

## FEATURES OF THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS ORGANIZATION IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSES WITH STUDENTS OF NON-LINGUISTIC SPECIALTIES WHEN SWITCHING TO DISTANCE LEARNING

*CARACTERÍSTICAS DA ORGANIZAÇÃO DO PROCESSO EDUCACIONAL EM AULAS DE LÍNGUA ESTRANGEIRA COM ALUNOS DE ESPECIALIDADES NÃO LINGÜÍSTICAS AO MUDAR PARA APRENDIZAGEM A DISTÂNCIA*

*CARACTERÍSTICAS DE LA ORGANIZACIÓN DEL PROCESO EDUCATIVO EN CLASES DE IDIOMAS EXTRANJEROS CON ESTUDIANTES DE ESPECIALIDADES NO LINGÜÍSTICAS AL CAMBIAR AL APRENDIZAJE A DISTANCIA*

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**ABSTRACT:** This paper discusses the problems of working with students of non-linguistic specialties in foreign language classes when switching to distance learning. The tasks have been set to assess the advantages and disadvantages of distance learning. The following has been noted among the aspects that have a positive effect on teaching a foreign language in a distance format: activation of cooperation of teachers to improve the educational process; closer contact between teachers and students; activation of students' independent work; mastering by teachers of the skills of working in the learning management system (Moodle/lms.mai.ru) and the format of video conferencing, etc. It is concluded that the distance format allows improving the learning process. In the future, it is advisable to use the elements of the distance format in combination with the traditional one to optimize teaching a foreign language.

**KEYWORDS:** Foreign language in a non-linguistic university. Distance learning. Information and communication technologies (ICT). Learning management system. Virtual learning environment. Video conference.

**RESUMO:** Este artigo discute a problemática do trabalho com alunos de especialidades não linguísticas em aulas de língua estrangeira na transição para o ensino a distância. As tarefas foram definidas para avaliar as vantagens e desvantagens do ensino a distância. Dentre os aspectos que influenciam positivamente o ensino de língua estrangeira na modalidade a distância, destacam-se: ativação da cooperação dos professores para a melhoria do processo educativo; contato mais próximo entre professores e alunos; ativação do trabalho independente dos alunos; domínio pelos professores das competências de trabalho no sistema de gestão da aprendizagem (Moodle / lms.mai.ru) e do formato de videoconferência, etc. Conclui-se que o formato a distância permite melhorar o processo de aprendizagem. Futuramente, é aconselhável utilizar os elementos do formato a distância em combinação com o tradicional para otimizar o ensino de uma língua estrangeira.

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**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** *Língua estrangeira em universidade não linguística. Ensino a distância. Tecnologias de informação e comunicação (ICT). Sistema de gestão de aprendizagem. Ambiente virtual de aprendizagem. Videoconferência.*

**RESUMEN:** *Este artículo analiza los problemas de trabajar con estudiantes de especialidades no lingüísticas en clases de lenguas extranjeras cuando se cambia a la educación a distancia. Las tareas se han establecido para evaluar las ventajas y desventajas de la educación a distancia. Entre los aspectos que inciden positivamente en la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera en formato a distancia se ha señalado lo siguiente: activación de la cooperación de los docentes para mejorar el proceso educativo; contacto más estrecho entre profesores y estudiantes; activación del trabajo independiente de los estudiantes; dominio por parte del profesorado de las habilidades de trabajo en el sistema de gestión del aprendizaje (Moodle / lms.mai.ru) y el formato de videoconferencia, etc. Se concluye que el formato a distancia permite mejorar el proceso de aprendizaje. En el futuro, es recomendable utilizar los elementos del formato a distancia en combinación con el tradicional para optimizar la enseñanza de una lengua extranjera.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *Lengua extranjera en una universidad no lingüística. La educación a distancia. Tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (tic). Sistema para el manejo del aprendizaje. Ambiente de aprendizaje virtual. Video conferencia.*

## Introduction

Forced self-isolation during the outbreak of the pandemic in the spring of 2020 has become a serious test for the Russian education system, which has faced an urgent need to switch to distance learning as soon as possible. Most educational institutions were not ready for this. The unexpected situation caused stress for many teachers and students, which negatively affected the educational process. As a result, a large number of complaints about the process and quality of education began to be received from students and their parents, and a negative attitude towards distance learning began to form.

The complex situation in the education system suggests that the prospects for distance learning should be seriously considered in addition to the development of the traditional form of education. Each discipline has its specifics, so it is more appropriate to refer to the prospects considering the specifics of a particular discipline. Teaching a foreign language at a university involves serious classroom work, direct contact between the teacher and the student, listening. The experience of most universities has shown that the discipline "Foreign Language" has successfully coped with a difficult situation, but there is still a lot of methodological work to be done. The planned and rational implementation of distance learning in the modern educational

process in combination with the traditional one will help to avoid force major situations and preserve the quality of education in case of the need to work remotely.

This approach may also fit in a normal situation, for example, in the case of temporary disability of a teacher or student, when there is no possibility of working in the classroom, but remote work will not interrupt the learning process.

## **Literature analysis**

The current situation in the education system has contributed to the fact that the problem of distance learning has become the subject of research by many scholars. Modern researchers understand learning in which all or most of the educational process is carried out using modern information and telecommunication technologies with the territorial disunity of the teacher and students as distance learning (AKHMETZHANOVA; ABIEVA, 2019).

The main tool for remote interaction between teachers and "remote" students, in this case, is the distance learning system – an educational Internet portal of an educational institution that provides the implementation of a systematic approach to the organization and management of the learning process, integrating various types of educational and methodological resources (BORISOVA, 2012).

Experts note that distance learning has a positive impact on the development of various skills in modern students (BEKETOVA *et al.*, 2020).

The important role of distance learning in modern education, including in the study of foreign languages, has been emphasized (LIU *et al.*, 2020).

The positive aspects of the use of ICT in teaching students in the discipline "Foreign language" have been noted. Firstly, active involvement in the communication process helps to increase the motivation of students (and teachers). Secondly, due to the development of the skills of searching, extracting, evaluating, and analyzing the necessary information, the formation of an independent personality of the student has been observed. In addition, the rationality of planning and organizing the educational process has been noted both in the classroom and in the independent work of students. An important place has been given to the development of the professional and communicative skills of students (ZAKHAROVA, 2020).

Some researchers consider the readiness of teachers to master innovations, which can include the active use of ICT technologies, to be the main factor influencing the process of innovation development in higher education institutions (PONYAEVA, 2021). Some authors believe that teachers should be professionally prepared for continuous qualitative updating of

the educational process not only "technically"/"technologically" (possession of competencies in the field of educational ICT technologies). Information-technology-rich forms of education also imply new roles of the teacher in the pedagogical process (DYAKONOV; IGOSHEV, 2014). Several researchers, explaining the difference between the learning styles of the two generations, suggest considering the constant changes in the social environment. There is a need to change the approaches to the learning process and its content, introduce new technologies and increase the degree of independence of students (ARTYUSHINA; ZHURBENKO; SHEYPAK, 2021).

Note that the use of presentations can be productive in distance learning, and it is necessary to pay attention to the development of presentation texts (ZHELTUKHINA *et al.*, 2019).

An interesting suggestion for teaching a foreign language in technical universities is the use of the Google classroom platform. The advantages of using open educational resources for working with students are explained, for example, effective allocation of class time; ensuring more productive communication between the student and the teacher; ensuring an individual learning trajectory. Such use of modern ICTs contributes to achieving the best results of mastering the discipline (CHUKSINA, 2021).

However, practice shows that many teachers still do not fully possess the ICT competence necessary for the implementation of their professional activities in the information educational environment and involves the following aspects: search/collection/assessment /selection/analysis/organization/view/stream information; teamwork; planning individual and group activities of students based on ICT (SAJGUSHKINA; BAKACH; SHUTKO, 2017). The experience of implementing distance learning based on computer telecommunications shows that some Russian teachers do not have sufficient knowledge in the field of information technology. The main task is to involve teachers in the new methodology, which is based on changing the nature of the relationship between teachers and students. This is especially important since students in the distance learning system are given the greatest freedom (CHERDAKLI, 2020). Qualified university teachers and ICT specialists are actively engaged in the design of electronic educational resources for their use in the educational process. The updated Federal State Educational Standards focus universities on the development and use of innovative teaching technologies, on a qualitative change in the role of the teacher, who is no longer the only translator of knowledge (NARCISSOVA; MAKLAKOV, 2019).

It has been noted that a modern teacher needs to increase media competence, strive for close dialogue with colleagues and students, and make maximum use of Internet resources for

online learning for educational purposes. The development of the teacher's media competence will contribute to the successful development of his/her students in this direction. The formation of general requirements for teachers, employees, and the administration of an educational organization on the level of proficiency in modern ICT allows planning the direction of professional development of employees and the development of the institution itself (KUZMINA, 2014).

The organization of distance learning requires the creation of electronic educational content and teachers' knowledge of the ICT complex.

The work experience gained during the forced transition to distance learning will contribute to the expansion of the electronic space and the integration of new technologies into the activities of the university, contributing to the improvement of its academic and information culture. Therewith, it has been noted that a complete replacement of the real educational environment with a virtual one is impossible (NIKITINA; PIGOREVA; BOLDYREVA, 2020).

## **Methods**

The following research methods were chosen in this paper:

1. Observation;
2. Questionnaire survey.

The survey was attended by teachers of the Department I-11 "Foreign Language for Aerospace Specialties" of the Institute of Foreign Languages of the Moscow Aviation Institute (NRU MAI).

The main objectives of the survey are to collect and analyze information about the level of proficiency of teachers in ICT technologies, their attitude to the process of distance learning (assessment of advantages and disadvantages), their assessment of the prospects of distance learning, and the process of interaction with students.

## **Results and discussion**

One of the systems often used in Russian universities for organizing distance learning is the Moodle virtual learning environment. Distance learning of students during quarantine (self-isolation) was organized in the Moodle/lms.mai.ru (UKHOV *et al.*, 2020) the system at the Moscow Aviation Institute.

The English language classes used electronic courses developed several years ago in this training system and used as a computer component to the main program of the discipline "Foreign language". Classes were held mainly in the Moodle/lms.mai.ru system during the transition of MAI to the distance learning mode.

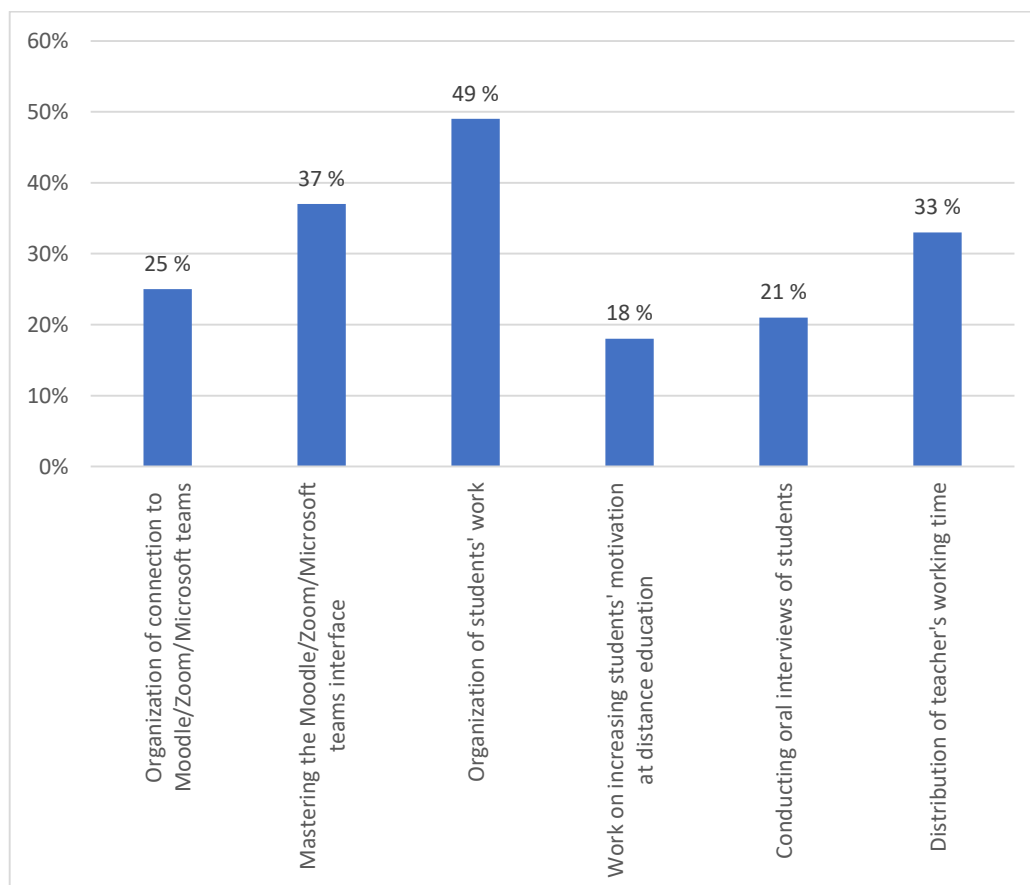
One of the active methods of testing knowledge of a foreign language in distance learning in the Moodle system is testing. Testing is a modern high-quality method of knowledge assessment (ZUBANOVA; BODROVA; KRUCHKOVICH, 2020).

The experience of conducting classes in a remote format allows identifying two key areas:

1. Independent work of students in the Moodle system/lms.mai.ru.
2. Virtual classes-video conferences (Moodle/lms.mai.ru, Zoom, Microsoft teams, etc.)

Let us present the results of the study. The survey showed that teachers faced the main difficulties at the initial stage of working in a remote format. Consider what is the reason for that (Fig. 1).

**Figure 1** – The main difficulties of teachers' work with students at the initial stage of distance learning using ICT technologies

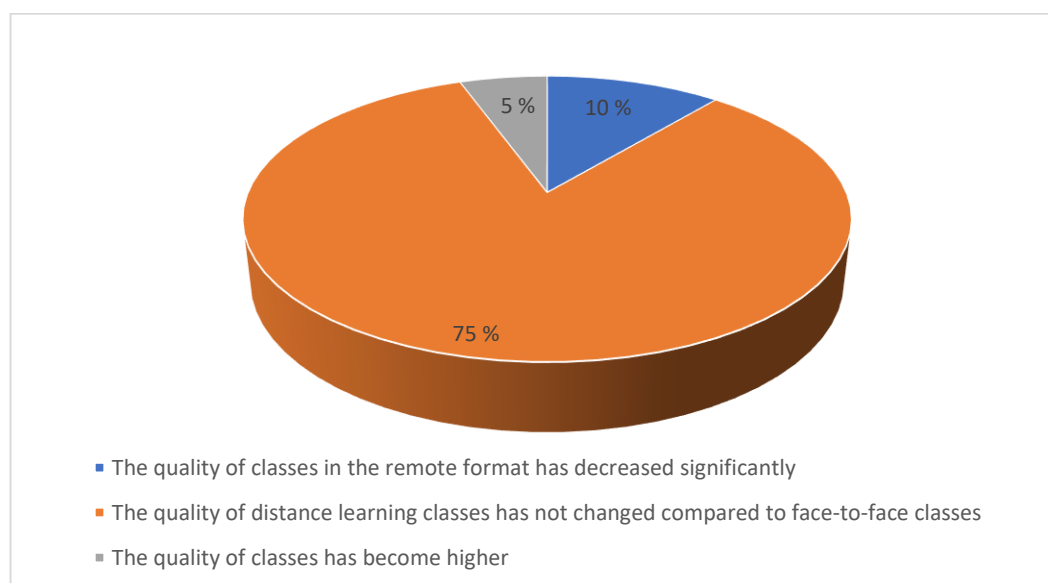


Source: Devised by the authors

Analysis of the results of the study showed that it was most difficult for teachers to organize the work of students at the initial stage. Note that the teacher was assigned the role of the organizer: forming the groups in Moodle/lms.mai.ru, notifying students about the format and time of classes, determining the criteria for admission, and evaluation of students' work, etc.

It is important to emphasize that the teamwork of the entire teaching staff of the department has acquired special importance. Weekly online meetings of the department were organized to solve and discuss emerging problems related to remote work, in particular, with the development of the virtual learning environment Moodle/lms.mai.ru. and various ICT technologies, planning tasks for each week of the semester. This made it possible to organize the work in strict accordance with the curriculum. At the initial stage, some teachers had difficulties with working with the electronic course and organizing video conferences. Colleagues provided each other with constant technical assistance in mastering ICT, and because of such joint work, each teacher of the department became confident users of the necessary services. Teachers noted that it was easier to organize the lesson, as they more often began to turn to Internet resources (electronic libraries, electronic dictionaries, etc.) and use them in video conferences in addition to the electronic course. Teachers also noted that this organization of work has allowed maintaining the quality of foreign language classes at a high level (Fig. 2).

**Figure 2** – Teachers' assessment of the quality of classes in the distance learning format



Source: Devised by the authors

Certain difficulties arose when conducting the final certification of students at the end of the semester, as the maximum objectivity of the knowledge assessment in conditions of limited communication was required. The department developed a formula for calculating the final assessment of the student's knowledge, which included:

1) The results of the student's work in the Moodle/lms.mai.ru system: the systematic performance of exercises following the curriculum; the results of intermediate tests; the results of the final test;

2) Activity and results of students' oral responses at video conferences (Moodle/lms.mai.ru, Zoom, Microsoft teams, etc.).

Therewith, special attention was paid to oral communication at video conferences, since only this format allows the teacher to objectively assess the student's real knowledge of a foreign language.

Most of the teachers noted that with the distance format, they had more options for communicating with students, but this rather complicated the work, as it led to a shortage of free time for the teacher. Students turned to the teacher not only during the class according to the schedule but also during extracurricular time in the Moodle/lms.mai.ru chat system, by email, in the WhatsApp group, etc. Special difficulties arose when the student and the teacher were in different time zones. The teacher could not ignore the students' questions, and, as the teachers noted, remote work meant "being in touch with the students around the clock".

It was noted among the positive aspects that due to online classes, students have reduced the psychological barrier to communication with both the teacher and fellow students, which led to an increase in their activity in the classroom. Students began to ask more questions, which contributed to the development of oral speech skills.

## Conclusion

The analysis of the experience of the Department of Foreign Languages working with students of Aerospace specialties of the MAI allowed identifying the following positive aspects of using the distance learning format:

- Activation of joint work of the department staff to improve the educational process;
- Activation of joint work of teachers and students;
- Activation of independent work of students;
- More rational planning and organization of the educational process (classroom activities and independent work of students);



- Mastering the skills of teachers to work not only with text editors but also in the learning management system (Moodle/lms.mai.ru.), in the video conferencing format (Moodle/lms.mai.ru, Zoom, Microsoft teams, etc.);

- Development of professional and communicative skills of students;

- The development of teachers and students' interest in modern Internet resources (virtual learning environment, search engines, electronic dictionaries, electronic libraries, etc.).

Some difficulties of remote work have also been identified:

- Insufficient classroom activities for the implementation of the curriculum, as students have more questions in the process of remote communication, including organizational ones;

- Problems with the quality of the Internet for some students and teachers (inability to enter the training system, turn on sound or a webcam);

- Reduced free time for the teacher due to the need to answer students' questions after class or contact the student outside the schedule grid due to time zone differences;

- Increasing the time to prepare for classes at the initial stage of the transition to distance learning;

- Disorganization of some students and additional time spent on explaining the features of the distance learning format to them.

Summing up, it should be noted that despite the difficulties encountered, in general, the distance format not only did not hurt teaching a foreign language but also improved it. Teachers began to take a more thoughtful approach to the organization of classes to qualitatively explain and verify the results of mastering the necessary material. There is an increase in interest in a foreign language among students. All this suggests that in the future it is necessary to optimize teaching a foreign language using a combination of traditional full-time and distance learning formats.

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