

## **BLOGS AS A TECHNOLOGY IN TEACHING ENGLISH**

The use of blogs in teaching students a foreign language is becoming increasingly popular nowadays. In a non language university learning a foreign language is often limited to the study of texts and exercises while working with a blog promotes the interaction between the learners and the organization of group learning activities of students aimed at the development of different types of speech activity.

The potential use of educational blogs is unfortunately insufficient. The pedagogical task is to make a blog as a working tool of teachers and incorporate this tool into the traditional educational practice. The widespread use of the Internet allows you to make a specific blog content available to any participant of the project, no matter where he is, so this technology can be successfully used both in individual and group work. Blogging technology allows you to hear every participant of the educational process. In addition, among the advantages and opportunities of this work is that blog technology allows you to use the materials in different formats (text, graphics, photos, video, audio material) for writing essays, reviews, surveys and reviews.

Let's consider the organization of blogging activity in a university group.

Any written work that the student performs may be available for viewing and analysing by only one person. Thus, even in a relatively small group of students any writing task cannot be available for the other members of the group. Because of these limitations a student may tend to present their work to the teacher only, or in some cases to classmate reviewers.

As a language teacher offers tasks within the blog, opportunities for student interaction and horizons of this educational space expand, providing students writing a blog far more readers both inside and outside the classroom. In our opinion using blogging activity can be very effective in non language high schools for several reasons. A student blogger can leave his posts in existing blogs, read and comment on posts of classmates. This activity can be carried out in a free extracurricular time at home, in the dorm, computer room, and in the university auditorium, using smart phone providing the flexibility and broad interoperability. Students are involved in the process of communication in writing, and the scope of this communication is concentrated in the student environment. This activity has a greater pedagogical potential, rather than work exclusively within the classroom.

Let's consider key elements of blogging.

Activities related to blogging include creating blogs in collaboration with other students and groups, leaving messages, or blog posts, and reading posts and comments of classmates.

Using the module system allows the university to study a specific topic within a single module, so at the end of this module you can offer students some tasks for a blog. To perform these tasks students will be required to review all the material topics, to analyze the material of the course and additional sources as well. Only then students will be able to start writing a focused task and write something in a blog.

First, a teacher should introduce students to the purpose of the assignment, he explains the essence and the basic stages of work on the basis of blogging technology, but also determines the theme. He also explains what the final result is expected and introduces students to the criteria for evaluating their performance. Students receive the Internet address of the server and register. A teacher explains to students how to post on your blog. As a result each student leaves post in the blog in the form of essay or a short message in response to a question posed by a teacher.

In some cases, weekly or biweekly task set in the blog gives perspective to a more open dialogue when students generate their own ideas related to the material, and then in response to them other participants reflect their own views. Thus, the blog is not only a means of exchanging brief comments but the way of expressing a point of view on controversial issues.

Teacher traditionally corrects, evaluates and comments on student work, but when working with a blog you can use the method of "expert assessments", which always gives the students the opportunity to feel the responsibility for such activities and to present themselves as readers and writers. This method presupposes the following: after receiving a written task for a blog, the student writer leaves his essay, while other students have to read and respond to it, and even to a certain amount of other posts. As soon as every commentator reads and responds to posts expressing his point of view which is sometimes the same and sometimes does not coincide with the views of others, a dialogue begins. This step is the basis of the concept of blogging activity as a student-oriented process in which the central element is active learning, student participation, and responsibility [2, p.53].

Let's present options of this kind of work: couples or small groups of three or four students-writers exchange comments and assign grades based on pre-defined criteria (written content, organization and structure, the presence of language errors, etc). In the end, each student-writer returns to his post, check the comments left by classmates, and responds to them. Each member of the blogging community or section of the blog contributes because he not only reads and comments but also responds to other bloggers' comments. Thus, a blog provides a forum which falls outside the scope of university subjects and which strengthens the acquisition of knowledge that occurs in the course of learning.

Teachers who have experience of blogging activity in a university group often find that it is quite difficult to ensure that all team members regularly review comments on their posts. Based on experience we can state the fact that without a clear control and guidance from the teacher students often respond to posts made by their friends only, while small or weak students do not participate in these activities at all.

In this case, the teacher can create a micro-blogging group within the student group. Such a group can consist of any number of students, but since the goal is to narrow the field of potential respondents commentators, it is good to limit ourselves to no more than to four-five members.

When the micro-blogging group has been created the task for each member of the group first is to respond to the posts for at least half of the members. This procedure creates a real opportunity for every member of the micro-group to receive a few comments in the post. Creation of micro-blogging is a way to group the effective organization of educational activities within the group, but in this case each student is engaged in the blog and trained in cyberspace.

In addition to work with messages of members of their blogging group the students also perform other activities such as reviewing a variety of home exercises or conducting a discussion of certain ideas, thus developing a sense of social continuity and meaningful social interaction with classmates.

It should be noted that the work of students-writers who learn a second language should be encouraged so that they write in the blog as often as possible. Writing assignments can usually be divided into two types: task which are clearly guided and controlled by the teacher and require precision performance, such as writing reports, essays, summaries, etc.; or written assignments to perform in a free form. In these cases, the teacher does not always have the time to read and comment on each student's writing assignment on paper, or does it personally.

The term proposed by American and Japanese teachers 'blogging buddy' [1] refers to a student writer's editing partner, the person who checks and comments on his/her blog post before it is posted. The blogging buddy is the initial peer reviewer, the first or final-draft reader, the one who acts as both the writer's good conscience (useful for motivational purposes) and as his/her proof-reader (in that way, also a surrogate teacher).

This method can be easily applied to the student audience and beyond, as a student, doing the job with greater certainty to publish it after checking by the blogging editor even if the editor does not have a high level of knowledge of a foreign language. And the editor in turn will do everything possible to examine in detail and address the shortcomings of the work, feeling the responsibility for the work. Regarding the blogging buddy's role, there is no limit on how much or how little editing input or other commentary he/she provides for his/her partner (although this dictum can be adjusted according to class circumstances) as long as there is a concerted effort at review and response. In this way, the blogging buddy system is simple: It requires each student to present a piece of writing to his/her blogging buddy before it is posted.

Research and practice show that, regardless of whether the students to write or not they always like to read the classmates' posts and respond to their comments on posts. At the same time participants of the blog are always interested in reading the comments of the teacher to his reports not excluding him from the process of dialogue, but rather involving the discussion activities and putting a teacher on one stage with all the participants of the blog. In addition, the students really are trying to improve their writing skills and find interesting and useful to act as editor.

Blogging activity can be considered as motivating for students as they are making efforts to improve the content and organization and to correct mistakes. Posted messages and comments are available for reading not only by a limited number of classmates, teachers, but by any Internet user.

There are also three features of blogging activities that make it a powerful component of the curriculum for the study of a foreign language at university: 1) the availability of people outside the traditional audience; 2) student-centred nature of the interactions between students; 3) ability to motivate students to work independently (alone, in

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pairs or in small groups) to write more and more frequently than the teacher can be expected; 4) blogging activity is communicatively significant and helps students to improve and develop their language skills.

Blogging activity can be organized in cycles in the framework of the program for the study of a foreign language. Each cycle may include the following activities: (1) in each group a blog is created for written assignments and publishing posts by each participant at least once within the module; it is assumed that the other members will comment on, and the author has to answer them; (2) Each student works with a blogging buddy when performing at least half of all tasks; (3) Each student must respond to comments on the specified theme every two weeks; (4) Each student must meet and comment on at least three other members' posts; (5) at the end of the thematic unit the teacher makes an overview of the blogging work, makes comments and analyses students mistakes.

Blog opened opportunities in terms of optimizing the learning process, increasing motivation to learn foreign languages, as well as the developing of creative abilities and communication skills.

### **LIST OF REFERENCES**

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