

## FORMATION OF A COMPETITIVE PERSON IN THE CONTEXT OF CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS USING BLOG-BASED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE AGRARIAN UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract.** The article deals with the active integration of cultural traditions, locale and styles of communicative behavior in different models of online-communication functioning in a multicultural agro-space. The authors focus on the situation of linguocultural business-communication influenced by information technology, as all members of society are involved in the international system of business Internet communications connecting people from different cultures, traditions and religious beliefs. Graduates of the Agrarian University considered by the authors have some difficulties in the international market of corporate communications due to insufficient knowledge of the main forms of intercultural interaction in agro-environment. In this regard, we propose to consider blog application as a major platform for closing the knowledge gap in this area. It gives agrarian university students the opportunity to organize their private academic space and enables them to familiarize with the main content of the Internet environment of corporate cross-cultural interaction and to master the skills of corporate intercultural competence through modern forms of interaction in the online environment, namely blog technologies that provide a platform for organizing the learning process. Linguocultural aspects research of corporate communication and basic forms of intercultural cooperation in the agro-environment enable the students to: 1) form a sufficient level of competence and competitiveness in the international labor market; 2) examine the main trends, patterns and forms of intercultural communication in the business environment; 3) acquaint students with the basic problems of linguocultural interactions in today's globalized world; and 4) determine the prospects of their further development; 5) define the role and place of linguocultural values and intercultural interactions in multinational agro-environment.

**Keywords:** blog technologies, linguocultural aspects, cross-cultural interaction, Internet environment, corporate intercultural competence, professionally-oriented language skills, students of agrarian universities

### Introduction

Global technological and geopolitical processes, caused by the active entrance of our country in the multicultural business space, dictate new requirements for university undergraduates. An active integration of cultural traditions, locales and styles of communicative behavior of different models in online communication, functioning in the multicultural business space takes place. Linguoculturological situation of business communication is influenced by information technology, as all members of society are included in the international system of business Internet-communication that links different cultures, traditions and religious beliefs. However, it is noted that today the majority of graduates experience some difficulties being in demand because of lack of knowledge in the area of linguocultural aspects as well as the basic forms of realization of intercultural communication in a business environment.

It becomes obvious that future specialists need not only to have a strong reserve of professional knowledge but also to orient themselves in the technology-related multicultural business environment and to be really competitive persons feeling themselves confident in the area of cross-cultural business communication. In that context, we propose to use blog-based technologies for developing students' communicative skills and linguistic-cultural competences. It is commonly recognized that educational blogging is an effective teaching medium; and it has been widely used by teachers all over the world. Henry Farrell, Associate Professor of Political Science and International Affairs, identifies five major uses for blogs in education.

1. Blogs can be used to replace the standard class Web page.
2. Teachers can link to the Internet items that relate to their course. Mesa Community College's Rick Effland, for example, maintains a blog to pass along links and comments about topics in archaeology [1].
3. Blogs are used to organize in-class discussions. At the State University of New York at Buffalo, for example, Alexander Halavais added a blog to his media law class of about 180 students. Course credit was awarded for online discussion, with topics ranging from the First Amendment to libel to Irish law reform [2].

4. Blogs can be used to organize class seminars and to provide summaries of readings.
5. Students may be asked to write their own blogs as part of their course grade. Educational Technologist Lane Dunlop wrote about one class at Cornell College: "Each day the students read a chunk of a book and post two paragraphs of their thoughts on the reading." In another class, French 304, students were given a similar exercise. Using a French-language blogging service called Monblogue, Molly, a business student, posted a few paragraphs every day.

However, we don't have enough information about Foreign Language Teaching Methodology based on blog technologies. Against this background we have developed an innovative training course "Formation of a competitive person in the context of corporate communications using blog-based technologies in the Agrarian University".

Blog as major platform for realization of our project will allow teachers and students to organize private academic space, since all the necessary training materials and standardized records are unified and can be accessed from any computer, as well as with other mobile technologies with Internet-access [3]. These materials can be quickly corrected; links to various online resources can be added, presentations and other multimedia tools can be included.

Blog technologies enable students to manage the process of their own learning by active information retrieving and receiving other people comments, in other words blogs contribute to the development of educational autonomy [4]. Archiving function and tag addition allow the teacher track and monitor the progress of every student; it also promotes self-reflection and self-evaluation of the graduate students. Using blogs enhances interest in the learning process and helps to maintain a high level of motivation masters [5]. The novelty of the technology is one of the motivating factors in teaching. Publications openness and availability of potential readership contribute to the quality of work significantly.

Blog as a platform for discussion provides not only learning process with efficient and reliable feedback from teachers to students; it also offers the opportunity of information exchange and mutual learning to students through the comment function, attracts a panel discussion with no direct relationship to the curriculum (e.g. native speakers). Blog is an ideal platform for collaborative, problem-based learning and work on the design methodology [6]. Application of these technologies contributes to the critical thinking formation, active position and student reflection, that is why we have selected this platform for the project. In addition to the technical support of the project by means of blog technologies the subject of our course directly correlates to the service, which also acts as a form of corporate intercultural interaction reflecting professionally-oriented values of modern business community.

The main goals of our course are familiarization of the students with the basic information content of the corporate cross-cultural interaction in the Internet, as well as mastering intercultural competence skills through modern corporate forms of interaction in the online environment, namely blog technologies that represent a platform for a training process structuring [7].

During our study we have determined the following objectives of the course:

- to develop a methodical foreign language training system for students of the agrarian university on the basis of blog technologies;
- to develop two algorithms including three stages (preparatory, procedural and evaluative) and steps on developing speech skills based on blog technologies, as well as a set of tasks for professionally-oriented language skills training for students of the agrarian university on the basis of blog technologies;
- to form a sufficient experience level and competitive ability on the issues of professionally-oriented foreign language with students of the agrarian university to be internationally viable in labor market.

## Materials and methods

**Study participants.** Experimental training was conducted in the period for one academic year 2014-2015 at the department for foreign languages and intercultural communication of the FSBEI HPE "Stavropol State Agrarian University." The participants of the experiment training were 42 students of the 1<sup>st</sup> course of the faculty for agricultural mechanization in the direction of

preparation “Agroengineering”. English proficiency level conformed to the level B1 – (Threshold level) according to the pan-European scale of foreign language levels (Common European Framework of Reference: Language, Testing and Assessment, 2001)

**Methods of the study.** The methodological basis of our research was formed by the following models and approaches of foreign language communicative competence: model of communicative competence M. Canale and M. Swain (Canale M., Swain M., 1980; Canale M., 1983), model of foreign language abilities L. Bachman (Bachman L., 1990), competence approach in education (Robert I.V., 2005, 2006, 2010); informatization of education conception (Polat Y.S., Bukharkina M.Y., 2008); distance learning conception; communicative and cognitive approach: Dudeney G., Hockly N.

To achieve the objectives of our study the following methods were used:

- modeling of the pedagogical foreign language training process on the basis of blog technology adapted by W. Richardson (2004);
- experimental training;
- analysis and description of the quantitative and qualitative results of the experimental training [8].

## Results and discussion

As part of the study two algorithms of students’ speech abilities of non-linguistic training were developed and presented based on blog technology as well as a series of tasks on formation of lexical and grammatical language skills on the basis of mobile dictionaries and linguistic corpus. The effectiveness of the proposed algorithms in the study and a series of tasks, the accuracy and the conditionality of the proposed methodology of foreign language teaching system based on the blog technologies has been tested during the pilot training.

The purpose of the pilot training was the formation of foreign language communicative competence of students in the direction “Agroengineering” based on blog technologies of mobile podcasts, mobile dictionaries and linguistic corpus.

To achieve this goal during the pilot training following learning issues were solved:

- to develop the reading and writing skills of students on the basis of blog technology;
- to develop the listening and speaking skills of students on the basis of mobile podcasts;
- formation of lexical and grammatical language skills of students on the basis of mobile dictionaries and linguistic corpus [9].

As part of the experimental study two types of control were used. The first kind was carried out by the teacher during the experimental training to control the engagement of all students in the project activities and the use of mobile dictionaries and linguistic corpus in the formation of lexical and grammatical speech skills of students as well as after the end of the experimental training in the form of general discussion.

The second type of control was to conduct narrative and controlling sections. Blog technologies have been integrated into classroom and extracurricular work of students. The experiment was conducted in three stages: narrative, forming and controlling steps. On narrative step of the experiment the participants of the control group (22 students) and experimental group (22 students) performed a test to determine the level of foreign language knowledge. The test included tasks on all kinds of speech activity as well as formedness of students’ grammatical language skills. The test results were coded and processed in the language center “Language Forum” on the basis of the Stavropol Agrarian University. The test results were encoded in the four-point scale. To assess the significance of the results student’s t-test was used. The table 1 shows the results of comparative analysis of data slice in two groups.

At the shaping stage training in the experimental group was carried out according to two developed algorithms, consisting of three phases and five steps (blog technology). A set of tasks aimed at formation of lexical and grammatical language skills of students was also applied. During the classroom and extracurricular activities the students of the experimental group were engaged in the project works based on blog technology using mobile dictionaries and linguistic corpus to form a

foreign language communicative competence. According to the curriculum, the students had 8 hours in English lessons per month (2 hours per week). During the course students have studied six different topics. Within each of the studied topic they were supposed to perform a project using blogging technology. While studying lexical and grammatical material they regularly used mobile dictionaries and linguistic corpus. Table 2 presents the thematic content of the lessons, time range and the projects' titles.

Table 1

### Comparison result data of ascertaining test by control and experimental groups

Group	Number of students	Student t-test	p-value
Control group	22	12.43	$\geq 0.05$
Experimental group	22	12.07	$\geq 0.05$

Table 2

### Thematic content of the lessons, time range and the projects' titles

№	Time range	Thematic content	Projects
1	September, 2014	Theoretical bases of the information environment formation of corporate intercultural interaction.	Concept of communicative Internet space; relevance of Internet communication as intercultural environment
2	October, 2014	Corporate culture and its influence on the format and context of language communication.	Essence of corporate culture; the basic concepts and functions of corporate culture; modern corporate subculture
3	November, 2014	Features of the Internet communication typical to the representatives of Russian and Western linguocultures.	Overcoming language barriers; value-semantic representation of Russian and Western linguocultures
4	December, 2014-February, 2015	Blog as a modern form of corporate communication.	Hypertext as a structural unit of Internet communication; relevant features of the blog.
5	March, 2015	Language expressive means of corporate communication (via examples of the blogging texts).	Lexical and stylistic means of expression and field-oriented lexical units; the use of terminological units and borrowings
6	April, 2015	Language implementation of corporate culture through blogging technology.	Values of corporate communities; corporate and professional categories and values of the company.

At the control stage of the experiment the students of the control and experimental groups had to perform the same test to appraise their language skills level. Comparison result data of control test performed by the students of the experimental and control groups are shown in table 3.

Table 3

### Comparison result data of control test by experimental and control groups

Group	Number of students	Student t-test	p-value
Control group	22	15.88	$\geq 0.05$
Experimental group	22	20.06	$\geq 0.05$

The results presented in table 4, indicate that the students of both groups (control ( $t = 15.88$ )) at  $p \leq 0,05$  and experimental ( $t = 20.06$ ) at  $p \leq 0.05$ ) during the experiment have improved their level of foreign language. In order to identify differences between the control and the experimental groups paired t-test was performed. The results indicate that the differences between the results of control and experimental groups are statistically significant ( $t = 15.36$ ) at  $p \leq 0.05$ .

Resulting data have shown the effectiveness of the developed method of foreign language learning on the basis of blogging technology.

As the results of the study the following aspects can be highlighted:

- didactic characteristics, didactic functions and methodical features of blogging technology were identified;
- the nomenclature of speech habits and skills of intercultural corporate competence with students of the agrarian university formed on the basis of blogging technologies was defined;
- psychological and pedagogical conditions of professionally-oriented foreign language training on the basis of blog technologies were identified: a) motivation of students to use blog technologies as teaching aids; b) teachers' willingness to carry out training based on blog technologies; c) informational and communicative competence of students; d) teachers' informational and communicative competence and intercultural corporate competence;
- methodical system of foreign language training of students in the agrarian university on the basis of blog technologies was developed;
- two algorithms including three stages (preparatory, procedural and evaluative) and steps on developing professionally-oriented speech skills and abilities on the basis of blog technologies were designed;
- a set of tasks for professionally-oriented language skills training on the basis of blog technologies was developed.

Table 4

**Analysis data of control test**

<b>Group</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Student t-test</b>	<b>p-value</b>
CG vs EG	44	15.36	$\leq 0.05$

Resulting from our study a detailed description of professionally-oriented foreign language training method in the framework of intercultural competence through corporate blog technologies was established and outlined. The results of this study can be applied in the development of study guides, language courses, original developments in the foreign language for specific purposes programs, and in the course of intercultural corporate competence training method.

## Conclusions

It is to be noted that professionally-oriented foreign language training of students in the agrarian university within a framework of corporate intercultural competence development based on blog technologies will be more effective if it is carried out through the development and implementation of a methodical system in which:

- the nomenclature of speech abilities and language skills of corporate intercultural competence formed on the basis of blog technologies is used;
- psychological and pedagogical conditions essential for successful professionally-oriented foreign language training on the basis of blog technologies are considered: a) motivation of students to use blog technologies as teaching aids; b) teachers' willingness to carry out training based on blog technologies; c) students' informational and communicative competence; d) teachers' informational and communicative competence and intercultural corporate competence;
- teaching process organization is carried out in three phases (preparatory, procedural and evaluative), including five steps (blog technology) and eight steps (mobile podcasts), as well as a set of tasks for the students' language skills development.

As the prospects for further research within this project other modern information and communication technologies as means of development and implementation of methodological system for professionally-oriented foreign language training of students in the agrarian university as part of corporate intercultural competence development should be subjected to detailed investigation.

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