

# Интернационализация образования. Образование в странах мира

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## BLENDED LEARNING MODEL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF EFL LEARNERS' COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE (CASE OF SOUTH URAL STATE UNIVERSITY: HIGHER SCHOOL OF ELECTRONIC ENGINEERING AND COMPUTER SCIENCE)

*I.A. Kolegova, kolegovaia@susu.ru,  
A.I.A. Almani, tigeralmany@gmail.com*

*South Ural State University, Chelyabinsk, Russian Federation*

The world is developing dynamically, and the changes, that occur every day, require instant decision-making. The examples of this are the latest events in the world: lockdown and distance learning. The 21st century has tested humanity for sustainability introducing COVID-19 and many business sectors as well as the education system at all levels had to switch to a remote format. However, the South Ural State University has managed to build a full-fledged online learning system, which provides opportunities for both teaching staff and students. The article reveals the key theoretical and practical aspects of the system of blended learning at the South Ural State University, as a new design for the teaching and learning cooperation: individual education routes depending on the initial level of language proficiency; placement tests to form groups by levels with online support for them; appropriate score-rating system for monitoring students' progress at each level. Moreover, the presented level-based model of education contributes to more effective mastery of communication skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading). The pedagogical model contains three blocks: methodological block, group processes' block and assessment block. The model was piloted in an online digital course with the students of Higher School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science. After piloting the model, the survey was conducted among the students that participated in a blended level education program. The aim of our research was to study the satisfaction level of students with the quality of education and to analyze the implementation process of the blended learning technology. During the research the following tasks were solved: the experience of using blended learning in educational process was analyzed, the level of students' satisfaction with the quality of education system was evaluated. This research shows that the implementation of blended learning technology in educational process had a positive impact on students' learning and the level of students' satisfaction with the education process increased.

*Keywords: blended learning; blended learning model, communicative competence, English as a foreign language (EFL), online support.*

### Introduction

Nowadays the world is developing dynamically, events that require an immediate feedback, and high speed of decision-making take place every day. A bright example of this is the latest events in the world: quarantine and distance learning.

The 21st century has presented humanity with a test in the form of COVID-19, a deadly virus, many business sectors, enterprises, as well as the education system at all levels had to switch to a remote format. However, it is worth men-

tioning, that the higher school managed to build a full-fledged online learning system and education technologies, which open up unlimited opportunities for both the teaching staff and students.

The process of modern learning takes place in the conditions of a rapid increase in the volume of new information, which becomes outdated so quickly that students do not have time to learn the necessary, useful and interesting knowledge, and the acquired ones quickly lose relevance. Technologies are developing rapidly, new

types of leisure are emerging, and there is less time to receive information, process it and assimilate it. Due to the growth of information, the technologization of society, there is a need to use teaching tools that can contribute to the effective teaching of foreign languages. The use of new information technologies in teaching English is one of the most important aspects of improving the educational process, increases its practical orientation, develops the intellectual and creative abilities of students and contributes to increasing the motivation of students in the educational process [6].

Improving the skills of productive and receptive activity in the process of teaching a foreign language is one of the most important factors in acquiring language awareness. The fundamental role plays the development of communicative competence, since the latter embodies other types of competencies [3].

The widespread use of games, the development of the Internet and the need to create attractive educational practices have led to the emergence of edutainment as a new form of education and professional training. Many teachers saw the potential of this form in complementing and expanding the possibilities of traditional learning, but some researchers saw this phenomenon as an opportunity to change the entire educational paradigm, where the emphasis will be on social interactive learning, rather than teacher-supported learning and self-learning [12, 22].

The leading universities of Russia, South Ural State University is no exception, abandon the traditional model of education in favor of a level-based one, since it is the level-based model of education that contributes to more effective mastery of basic speech skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading), the development of which is the main goal of the educational process for students of non-linguistic specialties. South Ural State University (National Research University) is one of the largest educational institutions in Russia and the largest in the Chelyabinsk region. The main goal of the SUSU development program is to transform the university into a SMART university, which will become the basis for the sustainable development of the region, and will also make a significant contribution to education and science around the world.

After the integration of in-depth language training into the educational process, it was decided to use not only blended learning, but also division into groups by levels, which eventually

contributed to more effective mastery of a foreign language. It is blended learning that allows you to better assimilate material in a foreign language, it is an educational approach that combines teaching with the participation of a teacher (face-to-face) and online learning. This learning model puts the student at the center of the learning process, using the power of technology to create a more attractive, effective and success-oriented learning environment. The online environment provides students with the opportunity to control the pace, time, place and trajectory of learning themselves.

A lot of well known scientists studied blended learning: Aspend and Helm [4], Allen, Seaman and Garrett [2], Babb, Stewart and Johnson [5], Boelens, VanLaer, Wever and Elen [7], Boyle, Bradley, Chalk, Jones and Pickard [8], Chandra and Fisher [9], Marsh and Johnson [14], Garnham and Kaleta [11], Rudestam and Schoenholtz-Read [18], Stockwell and Cennamo [21], Deegan [10], Sharma and Barrett [19].

There is no denying the fact that blended learning has a number of benefits for students [13, 21]:

1. Enjoying independence.

The primary benefit to students of using blended learning is independence, and as mentioned here, students become more independent in terms of learning and studying.

There are people who are accustomed to studying alone, and prefer to read books on the subjects they are interested in, mainly because they have difficulties while listening to the explanation of the professor or teacher in the institute.

In addition, through the blended learning, students' skills and abilities can be further developed so that they learn on their own, which awakens the student's interest in his ability and skill for self-research, searching for solutions and answers to his questions in an independent manner.

This feature is great not only for studying but also for life, as this method motivates people to be responsible for the decisions they make.

2. Get the most out of the lessons.

It is easy to notice that students can benefit more from the lessons because they are not only kept within the framework of the theoretical lessons, but aim above all to spread knowledge.

The student can learn a lot because in addition to the knowledge provided by the teacher, the student has continuous access to many other types of educational materials.

Also, the discussion that takes place in a spatial manner mainly allows the student to observe, in his own way, the subject being studied.

3. Finding a link between the university reality and the daily reality of each student.

Students can make their studies more relevant to their reality, they can organize their studies during the times they like to study and fit into their daily routine.

It is not necessary to just go to the spatial classroom to listen to the teacher. The blended learning goes beyond that and exceeds such limits, it is possible to study from anywhere and at any hour decided by the student [16].

Moreover, that studying at a time when the student feels that it is most suitable for him increases his productivity.

Thus, blended learning is not just about finding the right mix of technologies or simply increasing student access to content in a new medium. It is inherently about rethinking and redesigning the teaching and learning relationship. When implementing a blended approach, it is important to go beyond using technology to replicate or multiply traditional classroom instruction. For successful blended courses, a complete redesign of teaching methods is required to create meaningful and engaging integration between in-class and online learning. Some researchers and educators contend the benefits of blended learning are not the result of technology but rather the instructors' reflection and redesign of pedagogical practices in light of new instructional and media choices [15].

The South Ural State University teaches English as a foreign language in order to develop and enhance the linguistic ability of its students and increase their ability to communicate with the outside world, as English is the language of communication around the world. The goal that students interested in learning the English language must be achieved in order to go out to the outside world is to achieve and struggle for it, and this is what many universities are currently doing.

There are many strategies and methods that aim to enhance language learning, and these strategies are usually based on enhancing communication skill.

Therefore, these activities and strategies play a major role in developing communicative competence and working to enable communication

skills, and on the contrary, the traditional education system is based on imitations, memorization, and repetition drills, without the opportunity for use in everyday life, these strategies focus on the form and structures of language rather than its use [1, 3].

The activities on implementation of blending learning at the SUSU promote the communicative competence model as follows [1, 5, 15, 17, 20]:

1. Grammatical competence is attained through investing in the platform the E-SUSU 2.0, includes knowledge of phonology, spelling, vocabulary, word formation, and sentence formation to increase the skills to use such knowledge for communication.

2. Sociolinguistic competence includes knowledge of sociocultural usage of rules, which is attained through the activities on conversation, dialogue in pairs or groups, simulation and role-plays activities, and instructor-student interaction. It is concerned with the learners' ability to focus on settings, topics, and communicative functions in different sociolinguistic contexts.

3. Strategic competence is attained through investing in platform the E-SUSU 2.0, as well as Computer-Assisted Classroom Activities.

4. Discourse competence relates to learners' understanding and producing texts in the styles of listening, speaking, reading and writing to deal with coherence and cohesion in different types of texts so that is attained by using literature and reading.

To sum up, the four skills (reading, writing, speaking and listening) are integral to communicative competence because they are based on how students apply to use social, cultural and grammatical rules according to the context, and thus many students maybe find themselves unable to express their ideas fluently unless if we are not focus to the development of their communicative competence.

According to the references and teaching experience the pedagogical model was created (Fig. 1). It consists of three blocks. Approach complex block gives the principles and techniques to reach the main objective. Group processes block reveals the teaching/learning flipped classroom procedure adopted in each topical unit. Assessment block contains check-points as well as essential criteria. The model required online digital environment course.

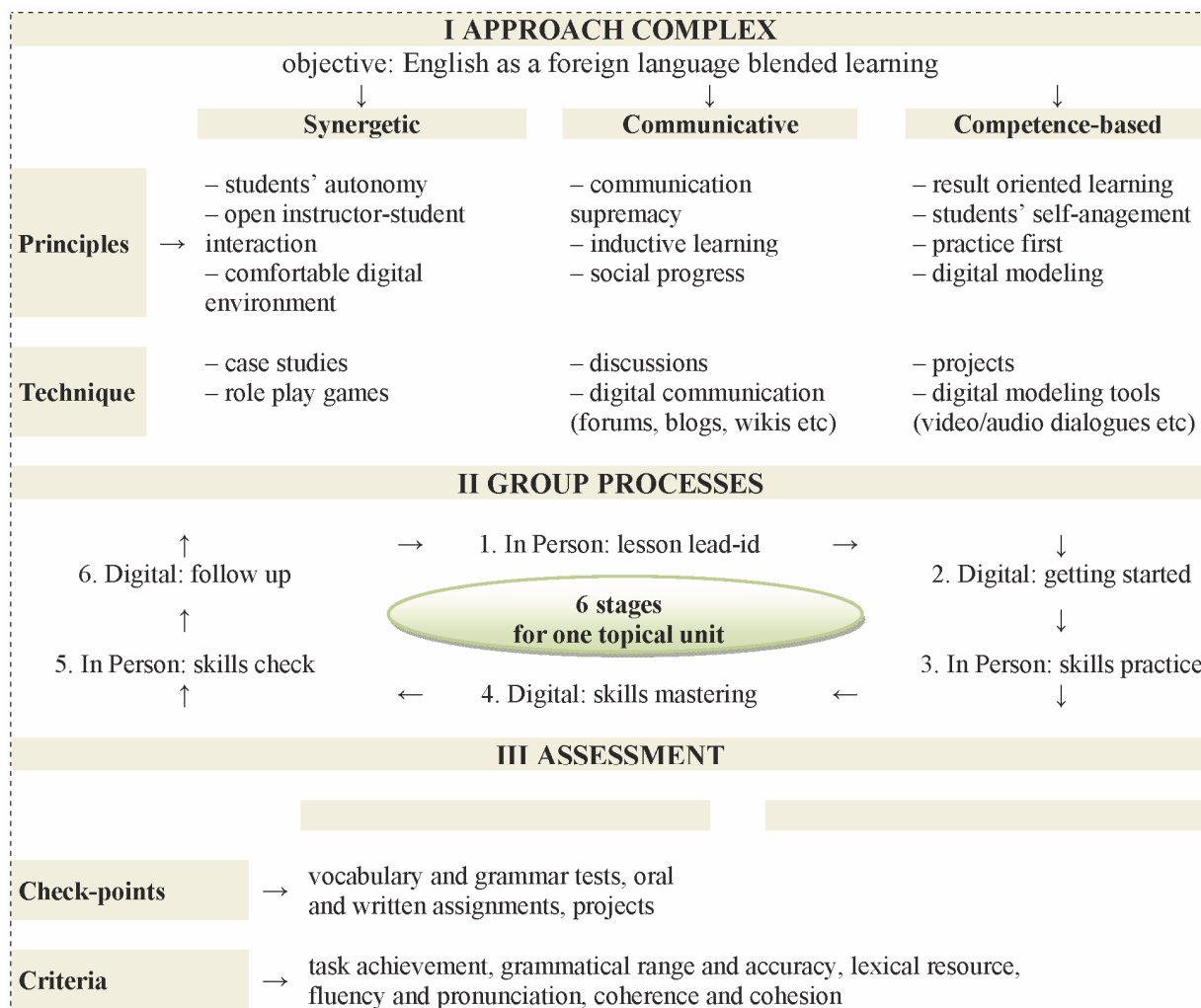


Fig. 1. The blended learning model for the development EFL Learners communicative competence

**Materials and Methods**

The following methods are applied in the study: theoretical (analysis of modern scientific and methodological literature on the research problem; pedagogical testing), empirical (experimental search work; questionnaire, methods of mathematical processing of the obtained data).

In our survey, we studied the Higher School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science students’ satisfaction of the blended learning model implementation. To achieve this goal, we used a method of analysis of performance data and a method of questionnaires. The survey method is the most acceptable and effective for assessing student satisfaction, as, from our point of view, it helps to reach a wide audience to obtain objective and reliable results.

The questionnaire allows you to collect information in a short period of time, reach a large target audience and get reasonable answers, because the questionnaire is conducted any-

mously. The main reason for choosing this method was the ability to achieve all the goals of the study: to assess the attitude of students to blended learning, to analyze the development of language skills within the course, to learn the degree of students’ satisfaction with the quality of education in the context of blended learning. An important factor is the fact that the way the results of the questionnaire are processed seems to be the most accessible.

The survey was conducted using the service Google forms. Students of the Higher School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science of the South Ural State University, who were engaged in a blended learning, were the respondents of the proposed questionnaire. It included both open and closed questions, as we should find out how students evaluate some criteria of this program, as well as analyze their attitude to the quality of education. In order to solve the tasks the following questionnaire was suggested (Table 1).

The questionnaire on the degree of students' satisfaction

Question	Possible answers
1. Do you like the combination of face-to-face and online classes?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> no <input type="radio"/> hard to say
2. Which skills, according to your opinion, did you develop better?	<input type="radio"/> Listening <input type="radio"/> speaking <input type="radio"/> reading <input type="radio"/> writing
3. Are there enough regular English lessons to effectively master a foreign language?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> no <input type="radio"/> hard to say
4. Do you like the English lessons?	<input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> no <input type="radio"/> hard to say
5. How has your level of foreign language competence changed compared to the beginning of studying?	<input type="radio"/> Increased <input type="radio"/> dropped <input type="radio"/> has not changed
6. Distribute the types of tasks depending on their effectiveness for you.	<input type="radio"/> Oral quiz <input type="radio"/> written quiz <input type="radio"/> reading texts in the students' book <input type="radio"/> vocabulary check <input type="radio"/> work online <input type="radio"/> project
7. What is your favorite online task?	<input type="radio"/> Vocabulary and grammar <input type="radio"/> time to read <input type="radio"/> time to write <input type="radio"/> time to explore
8. Do you like to write posts in the forum and communicate with other students?	
9. Evaluate the level of online learning in the university.	<input type="radio"/> 1 <input type="radio"/> 2 <input type="radio"/> 3 <input type="radio"/> 4 <input type="radio"/> 5
10. What would you change in teaching a foreign language at the university?	

## Results and discussion

The survey was conducted remotely with the help of the Docs.Google.com and was offered to students of the 1st and 2nd courses of the Higher School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science of the South Ural State University at the age of 17–19 years. These students (about 100 people) are enrolled in a blended level education program. The aim of our research is to study the satisfaction level of students from the quality of education and to analyze the implementation process of the blended learning technology.

The results of the survey were analyzed in details.

1. Do you like the combination of face-to-face and online classes? 60 students (60%) liked this form of study, 20 students (20%) said nega-

tively and for 20 students (20%) it was difficult to answer.

2. Are there enough regular English lessons to effectively master a foreign language? The total workload of the “Foreign Language” discipline is 540 hours, which includes 3 semesters of study of 180 hours each, with 5 hours of classroom classes per week. This number of classes was considered sufficient by 60 students (60%), for 30 students (30%) it was not enough and 10 students (10%) were not ready to answer.

3. Which skills, according to your opinion, did you develop better? The students noted that the following skills were more developed. The results are presented in Fig. 2.

4. How has your level of foreign language competence changed compared to the beginning

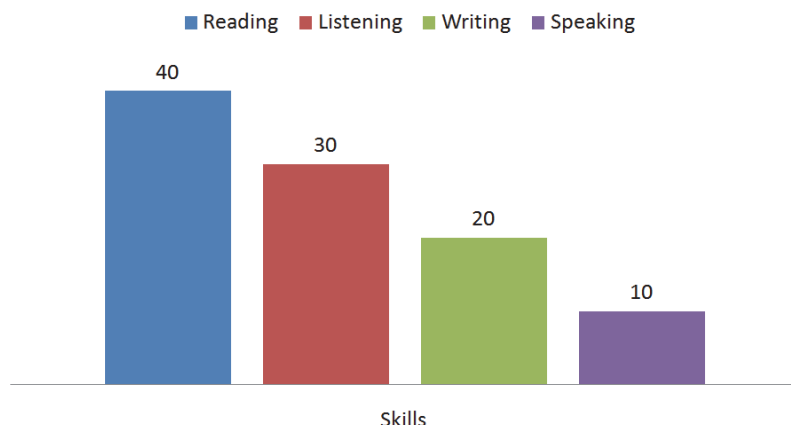


Fig. 2. The results of the questionnaire

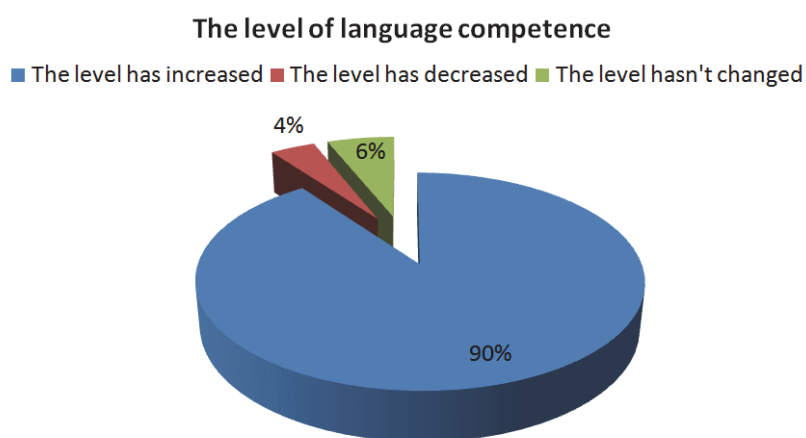


Fig. 3. Students' level of foreign language competence

of studying? The pie chart shows the students' responses as a percentage. 90 students (90%) believe that their level of foreign language competence has improved (Fig. 3).

5. What would you change in teaching a foreign language at university?

The majority of students (80%) said that they are satisfied with this method of teaching and would not change anything. Some students would pay even more attention to speaking (10%) and inviting native speakers to the lessons (7%).

6. Distribute the types of tasks depending on their effectiveness for you. After analyzing the data, we are presenting a list of those tasks that students consider the most effective: Oral quiz 60%, Project task 20%, Online work 15%, Vocabulary check 5%.

7. What is your favorite online task? According to the answers sections "time to read" and "vocabulary and grammar" are the most preferable (Fig. 4).

During the research the following tasks were solved: the experience of using blended learning in educational process was analyzed, the level of

satisfaction among students of Higher School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science from the quality of education in the context of the educational program and the implementation of the blended learning system was analyzed. This research has shown that the implementation of blended learning technology in educational process has a positive impact on students' learning. As a result of it, the level of students' satisfaction has become higher.

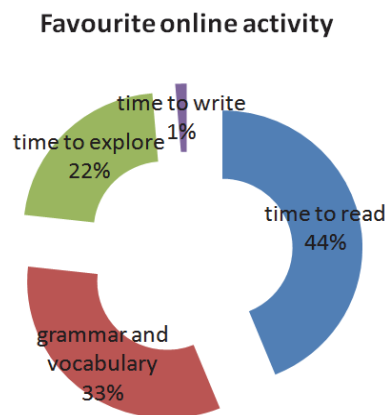


Fig. 4. Favorite online activity

### Conclusion

Summing up, it should be noted that this article reveals the key theoretical and practical aspects of the system of blended learning in the South Ural State University, as a new design of the teaching and learning relationship. Moreover, the presented level-based model of education contributes to more effective mastery of basic speech skills (speaking, listening, writing and reading), the development of which is the main goal of the educational process for students of non-linguistic specialties. The pedagogical model contains three blocks: approach complex block, group processes block and assessment block. The model requires online digital environment course. Furthermore, it was elucidated the analysis of the survey, conducted on the Higher School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science students, who participated in a blended level education program.

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## МОДЕЛЬ СМЕШАННОГО ОБУЧЕНИЯ ДЛЯ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ КОММУНИКАТИВНОЙ КОМПЕТЕНЦИИ СТУДЕНТОВ, ИЗУЧАЮЩИХ АНГЛИЙСКИЙ ЯЗЫК КАК ИНОСТРАННЫЙ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ВЫСШЕЙ ШКОЛЫ ЭЛЕКТРОНИКИ И КОМПЬЮТЕРНЫХ НАУК ЮЖНО-УРАЛЬСКОГО ГОСУДАРСТВЕННОГО УНИВЕРСИТЕТА)

**И.А. Колегова, А.И.А. Алмани**

*Южно-Уральский государственный университет, г. Челябинск, Россия*

Мир динамично развивается. События, требующие немедленной обратной связи, и высокая скорость принятия решений происходят каждый день. Ярким примером этого являются последние события в мире: карантин и дистанционное обучение. XXI век подарил человечеству испытание в виде COVID-19, многим секторам бизнеса, предпринятиям, а также системе образования всех уровней пришлось перейти на дистанционный формат. Однако стоит отметить, что Южно-Уральскому государственному университету удалось создать полноценную систему онлайн-обучения и образовательные технологии, которые предоставляют возможности как для профессорско-преподавательского состава, так и для студентов. Следует отметить, что в данной статье раскрываются ключевые теоретические и практические аспекты системы смешанного обучения в Южно-Уральском государственном университете как нового дизайна взаимоотношений преподавания и обучения: разработка индивидуального стиля обучения в зависимости от начального уровня владения языком; разработка тестов для формирования групп по уровням с онлайн-поддержкой; разработка соответствующей балльно-рейтинговой системы для мониторинга успеваемости студентов на каждом уровне. Более того, представленная уровневая модель обучения способствует более эффективному овладению базовыми речевыми навыками (говорение, аудирование, письмо и чтение), развитие которых является основной целью образовательного процесса для студентов неязыковых специальностей. Педагогическая модель содержит три блока: блок комплексного подхода, блок групповых процессов и блок оценки. Модель предполагает онлайн-курс-поддержку в цифровой образовательной среде. Кроме того, был проведен анализ опроса среди студентов Высшей школы электронной инженерии и компьютерных наук, которые участвовали в образовательной программе смешанного обучения. Целью нашего исследования является изучение уровня удовлетворенности студентов качеством образования и анализ процесса внедрения технологии смешанного обучения.



## Интернационализация образования. Образование в странах мира

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В ходе исследования были поставлены и решены следующие задачи: проанализирован опыт использования смешанного обучения в учебном процессе, а также уровень удовлетворенности студентов Высшей школы электронной инженерии и компьютерных наук качеством образования в контексте образовательной программы и внедрения системы смешанного обучения.

В заключение следует отметить, что данное исследование показало, что внедрение технологии смешанного обучения в учебный процесс оказывает положительное влияние на обучение студентов. В результате этого уровень удовлетворенности студентов стал выше.

*Ключевые слова:* технология смешанного обучения, модель смешанного обучения, коммуникативная компетенция, английский как иностранный язык (EFL), онлайн-поддержка.

**Колегова Ирина Александровна**, кандидат педагогических наук, доцент кафедры иностранных языков Института лингвистики и международных коммуникаций, Южно-Уральский государственный университет, г. Челябинск, kolegovaia@susu.ru.

**Алмани Абдельрахман Исмаил Ахмад**, магистр кафедры иностранных языков Института лингвистики и международных коммуникаций, Южно-Уральский государственный университет, г. Челябинск, tigersalmany@gmail.com.

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### ОБРАЗЕЦ ЦИТИРОВАНИЯ

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