

## **PREPARING STUDENTS TO MEET THE DEMAND FOR 21 CENTURY SKILLS: OPPORTUNITIES, CHALLENGES, EXPECTATIONS**

*The article introduces the study of English as a lingua franca (ELF). The author outlines why ELF is an important area of research. The different ways of understanding how English is used and taught in universities today in Master's degrees academic writing learning process are described. The role of students' digital skills and new trends of online education implementation in the foreign language teaching process in a higher educational institution are highlighted.*

*The problem of professional online tutor preparation was determined. The opportunities for implementation of online education for improvement of higher pedagogical education in the foreign language teaching process are revealed.*

*Professional online tutor training curriculum was specified. The opportunities for virtual education and communication are described. Necessity to generalize today's students' skills for providing education online course is considered.*

*Technology influence on language learning process, new ways of teaching and learning: the students' interacting in groups or working on a monologue or story; involving students to record podcasts, audio files, developing students' written skills in blogs and wikis are investigated.*

*On-line professional training courses on leading on-line platforms as an up-today trend in education are pointed out. The examples of on-line courses for students and teachers on leading on-line platform «Future Learn» for 2017-2018 yy. are presented.*

*The digital tools, which we can use learners for presenting their digital identity to the world by using digital badges, digital CVs to show off what the students can do are summarized.*

*Key words: academic writing; digital tools; learning; lingua franca; online education; teaching; university.*

**Problem statement and its relevance** . English is the most widely taught and learnt language. We are studying how this situation arose. World Englishes like the area of English and linguistics began since the 1970s. The journal “World Englishes” was first published (Connecting the 4 Cs of 21st Century Education (With a 5th C!) [Electronic Resource], 2018).

In 2002 the National Education Association (NEA) established the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (P21). The “Framework for 21st Century Learning” was developed. 18 skills were highlighted as essential themes for learning in the 21st century. In 2004 there were only “Four Cs”: Critical Thinking, Communication, Collaboration, and Creativity and Innovation (Connecting the 4 Cs of 21st Century Education (With a 5th C!) [Electronic Resource], 2018).

**Analysis of the last researches and publications.** In 2017 the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment (CEFR) presents a comprehensive descriptive scheme of language proficiency and a set of common reference levels (A1-C2) defined in illustrative descriptor scales, plus options for curriculum design promoting plurilingual and intercultural education (CEFR Companion volume with New Descriptors [Electronic Resource], 2018).

The methodological message of the CEFR is that language learning should be directed towards enabling learners to act in real-life situations, expressing themselves and accomplishing tasks of different natures (Connecting the 4 Cs of 21st Century Education (With a 5th C!) [Electronic Resource], 2018).

The scholars from different universities are studying the impact of using English as a lingua franca, as well as the controversies around the increasing spread of English (The University of Southampton – Mode of access, 2018).

At present the revision of education system is necessary in order to prepare graduates for the 21st century. The development of language competences is essential

for social inclusion, mutual understanding and professional development. The CEFR has contributed to the implementation of the Council of Europe's language education principles, including the promotion of reflective learning and learner autonomy (CEFR Companion volume with New Descriptors [Electronic Resource], 2018).

**Purpose of the article** is to analyze the development of language competences in a higher educational institution and discover increased students' level of engagement in different kinds of learning.

**Basic material of research.** Our research describes an attempt to present the results of studying academic writing in an English language (EL) textbook for students. The purpose is to show how general EL course can be taught alongside English academic writing, the place of academic writing in the whole system of textbook materials and show how other tasks contribute to understanding academic writing conventions and developing academic writing skills . We analysed the role of students' digital skills and new trends of online education in in a higher educational institution.

Scholars from different countries in their researches highlight the role of Global Englishes and intercultural communication in English Language Teaching. They explore the links between languages, cultures, communities, nations and identities and the implications about communication and teaching languages (Jenkins, 2015).

They define ELF as the use of English between speakers who don't share a first language and mention the role of English as a medium or a contact language for intercultural communication.

Now, English as a Lingua Franca is different because English as a Lingua Franca is not about a variety of English. It's about English used as a contact language, or a language of intercultural communication. Whereas World English is concerned with geographical and national locations and uses of English. English as an International Language (EIL) is a form of international English and a variety of English (Jenkins, 2015).

There are two acronyms ELF and EFL, which are very close, but they are different. English as a Foreign Language (EFL), as opposed to English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), involve native speakers.

Professor Jennifer Jenkins is the Chair of Global Englishes and Director of the Centre for Global Englishes in Modern Languages at the University of Southampton started her researches called the lingua franca core in 2000. She analyzes usage of English as a lingua franca in global communication and describes its three phases ELF 1, ELF 2 and ELF 3. She introduces English as a multilingua franca (Crystal, 2011). ELF is about communication across linguistic boundaries. The researcher highlights the role of the people's first languages and influence from people's conversation partners.

Anna Mauranen, Research Director, Prof. Emer, University of Helsinki, focused on Academic ELF rather than other kinds of ELF context and use, when she started researching ELF. She found from her ELFA corpus variable and common, things in English as a lingua franca and with second language speakers.

As for second corpus, the WrELFA corpus (written), the researcher has mentioned the conferences presentations analyzing. The people understand each other in spoken language but they couldn't possibly write it.

She collected a written corpus (examiners, pre-examiners statements on PhD's theses) and saw some differences in research blogs, unedited versions of people's academic research papers (Understanding languages : learning and teaching – Mode of access, 2018).

These corpus studies aim to collect examples of spoken English used a lingua franca, and to document the features and characteristics of that. And that helps people understand what English as a lingua franca is and also look at implications for language policy and language teaching.

The researches made predictions for the future of English – all the different varieties and types of English may converge. As a result – emerge international variety of English from this. The people adapt and change English for local settings and for particular needs, that is why it is successful as a global language.

More countries want to document their own varieties of English and have them in language policy, and have them recognised, have dictionaries.

Many linguists – for example, David Crystal – have predicted that Indian English will rise in status and importance in the future. Every year, languages disappear (Crystal, 2003, 2011).

Language and intercultural communication skills are considered to be basic skills in our globalizing world.

Academics across all disciplines are observing how researchers at various levels of experience write about their published research.

Everyone doing research reads and critically discusses the previously published research on their topic. Researchers know what to do but actually, many research students face the problem in essential questions.

Investigating the research writing experience, doing research writing for the first time, we need for explicit discussion and instruction in this area.

We find particularly challenging in writing research. The researchers need to understand the keywords that they use in their research questions, what the keywords are. When they read from the articles, they need to find the concept from the prior articles. The most challenging in writing for the researches is the language transfer into professional academic writing. We think in the mother language when we write something. We need to use, to transfer the idea into English. We do some errors or mistakes that we didn't realise.

There are some linguistic activities doing the research: language operation on many levels, our private thinking and we engage in every day social activities.

Nowdays, the concept English for Academic Purposes (EAP) has been the major driver for the changes in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) programme at Sevastopol State University (SSU), Institute of Pedagogy and Humanities (IPH). The Institute carries out trainings for future specialists on educational levels «Bachelor», «Master» in 3 different areas: pedagogy, psychology, philology. Our university offers academic programs at all levels including undergraduate, graduate, post-graduate ones.

By the end of Master course, students will be able to: read written materials (manuals, specialised articles and literary writing), evaluate them critically for further use in their teaching and research work; make presentations using appropriate logical structure, highlighting significant points; produce different types of academic writing, including articles, research reports, summaries, reviews and reports on professional issues, project proposals and research papers; reference resources and sources to complete their course, research and project papers.

We've taught a course "Teaching Professionalism and Intercultural Communication" for many years. I'm examining for other universities or in journal articles. Currently I'm reading undergraduate theses, master theses, and I have four PhD students and two of them are just on the point of submitting. So over the years I've probably read academic discourse. Our course "Teaching Professionalism and Intercultural Communication" is an advanced course for Master students. Its objective is to teach the students how to use their knowledge of teaching foreign languages in a professional environment abroad and adapt to intercultural environments at foreign universities.

The course topics are: Educational (teaching) Professions and Ethics; Study Opportunities (education abroad, international students in the USA, Europe, international exams, international teaching education); Research Opportunities (teaching research, teaching writing and citations, teaching resource databases, reviews and bibliography, publications); career opportunities (teaching jobs and internships, teachers' professional associations, applications, statements of purpose, resumes); Opportunities for International Cooperation (globalization of the teaching profession, teachers' conferences and workshops) (Самойленко, 2018).

Students read material, attend class, complete assignments, and participate in class discussions and cases. They demonstrate their understanding of cross-cultural communication through a presentation, a final exam and a final paper. Students or teams report on specific articles or topics.

As there were no courses in academic writing, Master theses and PhD advisors are expected to teach their students how to write in English, how to publish, and how to enter the international scientific community.

The CEFR introduces the concept of mediation. Mediation language activities, (re)processing an existing text, occupy an important place in the normal linguistic functioning of our societies. When the students use a language, several activities are involved; mediation combines reception, production and interaction. They try not only to communicate a message, but rather to develop an idea through what is often called 'languaging' (talking the idea through and hence articulating the thoughts) or to facilitate understanding and communication (CEFR Companion volume with New Descriptors [Electronic Resource], 2018).

There's been a massive increase in the use of technology in the use of English globally [2]. One of the new approaches is Visible Thinking. Visible Thinking is a way of helping educator for developing better learning and thoughtful students. The idea of Visible Thinking is making thinking visible. We learn best what we can see and hear ("visible thinking" means generally available to the senses, not just what you can see with your eyes).

Today technology has an impact on language learning process and provides new ways of teaching and learning: video the students interacting in groups or working on a monologue or story; get students to record podcasts and audio files and to develop their written work in blogs and wikis (The University of Southampton – Mode of access, 2018).

The problem of professional online tutor preparation is very relevant. We analyzed the opportunities for implementation of online education for improvement of higher pedagogical education in the foreign language teaching process. Professional online tutor training curriculum was specified. We would like to describe the opportunities for virtual education and communication. It is obviously necessary to generalize today's students' skills for providing education online course.

On-line professional training courses on leading on-line platforms are up-today trend in education. The examples of some on-line courses for students and teachers, in which we studied, on leading on-line platform «Future Learn» for 2017-2018 yy. are presented in the table 1.

*Table 1*

**Examples of on-line courses for students and teachers on on-line platform  
«Future Learn»**

№	Online course title	Information about online course	Authors	Who is the course for?
1	Teaching for Success: Lessons and Teaching.	Develop the skills and practices for continuing professional development (CPD); 4 weeks; cover four professional practices: planning lessons and courses, managing resources, managing the lesson, taking responsibility for professional development.	University of Southampton 2017	Students of Humanities, English language teachers
2	Understanding Languages	What exactly is language? How do we go about learning a language? What does an effective language teaching classroom environment look like? What about technology? How do we use that in language learning today? What about the implications of the global spread of English?	University of Southampton 2017	Future English language teachers, Undergraduate students of Humanities,
3	Research Writing: How to Do a Literature	Learn how to write a strong literature review with this course designed for research students, at any level, in any discipline.	University of Wollongong	Undergraduate students of Humanities

	Review		2018	
4	Blended Learning Essentials: Developing Digital Skills	A course for the Vocational Education and Training sector to support the development of learners' digital skills in the workplace.	University of Leeds 2018	Students of Humanities, English language teachers
5	English as a Medium of Instruction for Academics	Equip yourself to teach in international contexts by increasing your English language skills and intercultural knowledge.	University of Southamp ton 2018	Undergradua te students of Humanities,
6	English for Academic Purposes: a MOVE-ME Project Course	Develop the language skills you need to study in English and make the most of European student mobility programmes	University of Southam- pton 2018	Undergra-du ate students of Humanities
7	English for Academic Purposes: a MOVE-ME Project Course	Develop the language skills you need to study in English and make the most of European student mobility programmes	University of Southam- pton 2018	Undergra-du ate students of Humanities

In our practice we use the Language Portfolio (LP) for students' autonomous learning and language learning achievement presenting and assessing students' skills. The LP is a personal document of a learner. In this document learners of all ages can record their language learning and cultural experiences at educational institutions and or outside educational institutions (Самойленко, 2018).

Teachers help their learners present their digital identity to the world by using digital badges, digital CVs to show off what the students can do. There are digital tools, which we can use (table 2).

Table 2

**Tools for a digital identity**

No	Digital tool	Description
1	Digital badges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>–Digital objects, with an image and associated metadata, recording the skill or achievement that has been demonstrated in order to earn the badge.</li> <li>–The provider designs it and creates a link for the learner to use to download their badge.</li> <li>–It can be displayed in a CV or online profile.</li> </ul>
2	The Employability passport	A collection of certain digital badges has been set up successfully at Bath College ( <a href="https://www.bathcollege.ac.uk/">https://www.bathcollege.ac.uk/</a> ). (Sussex Downs College: <a href="http://www.sussexdowns.ac.uk/">www.sussexdowns.ac.uk/</a> )
3	Online profiles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Employment-oriented social networks with information about work, interests, CV, and the skills the students have to offer\$</li> <li>– possibility to search for and post jobs available and invite others to network for exploring each other’s work.</li> </ul>
4	OneFile	An e-portfolio tool, recording and managing work-based training ( <a href="https://www.onefile.co.uk/">https://www.onefile.co.uk/</a> ).
5	Trello	A personal to-do list, a collaborative online project management tool for sharing and planning cooperation skills
6	GSuite	Google suite of tools that helps manage work tasks (email, calendar, networking, documents, spreadsheets, forms, etc.)
7	Weebly, Wix	Free online website-building tools

We set the students the task of investigating these tools, and discuss which they could use to create their own online profile.

We studied on the online course “Blended learning essentials” by University of Leeds ([www.futurelearn.com/courses/blended-learning-digital-skills](http://www.futurelearn.com/courses/blended-learning-digital-skills)). Among the topics which were covered there are:

- the impact of digital technology on teachers and learners;
- pedagogical theories and teaching approaches that underpin blended learning, including constructivism, social constructivism, problem-based learning;
- digital technologies available to support blended learning in formal and informal learning scenarios;
- the role of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) and how to use them effectively for blended learning;
- the role of open tools in blended learning;
- open educational resources (OERs): what they are, how they can be used, and where to find them;
- processes for blended learning design, including curriculum and instructional design, story-telling and story-boarding techniques for developing digital learning;
- the role of assessment in the curriculum design process, different approaches for using technology to support assessment and feedback;
- the benefits and challenges of ‘flipped’ learning., approaches to designing a flipped lesson; collaboration in blended learning, including the use of discussion forums, synchronous collaboration, social media;
- how to design and review a blended learning activity;
- the digital skills learners need to equip them for the modern workplace, and how learners can be supported in developing these skills;
- the importance of inclusive teaching practices; the value of making education and training more accessible for learners;

– the demand for flexible learning, and the role of digital technology in making teaching and learning more flexible (The University of Southampton – Mode of access, 2018).

Every part of the course can be the task for further research.

One of the tasks we have done was the following.

Task 1.

Your digital identity now influences your browser search results. We can see how this happens if we test the different results we get from all of us on this course doing a simple Google search:

1. Do a simple Google search for the word ‘learning’.
2. Post the first item in the results list as a Comment, and comment on how similar or different it is to others’.
3. Why are they similar? Or, if they’re different, why are they different?

TIP: Do this at home, or whilst logged in with your personal account.

*(University of Leeds / UCL / Ufi Charitable Trust)*

The results of different participants are quite different.

As for us the first appeared sites are: Learning.ua, <https://learningapps.org>, [www.thesaurus.com/browse/learning](http://www.thesaurus.com/browse/learning) (Synonyms for learning at Thesaurus.com with free online thesaurus, antonyms, and definitions. Find descriptive alternatives for learning.), <https://www.coursera.org/learn/learning-how-to-learn>, <https://www.coursera.org/browse/...learning/learning-english>, <https://www.linkedin.com/learning>.

What are the reasons? The English language we use for searching, personalization of the information?

Professionals responsible for teaching and learning in today’s society must be increasingly knowledgeable about using technology in practice. There is an abundance of tools that can be used. Various activities are set up in the class to support this, including the students using digital story after their ELT classes.

Digital Storytelling (DS) is a form of traditional oral narration that is presented in digital interactive forms. DS results in creating a small-form media product – a digital

story proper – that employs a wide range of digital tools including online ones. Digital Storytelling is a universal teaching tool which combines visual, imaginary, musical and verbal constituents and that makes DS appealing to students with different learning styles [2]. With the help of technology we can teach, learn and assess the students' ability: to participate in a pair work oral activity; to skim a text and quickly look for key information; to tell a story; to follow instructions; to plan and organize an article; to write for a specific group or genre. As part of the assessment, the students are asked to do their own digital stories.

**Conclusion.** In conclusion we can say that language learning process has changed because the skills and content of any modern language course, the nature of assessment, impact of technology have changed. That is why the main goal of the future projects is to improve the present system of education of the residents and students by designing a Master program in “Foreign Languages and Intercultural communication teaching”, revising relevant curricula, existing relevant modules of teaching courses and approximating them to the European educational standards, developing and implementing training and retraining programs. Preliminary results of introducing the new program are presented. It is necessary to discuss some considerations as to the prospects of teaching academic writing, which are potentially applicable to similar intercultural and educational situations.

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