



# ДИСТАНЦИОННОЕ, СМЕШАННОЕ И ПЕРЕВЕРНУТОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ

## DISTANCE, BLENDED AND FLIPPED LEARNING

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### The use of video materials in online classes of English for specific purposes

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**Abstract.** *Problem statement.* In recent years, the distance format is no longer a rarity and is being actively introduced into the educational process. However, in higher school, when teaching specialised subjects, including English for specific purposes, there is a certain difficulty in making a class dynamic and interesting for students. The use of video materials seems to be one of the ways to solve this problem. The aim of the study – to consider the issues related to the use of videos in classes of English for specific purposes. *Methodology.* The research covers such topics as advantages of using videos in English language teaching and criteria for their selection as well as preparation of video-related tasks. It also highlights specifics of using news video content as a tool for teaching English. Particular attention is paid to the use of video content in distance learning conditions. The examples of practical experience of using videos in English classes for third- and fourth-year students studying “Transport Processes Technologies” in Admiral Makarov State Maritime University of Maritime and Inland Shipping in St. Petersburg are given. *Results.* The use of videos in distance learning classes has a significant number of advantages for students. The practice showed that the most interesting and effective to be used in online classes are newscasts. *Conclusion.* It is concluded that the process of class preparation using video materials is challenging for teachers, but at the same time that its use has a positive impact on their professional growth and on the effectiveness of the educational process.

**Keywords:** selection criteria, distance learning, video-related tasks, authentic materials, pre-viewing tasks, post-viewing tasks

**Conflicts of interest.** The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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## Применение видеоматериалов на занятиях по профессионально ориентированному английскому языку в условиях дистанционного обучения

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**Аннотация.** *Постановка проблемы.* В последние годы дистанционный формат перестал быть редкостью и активно внедряется в образовательный процесс. Однако в старшей школе при преподавании специализированных предметов, включая и профессионально ориентированный английский язык, ощущается некоторая сложность в том, чтобы сделать занятие по дисциплине динамичным и интересным для обучающихся. Применение видеоматериалов видится одним из способов решения данной проблемы. Цель исследования – рассмотреть вопросы, связанные с использованием видеоматериалов на занятиях по профессионально ориентированному английскому языку. *Методология.* Раскрываются такие темы, как преимущества использования видеоматериалов в процессе обучения, критерии их отбора, подготовка заданий, освещаются преимущества и специфика использования новостного видеоконтента в качестве инструмента для обучения английскому языку. Особое внимание уделяется использованию видеоматериалов в условиях дистанционного обучения. Приводятся примеры из практического опыта использования видеоматериалов на занятиях по английскому языку для студентов третьего и четвертого курсов Государственного университета морского и речного флота имени адмирала С.О. Макарова в Санкт-Петербурге, обучающихся по направлению «Технологии транспортных процессов». *Результаты.* Использование видеоматериалов на дистанционных занятиях имеет значительное количество преимуществ для студентов. Практика показала, что наиболее интересными и эффективными для использования являются новостные программы. *Заключение.* Сделан вывод, что процесс подготовки к занятию с использованием видеоматериалов является сложным для преподавателей, но в то же время его использование положительно влияет на их профессиональный рост и на эффективность образовательного процесса.

**Ключевые слова:** критерии отбора, задания к видеоматериалам, аутентичные материалы, предпросмотровые задания, послепросмотровые задания

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**Problem statement.** In global practice, online English teaching has already been practiced for many years and is due to the increased possibilities of the Internet. However, the most part of higher educational institutions in Russia had not been directly affected by this practice until early 2020, when, due to the pandemic of COVID-19, the educational process was forced to switch to an online format.

For many English teachers it was a difficult period, which required reconsideration of traditional methods of teaching and looking for new solutions to develop the language level of students. In other words, the transition to an online learning format revealed some problems that had already existed before. For example, it was noted that a lot of teachers found it psychologically difficult to conduct their classes online and one of the reasons was the lack of practice and general lack of digital competence [1]. Dealing with these problems teachers had to master new skills which included using Internet for educative purposes, creating online courses [2] and crafting videos for classes [3].

In recent years, researchers from around the world have conducted studies on the use of videos in English classes. Some of them study feature films as a tool for teaching the language [4], while others focus on YouTube short videos and podcasts [5; 6]. A number of researchers have chosen the use of multimedia educational platforms LearnWeb and TED (Technology, Entertain and Design) as the subject of their study [7; 8]. There also have been a number of experiments conducted worldwide that demonstrate good results of students who were taught in online or flipped classrooms with the use of video [9].

However, there is still some uncertainty within English language teaching in higher education about how exactly to use video materials in distance learning contexts and what kind of video content is preferable for this purpose. In order to bring clarity to this issue, **the aim of this study** is to consider how videos are perceived both in distance learning and in a traditional format as well as to understand the impact they have on students.

**Methodology.** The current research studies practical issues of using videos in English for specific purposes (ESP) classes with undergraduate university students in Transport Process Technologies, focusing on its benefits for distance education format. The peculiarities of using videos in online English classes have been identified as a result of their practical use among the third- and fourth-year students of SUMIS. The total number of undergraduate students is 60.

It must first be said that the use of video materials in English classes conducted both remotely and in the offline format has a number of advantages [10]. Regular dealing with videos develops students' listening skills [11], helps to enrich their vocabulary [12] and expands existing knowledge of the topics under study, the latter issue being especially important for ESP students [13; 14]. Furthermore, the use of videos develops students' speaking skills, since the contents of videos can be discussed after viewing [15], as well as writing skills, provided that students are given appropriate assignments related to the material.

It is also worth noting that videos selected to be watched in ESP classes in many cases are not originally intended for educational purposes. This means that such kind of material contains natural language and reflects the picture of what is happening in real life. This fact, in a sense, blurs the boundary between the artifi-

cially created learning format and reality, which, in its turn, can help to motivate students to master the language. This is especially important, since students' motivation is considered the key factor for the language acquisition, and this is what teachers should pay attention to [16].

However, authentic videos contain more complicated language and are more difficult for learners to comprehend compared to the materials created for the classroom use. Despite this fact, it should not be thought that authentic materials are suitable only for students with an advanced level of English, since the visuals contribute to the understanding of the material. Therefore, even if the level of students' language is not very high, they can grasp the main idea contained in the fragment being watched. Thus, the visuals compensate for the complexity of language constructions and for the fluency of native speakers [17].

Another important advantage is that classes containing video materials are memorable and attractive, according to a survey conducted among third- and fourth-year students of Transport Process Technologies. This fact is especially important when it comes to the use of videos in an online environment [18]. It is no secret that distance learning seems less "live" than traditional education, since students see only their teachers' faces instead of people's entire images with gestures, movements and postures, and are also more detached from each other. In this regard, the use of video materials can be seen as a way to diversify online classes and to compensate for the problem of students' distance both from the teacher and from each other.

Finally, it is technically easy to use videos in an online class. To successfully incorporate video into their classes, teachers only needed a computer, an Internet access, and a software program that allows them to conduct classes in a conference mode. They may also need to have PowerPoint presentation software installed to upload assignments to conferences.

Special attention should be given to the issue of selecting appropriate video material for the class, which is often quite a difficult task, as it must meet a number of criteria.

It is recommended that the video material is relevant to the topic under study within the discipline taught. For example, when studying the topic "Container Cargo" included in the curriculum of "Professional English" taught to students of Transport Processes Technologies, we can use video reviews highlighting new technologies applied in container handling. During the pandemic, it was also possible to watch current news materials, for example, the ones about the sensational situation around the "Ever Given" container ship stuck in the Suez Canal in spring 2021, about an unconventional way of using containers, which received wide publicity in the USA, where people, financially affected by the pandemic, had to use containers as their housing, etc.

When selecting videos to be used in the classroom, the level of students' language proficiency should also be taken into account [19]. It is important to note that any material may contain new vocabulary or grammatical structures unfamiliar to students, which in itself is a positive aspect of the process. However, we should not allow the situation when a video is overloaded with unstudied language material. In this case the use of video is not only ineffective, but can also be a source of stress for students.

Another important factor in choosing a video is its duration. Preference should be given to short videos lasting no more than five minutes. Using short videos has a number of advantages. Firstly, short duration encourages students to be more attentive both to the video and to the tasks required for completion. Secondly, duration directly affects the amount of new lexical units and grammatical structures contained. Accordingly, the shorter the duration, the less the risk of it to be overloaded with language material that needs to be worked through, the less the stress for students, and thus, the higher the productivity of the lesson. Thirdly, short duration means there is no problem replaying a video in order to draw students' attention to some fragment without going beyond the class time limits. Finally, short duration makes it possible to devote more time to active work.

After selecting an appropriate video, it is necessary to prepare a number of assignments. In an online environment, the tasks can be divided into two groups, i.e. pre-viewing and post-viewing ones, while in offline classes it is also possible to use the viewing tasks implying completion directly during the viewing. However, in this case it is often required to stop the video, which is not convenient during online broadcasting. As the practice of BigBlueButton conferences has shown, it makes more sense to give students access to a video via a link than to broadcast the material directly online.

Thus, a pre-viewing stage should include the introduction of new grammar and vocabulary or the material that needs some revising [20]. It is preferable to introduce vocabulary through English definitions, examples of usage, synonyms or antonyms, visual illustrations if appropriate, etc. It is also necessary to make sure that the list is not too long, but necessarily includes the key words, ignorance of which makes it difficult to understand the whole material.

Pre-viewing assignments may also include tasks for active completion, such as “prediction” or “brainstorming”. Their purpose is to prepare students for the perception of a particular material, as well as to reveal the existing knowledge on the topic. For example, when studying the topic “Ship broking”, students are offered to watch an interview with the executive director of one of the largest shipping companies, in which he tells about the duties of a shipbroker and about the qualities which a successful representative of this profession should possess. As a pre-viewing task students are offered to answer the questions about what ship brokers do and what their main duties are (thus the existing knowledge is revealed) and then they come up with their ideas of what qualities they think ship brokers should have. Moreover, working remotely, a teacher can not only question students verbally, but also use a whiteboard as a functional element of online conferences.

As for the post-viewing tasks, their range is quite wide. To check students' understanding they can be offered to answer some pre-arranged questions, to do “true/false”, “multiple choice”, “reconstruct the order of events” tasks, etc. To practice grammar and vocabulary teachers can use the tasks for matching collocations, synonyms and antonyms, tasks to fill in the gaps in the text, word formation tasks, filling in the tables and many others [21]. Then the learners are advised to watch the video again to reinforce the material [22]. Finally, they can be offered the tasks aimed at developing their speaking and writing skills, for example, to compose a dialogue, to make a report or a presentation on the material, to write an essay, etc. Written assignments can be attributed to students' homework.

It should be noted that the choice of both groups of tasks largely depends on the specific video material, its informative and linguistic component. For example, if it contains a storyline, one of the tasks may be “restoring the chain of events”, while a video containing an interview may serve as the basis for such an assignment as “composing a dialogue”. Similarly, tasks for practicing grammar and vocabulary will focus on certain linguistic units present in the video.

As for the technical side of the issue, most of the assignments can be prepared in the form of a PowerPoint presentation and uploaded to a BigBlueButton conference. Thus, in an online class, students can perform tasks on a whiteboard, using appropriate tools, while their teacher can see their answers immediately and correct them if necessary. This facilitates educative process and makes the class dynamic. In addition, the above kinds of representational tasks can be reused with other groups of students and adjusted depending on the individual characteristics of the latter.

**Results and discussion.** Summarizing the above, we can conclude that the use of videos in distance learning classes has a significant number of advantages.

Thus, the use of video materials in classes conducted in the distance learning system “Farwater”, which was implemented by SUMIS, has become one of the means of teaching ESP and the development of communicative competence of students helping teachers to cope with the complexities inherent in online learning.

Table shows the main advantages of using videos in online classes. The results shown are based on the work with sixty third- and fourth-year students enrolled in Transportation Process Technology.

**Advantages of using video materials in online ESP classes**

<b>Benefits</b>	<b>Student review</b>
Development of listening skills	56 students out of 60 claimed to have understood more when watching videos than when doing listening-only assignments
Vocabulary expansion	52 students out of 60 noted that words and their usage in different contexts are memorized better than in the traditional rote learning
Expansion of knowledge on professional topics	53 students noted that they learned a lot of interesting information from the video, which may be useful to them in their future careers
Providing effective material for discussion	It was found that when viewing certain materials (most often news report), students willingly engage in a discussion of the issue raised (55 students)
Reflection of the living reality	49 students surveyed admitted that they preferred the video to be less “instructional” and more live and real
Attractiveness to students	60 students noted that online classes containing video viewing and subsequent work on the whiteboard were more interesting than those that did not contain any video or contained only audio material

The practice of distant work showed that the most interesting and effective are newscasts of the leading foreign channels, covering business, economy and transport sphere news. They are quite dynamic, connected with the students’ future professional activity, contain appropriate vocabulary and are also short in duration. However, giving preference to news releases, it should be remembered that this kind of material loses its relevance quite quickly and, therefore, requires regular updating.

**Conclusion.** Considering the above, it can be concluded that preparation for a class where video material is to be used is not an easy task for a teacher and requires careful selection of a video, its analysis and making a number of assignments for every single video, which makes the whole process quite resource-consuming.

Despite the above mentioned problems, the benefits of using videos in English classes are obvious for both students and teachers. Distance lessons containing video materials supported by appropriate assignments have a positive impact on the process of students' mastering the language, increase the dynamics of such a lesson and encourage students' interest in the studied topics. In addition, the need to prepare a video containing class keeps teachers up-to-date with the events happening domestically and internationally, contributes to the development of their professional skills, and most importantly, introduces a creative component into the teaching process.

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