personal educational space as a means of fulfilling one’s educational needs (professional communities possibly created by a teacher; an instrument for reading news) (DUARTE, 2015).

According to researchers (AVCI, ASKAR, 2012; CUHADAR, KUZU, 2011), educational blogs increase students’ interest and stimulate their positive emotions improving the memorization of information. A person acquires a sense of safety. Mutual understanding, respect, and sympathy emerge in the relationships between a teacher and their students. These effects create a basis for democratic relations in the “teacher-student” and “student-student” systems in the form of awareness of the fact that another person’s tastes, thoughts, and ideas have the right to exist alongside one’s own and rely on personal experience of perceiving the world.

Scientists admit (HALIC et al., 2011; SIM, HEW, 2010) that the integration of blogs into the higher education process has a wide range of advantages compared to traditional technologies for educational process organization, namely its availability and ease of use, effectiveness in organizing the educational space, the lack of spatial and temporal limitations, the interactive and multimedia nature, the wide variety of classroom-based and independent work, increased interest in the educational process, the promptness of communication, reliability and safety, the creation of an environment for joint equal activity of a teacher and their students, the formation of personal information and communication space for them, the realization of context-based learning in common practice-oriented activity, the support for students’ sense of community, and the creation of an atmosphere of professional growth. However, the practical aspects of creating and implementing a blog to improve the professional and communicative culture of future family doctors are not covered sufficiently in modern pedagogical research.

When a teacher has their own blog, students acquire more opportunities to study new material, go over the previously studied topics, and summarize and systematize the obtained knowledge. A teacher’s own Internet resource provides an opportunity for online support of the discipline through the means of electronic presentations, web-lessons, various computer-based testing methods (as a form of automated control — a procedure that allows obtaining objective information about students’ knowledge or can be used for self-testing), publishing a teacher’s own electronic didactic materials, etc. (KERAWALLA et al., 2008).

Researchers (LI et al., 2013; SHARMA, XIE, 2008) have formulated the conditions for introducing educational blogs into the higher education process the most important of which is ensuring the necessary level of a teacher’s ability to use the Web 2.0 social networking services and use them to organize students’ learning activity. In order to fulfill this condition, teachers need to, first, independently create an educational blog and spend some time to figure out how it works and what pedagogical opportunities this resource presents and, second, visit other teachers’ educational blogs to see their structure and methodological content.

The next pedagogical condition indicated by scientists (ACKLING et al., 2015; KUO et al., 2017) is the level of students’ ability to work with online services, particularly those based on Web 2.0 technology. Students have to
know the rules of registration on websites, the rules of communication on the Internet, the principles of operation of Web 2.0 services, what blogs are, what they are for, and the principles of working on blogs, as well as be able to work with an e-mail (starting and entering it, opening and sending messages) and on the Internet in general (searching for information and navigating websites), communicate online (in chats, on blogs, forums, etc.), upload any type of files online (documents, images, videos, etc.), and comment on blog posts. Therefore, the conducted analysis of studies and publications on the problem of distance learning of students of psychological and social university faculties through the means of an informational and educational blog indicates that these studies are insufficient which supports the relevance of the present study.

**METHODS**

Different stages of the study involved the following methods:

- the general scientific methods – analysis, synthesis, comparison, systematization, and summarization of scientific literature to study the conceptual categories involved in the study;
- the document method, testing, and a survey which allowed us to evaluate the level of formation of the cognitive component of professional and communicative culture in future humanitarian specialists;
- the pedagogical experiment with the goal of testing the effectiveness of using and informational and educational blog in the formation of the cognitive component of professional and communicative culture in future humanitarian specialists;
- statistical methods of qualitative and quantitative analysis, interpretation and summarization of the study results.

The pedagogical experiment involved 124 students. Taking the results of the previous session into account, we separated the students into two groups: the control group (CG) and the experimental group (EG) consisting of 60 and 64 students, respectively. The quality of the academic performance was approximately the same across the two groups. Therefore, the necessary condition for acquiring reliable study results was fulfilled. The survey was conducted anonymously in order to improve the reliability of the obtained information by eliminating or at least reducing the students’ fear of answering honestly. Since the formation of the cognitive aspect of the professional and communicative culture of future humanitarian specialists presents the object of the present study, we shall focus on specifying this concept.

What we refer to as the characteristic features of professional and communicative culture are special language and speech training, mastery of the basics of ethics, knowledge of the specific characteristics and the psychological basis of professional communication, the development of communicative skills necessary for professional activity, etc. This process requires students to master quite a wide range of knowledge which involves transferring, acquiring, and exchanging information. The essence of professional communication of humanitarian specialists lies in the process of establishing and maintaining contacts which is determined by the professional situation, realized through the verbal and non-verbal means of communication, and aimed at exchanging professionally oriented information, as well as managing and regulating the process of communicative interaction in professional activity.

We interpret the professional and communicative culture of future humanitarian specialists as a complex and dynamic personality formation with encompasses the system of values, special communicative knowledge and skills, personal qualities, behavior patterns, and norms and rules of professional activity which are related to the specifics of a given profession and ensure the effectiveness of professional communication. What we consider to be the structural components of this category are the motivational component (motives prompting future specialists to master professional and communicative culture and acquire all the necessary knowledge, skills, and qualities), the cognitive component (knowledge ensuring a future specialist’s theoretical readiness for communicative activity), the personality and value component (communicatively important personal qualities and the system of values which together form the axiological basis for this type of culture), and the practical activity component (communication skills necessary for successful professional communication).

The cognitive component of professional and communicative culture of future humanitarian specialists comprises several elements, namely: the speech competency, i.e. the knowledge of Russian and foreign language at the phonetic, lexical, grammatical, syntactic, and stylistic levels; the communicative knowledge which refers to the summarized experience of communicative activity, the reflection of communicative
situations in their causal relations in one’s consciousness which forms the basis for any communication; the knowledge of ethics and etiquette, specifically the norms of professional ethics and the rules of speech etiquette.

RESULTS

The organization of students’ learning activity in studying humanitarian disciplines related to communication (Russian and foreign language, the basics of communication, ethics, and etiquette) via the use of a blog was conducted in accordance with the Bring Your Own Device educational trend which involves using personal mobile devices to access information resources. At the start of studying the disciplines, the students were told that their educational process was going to be partially organized with the use of a blog. They were suggested to open the blog web page, familiarize themselves with its structure, and identify the ways of using it for self-improvement in the knowledge of the discipline.

The blog was implemented in teaching the experimental group students by introducing the following tasks: to watch a video and answer the questions on it, to read an article (including articles in a foreign language) and prepare its summary in Russian, to complete an online exercise to consolidate or test their knowledge of the previously studied topic, to make a report on the topic related to the professional and communicative culture of a humanitarian specialist. These tasks were completed both individually and in pairs online which allowed the dialectic cooperation of students. To test the effectiveness of using the informational and educational blog created to serve the cognitive component of the professional and communicative culture of future humanitarian specialists, we conducted an experimental study.

The level of formation of the cognitive component of future humanitarian specialists’ professional and communicative culture was identified through the language competency, communicative knowledge, and knowledge of ethics and etiquette indicators. The level of students’ language competency was identified using the document method, i.e., studying the academic performance of the experiment participants in the Russian and foreign language through the analysis of the ranking protocols of students’ performance in the relevant disciplines. The level of communicative knowledge was assessed via the “Communicative knowledge” survey designed by us. The students’ knowledge of ethics and etiquette was tested through our “Ethical knowledge” survey. The indicated surveys were conducted both before and after the forming experiment. The results are presented in Table 1 and marked as “before” and “after”, respectively.

Table 1. The results of diagnostics of the formation of the cognitive component of the professional and communicative culture in students from the CG and the EG before and after the forming experiment (the number of people, in %)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Average</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>before</th>
<th>after</th>
<th>before</th>
<th>after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CG (60)</td>
<td>Language competency</td>
<td>Russian language and speech culture</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>B (27%)</td>
<td>20 (33%)</td>
<td>28 (46%)</td>
<td>29 (49%)</td>
<td>B (27%)</td>
<td>11 (18%)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>Foreign language</td>
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<td>1 (27%)</td>
<td>14 (23%)</td>
<td>14 (23%)</td>
<td>18 (30%)</td>
<td>36 (60%)</td>
<td>28 (47%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicative knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>9 (15%)</td>
<td>5 (25%)</td>
<td>22 (37%)</td>
<td>24 (40%)</td>
<td>29 (48%)</td>
<td>21 (35%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of ethics and etiquette</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (23%)</td>
<td>21 (35%)</td>
<td>16 (27%)</td>
<td>18 (30%)</td>
<td>30 (50%)</td>
<td>21 (35%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG (64)</td>
<td>Language competency</td>
<td>Russian language and speech culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>B (30%)</td>
<td>36 (56%)</td>
<td>27 (42%)</td>
<td>25 (39%)</td>
<td>B (28%)</td>
<td>3 (5%)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9 (14%)</td>
<td>27 (42%)</td>
<td>16 (28%)</td>
<td>27 (42%)</td>
<td>37 (58%)</td>
<td>10 (16%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicative knowledge</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (22%)</td>
<td>29 (45%)</td>
<td>21 (33%)</td>
<td>25 (39%)</td>
<td>33 (52%)</td>
<td>10 (16%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of ethics and etiquette</td>
<td></td>
<td>14 (22%)</td>
<td>34 (53%)</td>
<td>21 (33%)</td>
<td>22 (34%)</td>
<td>29 (45%)</td>
<td>8 (12%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Search data.
The comparison of the results of the diagnostic and control stages demonstrates that the number of EG students at the high and average levels of formation of the cognitive component of professional and communicative culture in all of its components, namely the language competency, communicative knowledge, and knowledge of ethics and etiquette, increased as a result of the forming experiment while the number of students at the low level reduced. Although the changes are quite apparent, we shall test the reliability of the obtained results by using statistical methods. To compare the acquired results, we will use Fisher’s \( \Phi \) criterion (the Fisher angular transformation). In order to use it, we translated the results into a dichotomous scale: the positive (high + average) level of the communicative culture formation and the negative (low) level (Table 2).

### Table 2. Dichotomous results of the level of formation of the indicators of the communicative component of professional and communicative culture in the CG and the EG students before and after the forming experiment (the number of people)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Levels</th>
<th>positive</th>
<th>negative</th>
<th>before</th>
<th>after</th>
<th>before</th>
<th>after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CG (60)</td>
<td>Language competency</td>
<td>Russian language and speech culture</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicative knowledge</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of ethics and etiquette</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG (64)</td>
<td>Language competency</td>
<td>Russian language and speech culture</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Foreign language</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicative knowledge</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowledge of ethics and etiquette</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Search data.

The results of pairwise comparisons are presented in Tables 3-6. The table cells contain the empirical values of Fisher’s criterion for the compared groups corresponding to the respective row and column. For instance, the empirical value of Fisher’s criterion for the comparison of the EG and the CG before and after the experiment by the “Language competency, Russian language and speech culture” indicator equals \( \Phi = 0.178 \) which is less than \( \Phi_{0.05} = 164 \) meaning that the CG and the EG were homogeneous before the experiment. The empirical value of Fisher’s criterion for the “Language competency, Russian language and speech culture” indicator for the EG and the CG after the experiment equals \( \Phi_{\text{emp}} = 2.487 \). We shall compare this value with the critical value \( \Phi_{0.05} = 2.31 \) for 0.01 significance level: \( \Phi_{0.05} = 2.31 < \Phi_{\text{emp}} = 2.487 \). This comparison leads us to the conclusion that the differences between the CG and the EG in the respective indicator are statistically significant. Similar conclusions can be made from comparing other groups before and after the experiment.

### Table 3. The empirical values of Fisher’s criterion in the CG and the EG before and after the formative experiment (Language competency, Russian language and speech culture)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CG pre-experiment</th>
<th>EG pre-experiment</th>
<th>CG post-experiment</th>
<th>EG post-experiment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CG pre-experiment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>1.106</td>
<td>3.62*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG pre-experiment</td>
<td>0.178</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.302</td>
<td>3.852*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CG post-experiment</td>
<td>1.106</td>
<td>1.302</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.487*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG post-experiment</td>
<td>3.62*</td>
<td>3.852*</td>
<td>2.487*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*the differences between the groups are statistically significant

Source: Search data.
Table 4. The empirical values of Fisher’s criterion in the CG and the EG before and after the formative experiment (Language competency, Foreign language)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CG pre-experiment</th>
<th>EG pre-experiment</th>
<th>CG post-experiment</th>
<th>EG post-experiment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CG pre-experiment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>1468</td>
<td>5.348*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG pre-experiment</td>
<td>0.25</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1241</td>
<td>5.32*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CG post-experiment</td>
<td>1468</td>
<td>1241</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.856*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG post-experiment</td>
<td>5.348*</td>
<td>5.32*</td>
<td>3.856*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* the differences between the groups are statistically significant

Source: Search data.

Table 5. The empirical values of Fisher’s criterion in the CG and the EG before and after the formative experiment (Communicative knowledge)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CG pre-experiment</th>
<th>EG pre-experiment</th>
<th>CG post-experiment</th>
<th>EG post-experiment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CG pre-experiment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1479</td>
<td>4.035*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG pre-experiment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>4.475*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CG post-experiment</td>
<td>1479</td>
<td>187</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.532*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG post-experiment</td>
<td>4.035*</td>
<td>4.475*</td>
<td>2.532*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* the differences between the groups are statistically significant

Source: Search data.

Table 6. The empirical values of the Fisher’s criterion in the CG and the EG before and after the formative experiment (Knowledge in ethics and etiquette)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>CG pre-experiment</th>
<th>EG pre-experiment</th>
<th>CG post-experiment</th>
<th>EG post-experiment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CG pre-experiment</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>4.79*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG pre-experiment</td>
<td>0.523</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>4.265*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CG post-experiment</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>1665</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.027*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EG post-experiment</td>
<td>4.79*</td>
<td>4.265*</td>
<td>3.027*</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* the differences between the groups are statistically significant

Source: Search data.

**DISCUSSION**

The creation of the blog was organized in accordance with the algorithm proposed by N.B. Ellison and Y. Wu (2008):

1. determining the goal of the blog and the didactic functions it should fulfill;
2. designing the structure of the blog;
3. choosing a platform to create a blog on;
4. the selection, development, and publication of material for each section of the blog;
5. determining the rules for maintaining the blog;
6. recruiting students to work with the blog.

At the first step, we formulated the objectives of the blog: drawing students’ attention to the problem of professional communication; providing information necessary for the formation of professional and communicative culture of future specialists; providing information that would serve as a basis for the development of professional communication skills; providing material for independent work; improving students’ interest and motivation for studying communication-related disciplines; perfecting the process of teaching said disciplines by diversifying independent work and using modern information technologies. Concerning the formation of foreign language competency, the blog aimed to: develop students’ ability to perceive and understand information in the English language by hearing it; improve students’ ability to understand English texts on professional topics; improve students’ vocabulary of professional terms in English; motivate students to use the English language for self-education and self-development. Following the objectives of the blog, we consider it serving the informational, educational, motivational, and self-development functions.


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We must also note that great attention was paid to the development of the English language competency of future humanitarian specialists. However, the results of third-year students in the professional foreign language subtest were disappointing indicating the insufficient development of students’ professional foreign language competency. This finding demonstrated the vital need to improve future humanitarian specialists’ competency in the English language convincing us of the importance of putting more effort into the development of this component of professional and communicative culture. The structure of the blog was designed in a way that reflected the structure of the cognitive component of future humanitarian specialists’ professional and communicative culture which included the language competency, communicative knowledge, and knowledge of ethics and etiquette. We must also note that we aimed to design the blog structure as simple as possible, with few sections and subsections to avoid complicating the process of working with the blog and searching for necessary information.

Thus, the blog included: 1) the main page; 2) the news section; 3) the “English language for communication” section aimed at improving the English language competency; 4) the “Psychology of communication” section covering the theoretical and psychological basis of the communication process; 5) the “Communicative skills” section presenting the knowledge needed for professional communication; 6) the “Ethics and etiquette” section presenting information on ethics and communication etiquette. Each of the sections has several subsections.

When choosing the platform to create the blog on, we used E. Top’s scientific search (TOP, 2012; TOP et al., 2010) that advised using the WordPress Content Management System for creating a teacher’s blog. According to the researcher, this technology presents a content management system that is easy to install and use and has an open code which allows one to construct various educational web-projects. Constant development and updates of the system make it possible to implement the functionality necessary for a modern blog by constantly improving the existing functions and adding new ones. The website management system comprises usable and understandable instruments for adding, editing, and deleting information. The main identified advantage is that a user able to access the website code can radically change the structure of their blog and modify and adjust the content management system to suit their needs. Thus, the properties of WordPress determined our choice of this content management system.

The selection and development of material for the blog were executed in accordance with the results of studies conducted by B.B. Ray and M.M. Hocutt (2006) that demonstrated the importance of presenting the educational information in a form convenient for visual perception, i.e. the usefulness of visualization of material. We also accounted for Z.K. Quible’s (2005) recommendation to change the content of educational material and the format of its presentation in accordance with the distinct individual and psychological characteristics of modern youth. These changes involve structuring information in the form of images, using vivid and clear visual presentations with easily understandable and figurative language, using visual images in the form of slides or animated videos in the process of teaching, and creating and demonstrating thematic videos with illustrative examples and experiments.

The presented requirements for selecting material for a blog are determined by modern students’ psychological characteristics formed in the conditions of the latest information environment constructed due to the ubiquity of mobile phones and the Internet. Characterizing the modern generation, researchers (SIEMENS, 2005; YANG, TSAI, 2008; LUEHMAN, TINELLI, 2008) note that the youth increasingly demonstrates a new culture of information perception and a new type of thinking that presents a reaction to the rapid growth of information flows primarily visual in nature and the high fragmentation and diversity of information. This new type of thinking was defined as “clip thinking” the characteristics of which determine the concreteness, high speed of image perception and information processing, visuality, emotionality, associativity, the ability to switch in disparate semantic fragments, illogicality, orientation towards less generalized concepts, and inadaptability to the long-term perception of homogeneous information, for example, text.

Examining the positive and negative aspects of this phenomenon, researchers (WANG, HSUA, 2008; NOVAKOVICH, 2016; WASSELL, CROUCH, 2008) refer to the following features as the positive ones: the defensive nature of clip thinking in the conditions of information overload; increased dynamism of learning activity; the ability to observe the multivariance and ambiguity of approaches to analyzing and solving certain problems; facilitation of adaptation to the changing social environment. The most prominent negative characteristics noted by scientists include the loss of depth in learning the material, reduced ability to analyze and create long logical chains, being accustomed to receiving information in a concise, simplified form, and false certainty in a fast and easy solution of a complex problem. Although the clip thinking is considered more of a negative phenomenon, the ideology of fighting it is flawed and destined to fail. In our opinion, education should be preparing a person for real conditions and the fight against clip thinking forces a student to adapt to the education system rather
than reality increasing the discrepancy between them. Therefore, it appears more productive to accept this phenomenon as an objective fact, make it serve personal development, and use its characteristic features to improve the educational process.

The materials presented in the blog were selected following the principles that are used to determine the content of educational disciplines in universities which include the scientific nature of this content, its availability, professional orientation, integrity, consistency, and compliance with the requirements of the development of society, science, and culture (OSMAN, KOH, 2013; YANG, 2009). The criteria for selecting text material for the blog were determined based on the analysis of the works of researchers who focused on this problem (SHANA, ABULI-BDEHB, 2015; HSU, LIN, 2008). As a result, we identified the following requirements for the texts published on the blog: authenticity, relevance, novelty, practical significance, conceptual and linguistic clarity, thematic relevance, and optimal volume.

Video materials for the blog were also selected according to the criteria presented in scientific works (SUJ UD, ABD RAHIM, 2013; XIE et al.: 2010); professional value; professional informativeness; the presence of a professional problem; relevance of the theme; appropriate level of difficulty for perception; correspondence of the content to the educational goals and students’ interests; correspondence between the sound and the image; the quality of sound and design; topic disclosure and logical completeness of the material; consideration of the moral and ethical potential involving removing the material containing the elements of amorality, violence, or intolerance. Since the video materials were sourced from the Internet, great attention was paid to searching for reliable and competent sources. Further on, we will briefly describe the goals and content of each section of the blog.

The main page of the blog was used to draw students’ attention to the problem of professional communication and reinforce their interest and motivation to study the disciplines in question. In order to attain these goals, the page needed to be constantly updated with new posts that could be distinguished into several types in accordance with their goals. The first type includes motivational posts covering the significant role of communication in professional activity, highlighting the importance of developing professional communication culture, and accentuating the need for students to study the foreign language. The second type includes articles aimed at enhancing students’ interest in their future profession through interesting facts about the human species, communication, and using a native and foreign language. The third type includes professional posts presenting text and video material on the topics studied within the academic disciplines. Aside from enhancing students’ interest and motivation, these posts can improve the process of teaching various disciplines since the videos presented in them provide the visualization of educational information and can be used in distance learning. The fourth type includes posts presenting information on the organization of students’ independent work on the discipline promoting their self-education and self-development. For instance, such articles recommend students textbooks for independent learning and Internet resources containing professional educational texts or scientific articles including the ones in the studied foreign language.

The “Psychology of communication,” “Ethics and etiquette,” and “Communication skills” sections were filled with information necessary for the formation of professional and communicative culture of future humanitarian specialists and the development of their professional communication skills. In particular, the “Psychology of communication” section included articles and videos on the essence of communication, verbal and non-verbal communication, the process of listening, communication barriers and the ways to overcome them, and conflict resolution strategies. The “Ethics and etiquette” section covered the ethical principles and the rules of communication etiquette. The “Communication skills” section contained practical recommendations for future humanitarian specialists regarding the ways to improve the skills necessary for professional activity including creating a positive first impression, listening to a client and questioning them, providing explanations and recommendations, discovering empathy, appropriate verbal and non-verbal behavior, etc.

Among its other objectives, the “English language for communication” section aimed to provide material for students’ independent work on the “Foreign language” discipline. For this reason, it contained learning materials deepening students’ knowledge of certain topics of the discipline. To ensure the improvement of students’ English terminology vocabulary, this section also presented interactive online exercises developed through the LearningApps.org service. The analysis of works of researchers (YANG, CHANG, 2012; YUEH-MIN et al., 2009; SAEED et al., 2009) who studied the implementation of this resource in the educational process presented the opportunity to identify its functions and advantages. The main objective of the LearningApps.org service is creating and storing interactive exercises through which one can present, consolidate, test, and summarize the knowledge attained by students. On the one hand, the interactive form of exercises gamifies the process of knowledge acquisition or testing stimulating students’ interest and motivation for learning.
On the other hand, the visualization of educational material serves as a more effective way of presenting new information and promotes better assimilation and consolidation of knowledge. In general, as noted by C.M. Ramsay et al. (2014), the advantages of interactive exercises in blogs lie in its diversity, illustrative nature, availability, creativity, using electronic devices instead of books, and implementing audio, video, and visual images which significantly activates and optimizes the educational process. A useful function of this service is the ability to access the code to post an exercise on the website which made it possible to post all the developed exercises on the blog.

**CONCLUSION**

The results of the theoretical analysis of the problem in question demonstrate that the implementation of blogging technologies in distance learning improves students’ motivation due to using a well-developed technical base and a certain freedom in the search for relevant information. Work in blogs stimulates the improvement of professional communicative competencies, promotes the development of the ability to analyze information and comment on it, thus developing students’ critical thinking. Competent implementation of blogs will broaden students’ horizons, form their ability to work in groups, help build interpersonal relations, enhance responsibility for the results of one’s work, and increase the level of general cultural competency. Simultaneously, the implementation of blogging technology presents an effective way of administering the educational process. Therefore, the educational environment created based on the blogging technology in the process of distance learning of university students corresponds to the current goals and objectives of higher education, specifically the formation of students’ professional communication skills and their mastery of the relevant and universal ways of action.

The experimental study results demonstrate that the language competency level increased in students from the experimental group, specifically, the number of students at the high level of knowledge in the Russian language and the culture of speech increased by 26%, and the number of students at the high level of knowing the foreign language rose by 29%. At the end of the experiment, 47% of students were at the high level of the communicative knowledge indicator which exceeds the results from the diagnostic stage by 32%. Future humanitarian specialists from the experimental group also demonstrate a high level of knowledge in ethics and etiquette, and the proportion of such students increased by 32% compared to the beginning of the study. Overall, significant changes were observed in all indicators of the cognitive component of professional and communicative culture in experimental groups: 50% of students were at the high level, 36% are at the average level, and 4% were at the low level. Some changes were also observed in the control group: the percentage of students at the high level of formation of the cognitive component of professional and communicative culture grew by 9%, the number of students at the average level increased by 4%, and the proportion of students at the low level of formation of the studied indicators decreased by 13%. Therefore, we can conclude that the teacher’s informational and educational blog positively affected the formation of the cognitive component of future humanitarian specialists’ professional and communicative culture. Thus, the results of the study support the hypothesis that fulfilling the cognitive component of professional and communicative culture through the means of an informational and educational blog can be considered one of the pedagogical conditions for the formation of said culture in future humanitarian specialists.

**LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD**

When working with the blogging technology, one should remember that its implication in the educational process must be methodologically substantiated and have a precise algorithm for integration in learning. Otherwise, this type of work can transform into chaotic entertainment and students will not perceive it as an additional useful task. Therefore, it is recommended to set up a schedule for the publication of tasks and conduct an explanatory training session to introduce this technology effectively. The teacher’s support and timely feedback and the analysis of the results of learning activity as also important. In our opinion, said support aims to create the conditions for students’ increased activity through creative tasks and to organize the communicative conditions to support students’ activity. We believe that the quality of cooperation can indicate the success of educational interaction through the means of blogging technology. In conclusion, we shall note that the “Professional communications” blog is currently being actively implemented in the process of teaching humanitarian disciplines at psychological and social university faculties and is constantly updated with new articles, methodic materials, and interactive exercises. We see the perspectives of further research in this direction in developing the created blog and creating more interactive online exercises that would cover the educational material of the listed disciplines to the greatest possible extent.


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