

## IMPLEMENTATION OF BLENDED TEACHING TECHNIQUES IN ACADEMIC ENGLISH COURSE THROUGH ASU REPOSITORY: A CASE STUDY AT ALMATY MANAGEMENT UNIVERSITY

\*Zhuginissova A.M.<sup>1</sup>, Bakhtiyar I.<sup>2</sup>

\*<sup>1</sup>master of translation studies, senior language instructor, Almaty Management University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, email: [a.zhuginissova@almau.edu.kz](mailto:a.zhuginissova@almau.edu.kz)

<sup>2</sup>aster of translation studies, senior language instructor, Almaty Management University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, email: [i.bakhtiyar@almau.edu.kz](mailto:i.bakhtiyar@almau.edu.kz)

**Abstract.** Blended learning and teaching methods have gained a broad recognition in the field of education. They enable instructors and learners to diversify, enhance and facilitate the process of language acquisition. After the Covid-19 period, there was a demand to teach English for numerous students using contemporary approach, therefore, the Almaty Management University, Kazakhstan, has created an innovative Academic English Program using the repository of Arizona State University (ASU). There are four academic modules included in this program. This program's main aim is the development of integrated language skills, particularly focuses on learning and using the authentic materials from the repository. The blended-learning model was implemented in this program. The model included: (1) Students independent work with ASU Academic online course; (2) The teacher's monitoring on students' learning process; (3) the teacher's class which was hold face-to-face in campus, and (4) students' involvement in immersion tasks. The university used the Moodle online LMS platform to save all the materials and ASU content. Main advantages of the available online course are their contemporary content, constantly updated materials, and user-friendly interface. There were interactions between learner and computer, learner and teacher, learner and learner throughout the course completion. This article will describe the elements of the blended-learning model, the implementation problems and the results.

**Key words:** blended learning, blended teaching, traditional education, online education, knowledge acquisition, academic program, English as a foreign language (EFL), ASU repository, Information and communication technologies (ICT), contemporary.

### Basic provisions

Due to the rapid development in different areas of human activity in a global scale, the modern education has to follow the changes as well. The Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been spread in economy, international relations, education, and other segments of our contemporary society. The education system of modern society has been influenced by a new concept of learning and teaching, the concept is called *blended learning*, the definition of blended learning is to combine instructional modalities, such as face-to-face and online learning [1]. As most of the educators understand, the blended learning could be mixed by traditional class and digital class. For students of new generation, the blended learning is considered a good way to deliver teaching materials (handouts, textbooks etc.) in different levels.

Recent advances in modern technologies and integrated information and digitization have “made changes in the education system and teaching method”, as a result of which higher and professional education have come to be seen as an important factor in the development of human capital, its effectiveness, the quality and completeness of communication and educational technologies. Teaching a foreign language in higher education requires learning the technological impact of significant changes in the educational paradigm [2].

S.S. Kunanbayeva in her book considers «The study of a foreign language in the system of private scientific education as an object of its developmental research, and put on the agenda many issues that need to be addressed today» [3]. The modern Kazakhstan is facing a rapid update of the English language teaching using various ICT such as online teaching platform, effective LMS system and helpful digital contents. Therefore, she predicted that one of the results in the Concept of foreign language education is “the integration of Kazakhstan to the world educational atmosphere [4].

By this we can conclude that the integration of technology-based approaches is crucial not only for modern educational system but for the new generations as well.

### **Introduction**

Contemporary world of English language learning is rapidly changing, providing numerous of opportunities to language learners. Since online education format has been advancing recently, there are various effective and interactive models of studying that pursue to instill crucial language and educational skills. New technologies and web-services development have equipped us with a number of tools to observe, analyze and experience learning modes, in order to broaden the perspective on the materials and explore new ways of acquiring knowledge.

The term blended learning comprises many aspects of knowledge acquisition and there have been multiple ways of realizing and implementing it. Initially, blended format emerged and gained attention when Information and Communication Technology (ICT) started to be widely used in the classrooms and the effectiveness of traditional learning approaches was questioned. At the same time e-learning and online education were said to be more effective and time-saving. Yet with time and experience, it becomes clear that depending on the purposes of learning and teaching the combination of both the traditional education methods and the online learning tools will benefit not only students and but teachers as well. Blended learning has been widely used due to its almost limitless possibilities in terms of ICT application within educational process.

Defining Blended learning has been discussed among researches for over two decades now. Different definitions were suggested saying that a combination of teaching methods featuring technological tools was called blended learning. This type of learning was also named as hybrid or web-assisted instruction [5]. The most common explanation said that when an online form of education combined with traditional face-to-face instruction, blended learning occurs. The online form of education may imply computer-

aided teaching, educational applications and online courses. Thus, comprising contemporary methods of e-learning and traditional instruction, blended learning presents a number of advantageous features.

One of common positively affecting characteristics is the flexibility which enables learners to utilize different resources and to develop academic skills. Moreover, the hybrid instruction makes the face-to-face interaction more effective and complete. It also enriches the traditional classrooms with a variety of interactive activities assisted by technology. Interactive and intensive classes usually encourage and motivate learners to strive harder and succeed in academic performance.

The concept blended learning models is widely discussed among researchers, and there are certainly some views worth sharing. Valiathan Purnima suggests that the term blended learning is used for a combination of some methods of information delivery, for example using collaboration software, learning management systems or courses hosted on web-platforms [1]. Blended learning is not limited to certain in-class activities, yet it includes face-to-face classes, e-learning, and self-paced learning. The following categories of blended learning models are suggested by V. Purmina: skill-driven learning, which implies independent study on self-paced basis, with instructor support to ensure specific knowledge and skills development. Attitude-driven learning, is explained as behavior types, developed and influenced by a number of situations, media content presentation. And finally, competency-driven learning, which aims at boosting professional competences through a set of operating and maintaining skills [1]. Skill-driven learning is usually strictly adhered to program schedule with instructor-led observations and result-based discussions. It focuses on informative material which is self-paced, such as video-tutorials, individual projects and online practical assignments. All the procedures are demonstrated through synchronous online learning platforms combined with traditional classroom modes. As for the attitude-driven model of blended learning, it is built on the contents that help with building new insights and relations towards education and new knowledge, teaches mutual assistance in issues.

Special role in skill-driven model is allocated to the trainer of the program. Without a proper support, monitoring and constant feedback providing, learners might feel isolated and demotivated to learn. Besides classroom meetings, the instructor should be available via email or any other type of communication facilities, so that learners on the one hand feel supported and guided, on the other hand, disciplined and monitored. This guarantees successful accomplishment of the self-paced modules.

The following aspects of learning examine authors' attitude toward the blended learning. They are flexible learning modes, managing studying process, technology enhancement, online learning and interaction, and classroom studies [6]. These attitudes may indicate whether students are ready or not for the blended learning. On interesting fact is that, if students are highly motivated in learning process, meanwhile, they will have a very positive attitude towards blended learning [7].

The benefits of blended learning is significant and closely related to the pedagogy, all of them were in the list. The interest for the class can be generated by it, students' 4 language skills (listening, reading, writing and speaking) will be enhanced, it can foster a deeper learning, it can also motivate students, most of the students will be inspired to use the online learning tools [8]. The academic performance might be affected by several factors such as course content, teaching methods, and learners' motivations. Students perform better if the blended teaching method is implemented in the study process [9].

A well-designed blended course will positively affect the result of language learning, a student who encounters this type of course for the first time, may slightly get confused with the tasks that teacher introduces, gradually, the student may find the learning process interesting and effective, because student may have more time to do the tasks. This type of learning can be applied to English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom. Then, the researchers found out that it students are motivated and they participated in activities more frequently [10]. The academic achievement is directly dependent on the course content that implement the blended format. If a group of students is taught by blended learning methods, their academic achievement is better than those who were taught by traditional ways. [11]. Students who are involved in the blended-format course is highly motivated to continue the course, he is ready to explore new language points and more confident to the communication skills. There might be negative consequences if the blended course is not well-designed. Sometimes, a small amount of students cannot adapt to the blended learning methods due to the fact that it can isolated them from the society, there are not enough interaction with other students. [12]. Generally, such advantageous perspectives as developing life-long learning, critical thinking, academic thinking, independent language practice and computer skills by far outweigh any negatives of blended learning format.

### **Materials and Methodology**

The methodology of the study conducted at the Almaty Management University was a cross-sectional, it is due to the fact the results were gathered at a certain time period.

*Participants:* In this research, 103 students participated, 71 (68,9%) were females and 32 (31%) were males. Their age is between 18 to 20. They studied at the second year in Almaty Management University. The average time of studying English is between one year to 16 years.

Within the collaboration of Arizona State University and Almaty Management University (AlmaU), several online academic courses created and developed by ASU have been implemented into the course syllabus of AlmaU. The newly developed program was introduced to the students of the second year, B2 level of English. It was based purely on ASU content and blended learning techniques were applied in teaching it. The academic online courses used for the program differ by the level of difficulty and are intended to develop learners' analytical, comprehension and productive skills. The courses are designed for students' independent study and feature a variety of interactively online tools

and interesting topics. Academic courses commonly focus on specific topics, researches and findings analysis, articles with advanced terminology and research-based writing, which often seem a bit complicated for learners to process. However, all these are meant to instill learners critical thinking, reasoning and therefore advanced academic writing and speaking skills. Combining ICT and academic topics together to help students comprehend the information better is what contemporary methodology is based on. The specific ASU online courses utilized for the program modification are based on video tutorials and academic articles, online tests, training exercises and writing assignments. This material is found to be appealing to students, who are now willing to cover academic programs.

Each online course was carefully planned in accordance with academic syllabus. The semester's course was first shown and explained to students in detail to assure their independent work. The program was then switched to the flipped mode which implied learners' independent studying on the course online platform and completing assignments. Each week students had face-to-face classes with a language instructor, wherein the teacher's goal was to stimulate, recall and practice the newly acquired students' academic skills. The face-to-face classes were planned to target production of a language rather than instruction. The ultimate objective of the course was to test whether methods like those are effectively motivating students to become autonomous, life-long learners.

## Results

In this section of the article the survey results are presented. By the end of the first semester all groups of students took a questionnaire to provide the feedback on the course. In general, the survey has shown a high level of students' satisfaction.

What do you think of studying without a coursebook?  
64&nbsp;ответа

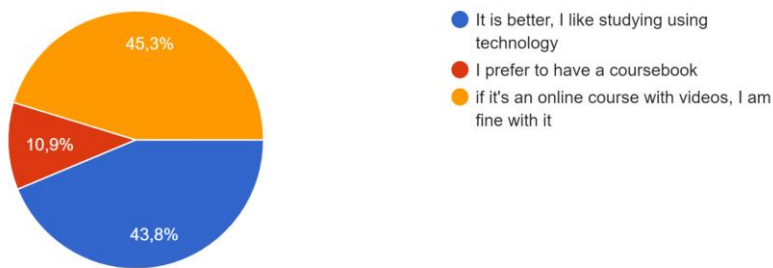


Chart 1. Survey, part 1.

As the given diagram shows, the satisfying number of the respondents are confident about taking online courses within their Academic English Program based on online ASU repository.

What academic skill(s) you learned throughout the Academic Thinking course was (were) useful.  
Choose one or several.  
64&nbsp;ответа

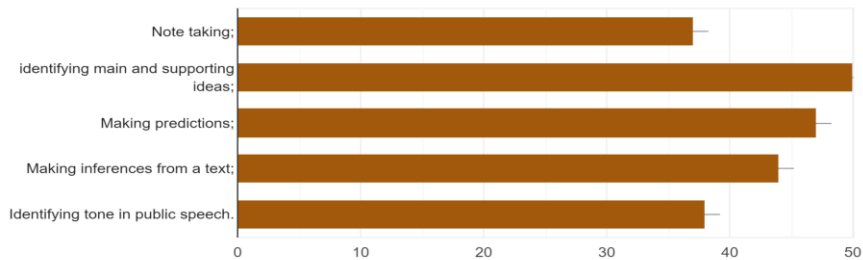


Chart 2. Survey, part 2.

According to the second graph, students have successfully defined the academic skills acquired within the flipped program. The numbers indicate that more than half of the respondents have picked the given options. In addition, three key academic skills were rated as highest.

How easy, or how difficult, was it for you?  
64&nbsp;ответа

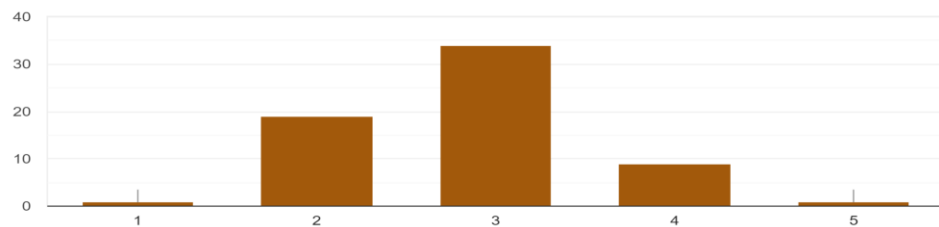


Chart 3. Survey, part 3.

The course in general was defined to be not much complicated which enables the course instructors to make some alterations in the future by adding more challenging and diverse tasks. The courses with the ASU repositories are updated every year and new topic and discussion questions are being introduced. Recently, the Quizlet application have been integrated which completes the course with vocabulary section. This update improves the course a lot and lets its users process the material for more extended period.

What do you think of flipped program of study?

64    ответа

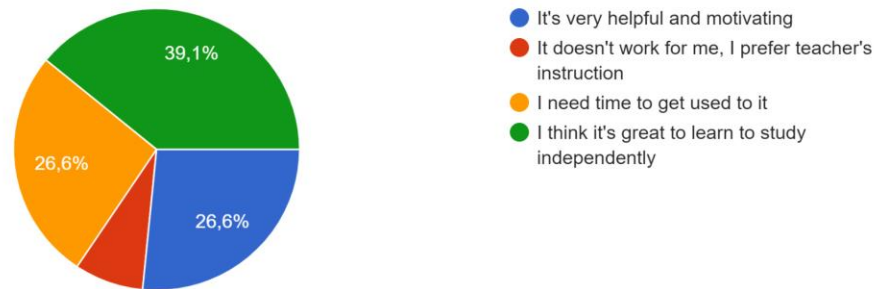


Chart 4. Survey, part 4.

As it has been expected, although learners are still struggling with getting used to the flipped method of acquiring knowledge, most of the respondents have shown the positive trend in the program adaptation.

As far as the answer is concerned in this part, this is blended learning with the flipped classroom elements. The students gave positive respond to this way of learning English language. The usage of modern digital technologies such as smart phones, notebook and gadgets is closes connected to the students' performance. Most of the students are eager to use the smart technology everywhere, the teacher's responsibility is that to encourage them to use it smartly for English language learning purposes. Furthermore, the blended learning and teaching method can be implemented for the course of Academic English, students will achieve significant good result and academic performance. [11]

## Discussion

The instructors of the blended Academic English Program have compiled a SWOT analysis of the course to evaluate its effectiveness. Among common strengths of the program, videos of various types were mentioned. Video material featured mini-lectures, stop and reflect function, which implied questions appearing at different points of the video, and students needed to type in the answers. Discussions were also common to build up the video tutorials. Reading section of each unit had a number of advantages presenting scientific texts with research findings on contemporary topics. Texts addressed thoughtful questions and were downloadable which facilitated content acquisition. The program had focus on academic skills which was far more advantageous than simply revising grammar. The most common weakness of the introduced course was its asynchronous mode with the original platform of ASU which in turn hindered up to date modifications to appear in the present course. Although technical part of the program was sometimes prone to errors, it still had a number of valuable opportunities. This is exemplified by highly effective and

entertaining course interface presenting a possibility to dive into the academic world through visual and immersion content. The threats to mention were minor and confined some topics to be uninteresting or unclear for learners.

According to Tang & Chaw [6], by this research, 5 aspects of blended learning were examined. The first aspect is learning flexibility, for example, students can learn English with the combination of classic methods and using the mobile phone. The second is the access and usage of modern technology, the next is the learn-online mode, as a part of the blended learning course, combined with the traditional learning methods in class, the last is to interact online, most of the students will submit the home task via LMS, they can take the exam or test online.

This research has had a number of positive sides. One of them is a possible contribution towards the investigating up-to-date methods of teaching such as paperless approach, flipped classroom and blended learning. It also allowed us to evaluate the students' attitude to the traditional type of language learning and technology-based one. Another major advantage this investigation pursued is testing various aspects of flipped program such as assigning tasks and completing tests via online digital platform hosting a contemporary online course.

There are some shortcomings in this research to mention. The research was taken place at Almaty Management University, so it cannot generalize to other universities. Secondly, it is about the nature of the question for examining the attitudes of students. Not all the students were sincere about their attitudes, thoughts and opinions. This can be considered as a typical issue for many social researches.

## **Conclusion**

Nowadays, being a professional language instructor involves a number of hard and soft skills and this number is unlimited. The more professional skills are acquired, the more valuable and acknowledged the specialist is. Contemporary teachers are to be able to utilize and effectively apply a variety of methods to facilitate the learning process and stimulate the learners' interest. One of the key skills for every instructor in the classroom is using not only technological devices within the discipline program but modern electronic tools that learners feel comfortable using and are eager to utilize during the class. Since technology integration can stimulate the learners' better interaction with the educational material and enable them to consume the information better, instructors are to introduce them and present in different forms. The educational world is developing fast to satisfy the need for knowledge and ease the acquisition process. Constant progress in education has introduced us such streams as blended learning and flipped classroom approach. Using these techniques can lead us to paperless classroom which can eventually benefit not only the world of education but the society in general as well.

However, mixing traditional teaching tools with blended teaching can bring even more advantages both to the course instructor and students. Traditional methods of teaching are familiar and work really well for certain groups, although combining them



with online courses bring variety and excitement to the learning process in general. There are lots of existing online platforms for learning languages, but not all of them can easily be combined with University academic programs. The courses, developed by University Professors are intended to perfectly suit the syllabi and satisfy the learners' needs.

The language instructors of Almaty Management University within the collaboration with Arizona State University have combined the course of Academic English for second year students and online ASU repository. Since the newly developed course was based on technologically enhanced online learning environment, all the new materials added, featured similar form and style of content presentation. By the end of the two-semester Academic course, the questionnaire, completed by students showed the high level of learners' satisfaction of the online course combined with some familiar methods. The SWOT analysis, conducted after the course has shown that the new program features positives more than the negatives. However, the course advantages which were interactive, techno-empowered, gamified types of tasks by far outweighed the drawbacks of the program. Finally, contemporary trends in IT are to be applied and combined with educational programs with a purpose to vary, enhance and modernize the process of language acquisition.

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## **ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY РЕПОЗИТОРИЙЛЕРІН ПАЙДАЛАНА ОТЫРЫП, АКАДЕМИЯЛЫҚ АҒЫЛШЫН ТІЛІ КУРСЫНА АРАЛАС ОҚЫТУ ӘДІСТЕРІН ЕНДІРУ: АЛМАТЫ МЕНЕДЖМЕНТ УНИВЕРСИТЕТІ ПРАКТИКАСЫНАН МЫСАЛ**

**\*Жүгинісова Ә.М.<sup>1</sup>, Бахтияр И.<sup>2</sup>**

**\*<sup>1</sup>Аударма ісі магистрі, аға оқытушы, Алматы Менеджмент Университеті,  
Алматы, Қазақстан, email: [a.zhuginisova@almu.edu.kz](mailto:a.zhuginisova@almu.edu.kz)**

**\*<sup>2</sup>Аударма ісі магистрі, аға оқытушы, Алматы Менеджмент Университеті, Алматы,  
Қазақстан, email: [i.bakhtiyar@almu.edu.kz](mailto:i.bakhtiyar@almu.edu.kz)**

**Аңдатпа.** Аралас оқыту әдістері білім беру саласында кеңінен танылды. Олар білім берушілер мен білім алушыларға тілді үйрену процесін әртараптандыруға, жақсартуға және жеңілдетуге мүмкіндік береді. Пост-квит кезеңінде оқудың жаңа тәсілдерін қолдана отырып, көптеген студенттерді оқытудың шұғыл қажеттілігі туындады. Өз кезегінде Қазақстанда Алматы Менеджмент Университетінде, Аризона штаты университетінің (ASU) репозиторийі негізінде ағылшын тілін оқыту бойынша заманауи академиялық бағдарлама әзірледі. Бағдарлама төрт академиялық модульден тұрады. Бағдарламаның негізгі мақсаты – терең білімді, сондай-ақ тілдік дағдыларды дамыту, әсіресе репозиторийдің бейімделмеген материалын түсіну. Аралас оқыту моделі осы бағдарламада қолданылды. Модель мыналарды қамтиды: (1) ASU онлайн академиялық курстары бар студенттердің өзіндік жұмысын; (2) студенттерді оқыту процесінде оқытушының мониторингі; (3) кампуста оқытушымен өткізілетін сабақтар және (4) студенттерді ортаға сүңгу тапсырмаларына тарту. Университет студенттерге материалдарды ұсыну үшін, соның ішінде ASU курстарын, Мудлдың онлайн оқытуды басқару жүйесін қолданды. Қол жетімді онлайн курстың негізгі артықшылықтары оның өзекті және жиі жаңартылатын мазмұны, сондай-ақ ең қарапайым және ыңғайлы интерфейсі болды. Курс өзара әрекеттесудің бірнеше режимін ұсынды: білім алушылар мен компьютер, білім алушы мен оқытушы, білім алушы және білім алушы. Бұл мақалада оқытудың аралас моделінің элементтері, сондай-ақ жаңа бағдарламаны енгізудің қиындықтары мен нәтижелері қарастырылады.

**Тірек сөздер:** аралас оқыту, аралас сабақ беру, дәстүрлі білім беру, онлайн білім беру, білімді меңгеру, академиялық бағдарлама, ағылшын тілі шет тілі ретінде, Аризона мемлекеттік университетінің репозиторийлері, Ақпараттық-коммуникациялық технологиялар (АКТ), заманауи.

## **ВНЕДРЕНИЕ МЕТОДОВ СМЕШАННОГО ОБУЧЕНИЯ В КУРС АКАДЕМИЧЕСКОГО АНГЛИЙСКОГО ИСПОЛЬЗУЯ РЕПОЗИТОРИИ ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY: ПРИМЕР ИЗ ПРАКТИКИ АЛМАТЫ МЕНЕДЖМЕНТ УНИВЕРСИТЕТА**

**\*Жүгинісова А.М.<sup>1</sup>, Бахтияр И.<sup>2</sup>**

**\*<sup>1</sup>магистр переводческого дела, старший преподаватель, Алматы Менеджмент  
Университет, Алматы, Казахстан, email: [a.zhuginisova@almu.edu.kz](mailto:a.zhuginisova@almu.edu.kz)**

<sup>2</sup>магистр переводческого дела, старший преподаватель, Алматы Менеджмент Университет, Алматы, Казахстан, email: [i.bakhtiyar@almau.edu.kz](mailto:i.bakhtiyar@almau.edu.kz)

**Аннотация.** Методы смешанного обучения приобрели широкое признание в сфере образования. Они позволяют обучающим и обучающимся разнообразить, улучшить и упростить процесс изучения языка. В период пост-ковид появилась острая необходимость обучения большого количества студентов применяя новейшие подходы в обучении. В свою очередь Алматы Менеджмент Университет, Казахстан, разработал современную Академическую программу по изучению Английского языка на основе репозитории университета штата Аризона (ASU). Программа состоит из четырёх академических модулей. Основной целью программы является развитие углубленных знаний, а также языковых навыков, в особенности пониманию неадаптированного материала репозитория. Модель смешанного обучения была применена в данной программе. Модель включает в себя: (1) самостоятельную работу студентов с ASU онлайн академическими курсами; (2) Мониторинг преподавателя над процессом обучения студентов; (3) занятия с преподавателем, которые проводятся на кампусе, и (4) вовлеченность студентов в задания погружения в среду. Университет использовал онлайн систему управления обучением Мудл для предоставления материалов студентам, в том числе курсов ASU. Основными преимуществами доступного онлайн курса были его актуальное и часто обновляемое содержание, а также максимально простой и удобный интерфейс. Курс предоставлял несколько режимов взаимодействия: обучающиеся и компьютер, обучающийся и преподаватель, обучающийся и обучающийся. В данной статье будут рассмотрены элементы смешанной модели обучения, а также трудности и результаты внедрения новой программы.

**Ключевые слова:** смешанное обучение, комбинированное преподавание, традиционное образование, онлайн образование, усвоение знаний, академическая программа, английский язык как иностранный, репозитории Университета штата Аризона, Информационные и коммуникационные технологии ИКТ), современный.

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