

# The Magic of Innovation



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*New Techniques and  
Technologies in Teaching  
Foreign Languages*

Edited by

Dmitry A. Kryachkov,  
Elena B. Yastrebova  
and Olga A. Kravtsova

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AHELO	Assessment of Higher Education Learning Outcomes
CALI	Computer Assisted Language Instruction
CALL	Computer Assisted Language Learning
CALP	Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency
CBI	Content Based Instruction
CBT	Computer-Based Training
CEFR	Common European Framework of References
CELL	Computer-Enhanced Language Learning
CELTA	Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults
CLIC	Content and Language Integrated Classrooms
CLIL	Content and Language Integrated Learning
DL	distance learning
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGP	English for General Purposes
ENGECON	Saint Petersburg State University of Engineering and Economics
EPOSTL	European Portfolio for Student Teachers of Languages
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
FEPO	Federal [internet-based] Examination in the Area of Professional Education
FL	foreign language
FLA	Foreign Language Learning Anxiety
FLAC	Foreign Languages Across the Curriculum
FLCC	Foreign Language Communicative Competence
FLT	foreign language teaching
HOME	Higher Education Online
HOTS	higher order thinking skills
IATEFL	International Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language
IC	Intercultural Competence
ICC	Intercultural Communicative Competence

ICLHE	Integrating Content and Language in Higher Education
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
JRC	Joint Research Center of the European Union
L1	the native language of a learner
L2	second/foreign language
LOTS	lower order thinking skills
LSP	Language for Specific Purposes
LT	language teaching
MALL	Mobile Assisted Language Learning
MATI	Russian State Technological University named after K. E. Tsiolkovsky
MESI	Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics and Informatics
MGIMO	Moscow State Institute of International Affairs
MOOCs	Massive Online Open Courses
MSAL	Moscow State Law University
MSU	Lomonosov Moscow State University
MSURE	Moscow State University of Railway Engineering
NAA	The Russian National Accreditation Agency
NATE	National Association of Teachers of English in Russia
NL departments	non-language departments
OCW	Open Courseware
OECD	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OER	open electronic resources
PetrSU	Petrozavodsk State University
PFUR	The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia
QAA	The British Quality Assurance Agency
RFL	Russian as a foreign language
SL	source language
TC	Translation Competence
TEL	Technology Enhanced Learning
TELL	Technology Enhanced Language Learning
TKT	Teaching Knowledge Test
TL	target language
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
TSU	Tyumen State University



TT	teacher training
UNIK	Institute of World Economy and Informatisation
WBE	Web-Based Education
WBT	Web-Based Training
WSCL	Web-Supported Collaborative Learning



## INTRODUCTION

Today's down-to-earth world arguably has no place for magic; yet all of us keep looking for – and finding – all things magical, be it in everyday life or at the workplace. The conference that originated this volume “The Magic of Innovation: New Techniques and Technologies in Teaching Foreign Languages” sought to explore the here and now of foreign language (FL) teaching, in an attempt to identify innovations which can help us (FL teachers) work magic in the classroom.

Professional literature has been buzzing with innovations since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and although in this sense innovations are well-trodden ground, *the* definition of innovations in language teaching is yet to be found. For some, it is *novelty* that distinguishes innovations from non-innovative developments (Khutorskoi, 2005); others consider *change* to be the decisive factor (Papagiannis et al., 1982). Yet, novelty and change themselves are tricky to define. Is it only something totally new that can be counted as innovation? Is serendipity the mother of innovative change?

Obviously innovations come in various guises and include not only totally new ways of teaching; major breakthroughs in FL methodology do not happen too frequently. Innovations today tend to focus on new *modes of application* of existing tools, extensions to new audiences and other modification of the learning environment. Change is to be *deliberate* (as compared to accidental), and it is to *develop* purposefully at least one area of FL communicative competence (see also [Yastrebova, Kryachkov, 2013]).

This broader interpretation of FL teaching innovations accounts for the variety of issues dealt with in this volume, which is thematically organised around the following areas:

- the innovative use of ICTs in foreign language teaching (Part 1);
- new developments in methodology (Part 2);
- approaches to course and materials design (Part 3);
- language theory in FL teaching (Part 4).

Part 1 *Making the Most of E-learning* opens with the chapter “E-learning in Russian Higher Education: Challenges and Responses” by Olga V. Lvova, Maria Y. Kopylovskaya and Tatiana M. Shkapenko, who in many respects set the context for the volume by analysing major ICT-related trends in modern FL teaching in Russia. After a brief introduction, the authors

analyse two overlapping concepts – e-learning and what became known in Russia as informatisation of education, giving particular focus to the latter as the prevailing paradigm among Russian educationalists. Informatisation processes are viewed as a response on the part of universities to the perceived need to find their own niche in “the market of educational services”, a task which is difficult to achieve given the rising level of competition. The authors provide a brief overview of distance, blended and mobile learning trends in FL teaching in Russia, which aim to enhance learning outcomes and foster a new type of thinking required to keep up with the rapidly changing world. The chapter also presents the results of research into the concept of information and telecommunication competencies.

While Sergey S. Khromov and Natlya N. Udina in Chapter 2, “Learning Technologies and New Models of Teaching Foreign Languages”, also reflect on e-learning related issues, their primary interest lies in exploring how new – and not so new – learning technologies influence the way foreign languages are taught. It is precisely in this context that they analyse distance learning in two of its incarnations – as a mode to teach autonomous courses on specific subjects and as a tool that has a fitting place in the toolbox of a teacher of a particular subject. In the former case, the authors’ emphasis is on the choice of methodology and particular forms of distance learning, while in the latter – on a reasonable mix of distance learning and other available methods. As in Russia non-language students study primarily foreign languages for specific purposes, Sergey S. Khromov and Natlya N. Udina give an account of their hands-on experience of how new learning technologies can be used to overcome some of the problems arising in the development of communicative competence in ESP due to the lack of special subject knowledge. The proposed network enculturation model, based on an extensive use of educational institutions’ and professional network communities’ websites in the subject area, addresses the issue by creating a socially contextualised and technology-enhanced language learning environment in an LSP course.

In Chapter 3, “Developing Communicative Competence Through Internet and Digital Technologies”, Galina G. Artyushina, Elena I. Baguzina, Olga G. Plekhova and Olga A. Sheypak invite us into the classroom to explore how podcasts and WebQuests can help university FL teachers to organise students’ self-study efficiently and make up for insufficient contact hours. The analysis of the practicalities and value of using podcasting in FL teaching at undergraduate level is complemented by the results of a survey of over 700 students, revealing their attitudes toward this creative and highly motivating technology. Based on the project method, inquiry-

oriented learning and the ability to integrate online resources, WebQuests, in their turn, have also demonstrated their great educational potential as they are student-centred and intellectually engaging. The authors conclude that although WebQuests are mostly team projects and podcasts focus on individual work, both technologies have a lot in common in that they develop students' FL communicative competence, encourage their personal and professional development, motivate them to study English and contribute to their educational mobility.

Chapter 4, "Blended Learning: In Search of the Right Blend", by Olga A. Kravtsova and Anna V. Galiguzova looks at the blended learning approach to teaching foreign languages. After giving a general historical, methodological and terminological background, the authors discuss the advantages and disadvantages of using information and communication technologies in teaching and learning foreign languages, with a particular focus on the situation with blended learning in Russian tertiary education. ICT have arguably changed the quality of the educational process and dramatically raised the standards of language learning. Apart from enhancing student motivation and facilitating the acquisition of professional competencies, ICT develop students' ability for constant self-improvement and self-development, which is the ultimate goal of professional education. At the same time, the authors sound a note of caution: excessive or uncontrolled use of ICT is fraught with a number of pitfalls, ranging from a highly negative impact on students' health to information overload, major changes in the characteristics of attention and a decreased capacity for analytical thinking. This calls for a balanced approach to ICT application, which, in the authors' view, is to be found in the "right" blend of traditional face-to-face and technology enhanced learning.

Chapter 5, "Active Learning Methods in Teaching Foreign Languages at Russian Universities", by Elena A. Mensh and Nataila V. Matveeva introduces Part 2 *Teaching Foreign Languages: Teaching to Learn, Learning to Teach*. This chapter deals with ways of involving students in research simulation and various creative communicative activities to facilitate the development of communicative competence in a foreign language. The authors offer their classification of active learning methods and useful insight into how they are used in Russia. They draw on their practical experience of designing learning activities at the final stage of studying a topic when students' skills are integrated in the context of simulating professional communication. It is claimed that student discussion, case study and role play, which appear to be the most widely used methods, are mutually compatible and complementary and are most effective when applied in a consistent

manner. Maintaining that case study can be used both separately and as an integral part of a role play to simulate future professional activities, the authors describe several role plays in greater detail. These practices proved effective at two very different universities: Tyumen State University and Moscow State University of Railway Engineering.

Chapter 6, “Project Work: Traditions and Innovations”, by Irina E. Abramova, Anastasia V. Ananyina, Elena P. Shishmolina and Natalia E. Medvedeva looks at project work activities as a means of “language socialisation”. The authors posit that integrating project work into the EFL process involves students in specific social relations, which enables them to assimilate cultural and historical knowledge and perform cognitive and language tasks according to the norms of a specific ethnolinguistic culture, thus minimising communication barriers and foreign language anxiety. After analysing some of the major challenges in Russian EFL classrooms, the chapter seeks to prove that collaborative project work can successfully resolve them and meticulously describes the various stages of students’ film making projects including assessment, and therefore gives insight into the inner workings of the method. The results of this interesting study show that filmmaking facilitates the development of a sustainable, flexible and healthy learning environment.

In Chapter 7, “Challenges and Innovation in Communicative Competence Assessment at Russian Universities”, Irina A. Mazaieva and Alexey A. Korenev look at the situation with assessment at the leading Russian universities, highlighting the major challenges and pedagogical innovations in the areas of continuous assessment and testing. At present, an increasing number of communicative language syllabi declare that a combination of testing (oral and written) and alternative assessment forms (portfolio, project, class participation records, and criterion-referenced assessment) is applied. This mix of tradition and innovation created favourable conditions for pedagogical initiative and innovation, while the discrepancy between tradition and innovation is posing a major threat to the consistency of assessment as well as to the validity and reliability of assessment systems at university. The chapter suggests a pedagogical strategy of developing criteria-referenced descriptors of continuous performance assessment when assessing students’ writing skills, as well as a strategy of implementing the practice. There are also some significant insights into the effect of criteria-referenced assessment on teacher and student development.

In Chapter 8 attention turns to questions of training the teacher who seeks to meet the challenge of the modern classroom. Natalia I. Tsvetkova and Elena N. Solovova in “A New Teacher: In Search of Identity” remind

us that the most efficient way to ensure that FL teachers have expertise relevant for today's classroom is through innovative in-service training, and they endeavour to identify the right ingredients of such programmes. Drawing on the results of a survey conducted among Russian university teachers from various cities and a thorough analysis of a vast body of Western and Russian literature, the authors pinpoint challenges in teaching FL to millennial students and describe the competencies a modern FL teacher is expected to possess. The undertaken study suggests that in-service training should above all focus on such areas as student assessment and self-assessment (one of the crucial elements of teachers' professional development), interaction techniques, materials development and course design including ways to combine ESP, EGP, EAP and organise students' self-study.

Part 3 *Looking for New Approaches to Course and Materials Design* opens with a contribution from Larisa G. Kuzmina, Aleksey Y. Krashennikov and Elena V. Pivovarova. Their chapter, "Developing Students' Translation Competence in the Framework of New Educational Standards", calls for a competence-based approach to teaching translation to non-language majors. From a practical point of view, they argue, it is reasonable to integrate training in translation with teaching a foreign language. The chapter offers a theoretical perspective on the new educational paradigm and new pedagogical guidelines to be followed in FL teaching. To show how these principles can be put into practice, Chapter 9 also describes an innovative textbook of an integrated type, which aims at developing learners' professional translation competence. As the structure of the textbook can be reproduced in similar educational contexts, these insights can help university FL teachers create efficient teaching materials for use in professionally-oriented language learning.

Chapter 10, "Modernizing Traditional Foreign Language Coursebooks for University Students", by Nina V. Popova, Marina S. Kogan and Dmitry A. Kryachkov discusses the role of computer technologies in modernising traditional FL coursebooks. While computer technologies have been part and parcel of the FL learning environment for a long time, today the academic focus is mostly either on computer-assisted learning or the traditional components of FL courses, with insufficient attention given to their interface. This chapter looks at ways of combining both and proposes a working model of a modified FL coursebook for university students, consisting of three components: language content (lexis and grammar), professionally-oriented subject matter and a computer-assisted learning environment. The authors discuss the added value of the proposed approach and conclude that using computer technologies to modify

traditional FL textbooks is more advantageous both for the learner and the teacher than developing more complex, time consuming and expensive full-scale digital courses.

In Chapter 11, “Introducing CLIL at Russian Universities Through Interdisciplinary Approach”, Nina A. Zinkevich and Bella L. Ivanova explore a new approach to teaching ESP at the tertiary level aimed at developing students’ career-specific competencies. Based on the experience of two universities – ENGECON in Saint-Petersburg and MGIMO in Moscow – it exemplifies steps taken towards integrated teaching/learning of content and language. CLIL methodology is implemented at both universities in various forms such as lectures, team teaching, binary seminars, project presentations and research conferences, business games and simulations, all of which help to enrich content, develop cognition, and enhance cross-cultural and communication skills in line with CLIL principles. The authors conclude that the introduction of CLIL at their universities, albeit along different trajectories, has clearly benefited both students and teachers. It is an approach that enhances students’ subject and language competencies and facilitates professional growth among teaching staff.

In Chapter 12, “From Bachelors to Masters: Suggestions for Course and Materials Design”, Elena B. Yastrebova and Dmitry A. Kryachkov propose a “continuum” model of developing communicative competence in an ESP course, with a particular focus on transition from a Bachelors programme to Masters. The proposed modular course for students of international relations (IR) at MGIMO University has a spiral design, which intertwines ESP with EAP and EGP due to the specific identity of English for IR. The authors are convinced that an ESP course is more effective if it takes into account the specific features of young adults’ learning and if designed around activities aimed at developing professional skills rather than around subject matter, which calls for developing a specific ESP identity profile based on an inclusive needs analysis. The Masters programme, based on a “matrix” design with a built-in foundation course in the first semester, aims to cater for the needs of Masters students with different educational backgrounds. The approach suggested by the authors is expected to ensure a smooth transition for Masters students.

Part 4 *From Research Findings to Language Teaching* begins by looking at how the knowledge of conceptual structures underlying the semantics of discourse and language units can help minimise the negative influence of a learner’s first language on the acquisition and use of other languages. Elena G. Beliaevskaya and Nina A. Levkovskaya, in their illuminating article “Cognitive Modeling in Teaching English as a Second Language” posit



that if the conceptual inner form of word semantics as well as the conceptual structures underlying different types of argumentative discourse in English are reconstructed in the process of linguistic analysis and applied in teaching and learning English as a second language, they help avoid subconscious translation from the learner's first language (Russian) into the second language (English), thus ameliorating the effect of native language interference. The proposed concept is supported by a comparative study of synonym discrimination and argumentative discourse organisation, particularly in English and Russian essays.

Chapter 14, "Biosemiotics and Prototype Semantics in Understanding Lexical Polysemy: Implications for Applied Linguistics", by Dmitry N. Novikov and Svetlana A. Pesina makes a case for the practical application of a new approach to investigating the nature of lexical polysemy which is based on the tenets of bio-cognitive linguistics. Language learners are known to have difficulty in remembering numerous senses of polysemantic words. Mechanical enumeration of all possible contexts in which a word may appear is, therefore, not a very productive way to acquire vocabulary, as it requires of a student much cognitive effort and considerable resources of memory. Instead, the authors propose to focus on invariant meanings of polysemantic words, which serve as sort of "prototypes" for all senses to be found in actual discourse. The proposed method provides a word "formula", which remains unchanged in the stream of meaning variations.

Chapter 15, "Intercultural Communication: From Competence to Performance", by Klára Kostková and Nikolai V. Baryshnikov deals with teaching intercultural communication skills. The authors present a model of intercultural communication competence comprising two integrated levels, one of which includes four core intercultural dimensions (awareness, attitudes, skills and knowledge) and the other one is foreign language communicative competence. It is proposed that intercultural training should focus on core intercultural dimensions and models of intercultural communicative competence to enable learners to communicate appropriately and effectively by using authentic intercultural strategies. The chapter gives particular attention to strategies of communicative attack (compliment, flattery, irony, etc.) and self-defense (criticism, retort, communicative boomerang, etc.), which are of practical value to FL teachers.

This collection of essays is unique in that it brings together researchers and practitioners working in a variety of contexts: from technological to classical universities, from language schools to top higher education institutions for would-be diplomats, from the harsh climate of the Siberian

city of Tyumen to Prague in the heart of Europe – all drawing on their direct teaching experience. As the contributions are co-authored by scholars from different universities, cities and sometimes countries, they give an idea of how the same FLT issues are dealt with in different educational environments. One thing the authors have in common, apart from their passion for teaching and an aspiration to bring innovation into the classroom, is that all of them work at what in Russia became known as non-linguistic universities, i.e. universities offering primarily non-language degrees, which makes the authors' experiences particularly valuable as they are not geared towards FL proficient language students and can be applied across various academic environments. While the essays may not offer ready-made solutions to all problems, they address a broad range of issues that continue to challenge language teachers.

This volume could not have been written without the help and support of those who were involved in the project. We wish to thank all the authors for their enthusiasm, commitment and perseverance. Our gratitude also goes out to Steve Elliott, Anna Tumanova and Ekaterina Lukianchenko, whose expertise, skills and dependability have helped make this project a reality. A special thank you is owed to our families and friends, whose patience and encouragement sustained us throughout the many long hours of work.

*Editors*

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**PART I:**

**MAKING THE MOST OF E-LEARNING**



# CHAPTER 1

## E-LEARNING IN RUSSIAN HIGHER EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES

OLGA V. LVOVA, MARIA Y. KOPYLOVSKAYA,  
TATIANA M. SHKAPENKO

The modern market of educational services in Russia is going through rapid and radical changes in an attempt to accommodate the actual needs of the social environment. More and more efficient methods of teaching are being introduced and innovative technologies of learning are being developed. In the light of this, information technologies are most welcome as they have enormous potential and introduce new methods and ways of learning into the world of education. It is obvious that the internet, being an inalienable part of our everyday life, cannot but penetrate this area of human activity. Thanks to the World Wide Web, today's EFL teachers and their students can access different forms of information, enjoy authentic language through audio and video web resources, communicate in social networks, and have virtual contacts with the world from almost any part of Russia's vast territory. Both education specialists and learners enjoy an incalculable variety of technologies and facilities that possess obvious pedagogical potential in terms of their progress. How can one select those that are the most appropriate and relevant?

This question has no easy answer, because the entrenchment of e-learning is a multi-faceted and challenging process. The challenges are predominantly of a practical nature, concerning financing, scale, forms and search for the most suitable patterns of e-learning development in Russia. Most debates centre on distance learning, blended learning and mobile learning. Yet some of them are purely theoretical, caused by changes that have recently taken place in the system of higher education in Russia, necessitating working out new concepts and strategies. Among the latter is the necessity to conceptualise two key competencies that would be in demand in a digitally

networked society – the ability to handle information flows through language proficiency and the competency needed to tap into the potential of numerous telecommunicative facilities and be efficient in virtual communication. Both are making their presence felt in focused higher educational values and are considered in this article.

Much is being done through cooperation with the international ICT-LT community. In December, 2012, the British Council organised a four-day workshop in Moscow: “Digital Literacies for ELT”. English teachers from universities all over the Russian Federation were invited. In March 2014, the fourth E-merging Forum was held in Moscow – a prestigious event that brought together advanced ICT-LT educators and Russian EFL teachers keen to learn more about available technologies. Another great contribution has been provided by social and professional networks (LinkedIn, Professional.ru), where teachers can compare and exchange notes about new technologies used for ELT. There are also posts from Russell Stannard, a British educator, who, on the web-pages of his Teacher Training Newsletters, generously shares his valuable ICT-LT know-how with educators from all over the world.

This is a brief outline of the e-learning challenges that Russian language education must meet. Let us consider the details of the picture, which would be incomplete without a close-up analysis of the responses to these challenges.

## **E-learning and Informatisation – What, Why and How?**

Today there are at least two approaches to using internet resources for educational purposes. The first involves the design and development of educational networks by educational specialists at the administrative level, with the involvement of students at universities in such learning management systems as Moodle and Blackboard, and reflects a tendency towards institutionalisation of e-education. The second concerns intensifying particular educational courses by incorporating adequate technologies into teaching/learning, but discretely, being an initiative of some teachers or students aimed at improving/assisting/facilitating acquisition skills or knowledge without any administrative interference on the part of the educational establishment as a whole. The latter appeared within Web 1.0, firmly secured its position in EFL methodology, and entered the corpora of EFL terminology as Web-Supported Collaborative Learning (WSCL), Computer-Based Training (CBT) and Web-Based Training (WBT). Within the framework of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), the first approach has traditionally been referred to as e-learning,

while the second one entered the discourse of EFL methodology as Technology Enhanced Learning (TEL).

The boundaries between both above-mentioned approaches are obviously rather circumstantial and, in practice, their use is normally complementary. It has been explicitly demonstrated in blended learning in language education.

A sort of institutionalism can be observed at a more fundamental level of methods and approaches. While in Russia educators emphasise research into *teaching English* as a foreign language, their counterparts in the West, within the framework of the Learner-Centered Approach, consider *learning English* to be the focus of research and effort. This is true for e-learning as well: in Europe and the USA distance educational technologies are more related to informal open learning; in Russia the dominant trend is to institutionalise distance forms of education. However, more often than not, university professors opt for technology-enhanced teaching, integrating technologies in their courses and workshops without any pressure from the top.

Sometimes a similar attitude towards e-learning can be observed beyond Russia's borders, by those who believe that the question to use or not to use ICT instruments in the classroom remains at the discretion of the faculty. Some are of the opinion that, in spite of e-learning being around for approximately twenty years, the place of technology ("technology in and out of the classroom") should still be determined by the professor, while the educational establishment rarely demonstrates any support or enthusiasm. What is more, on-line learning is still far from being popular on some campuses (Kirshner, 2012).

Integrating e-learning in Russia's language education is predetermined by *kompetentnostnyi podkhod*, or *competency approach* – a nationwide educational concept that emphasises the value of practicalities over purely theoretical knowledge; it implies readiness to use this knowledge in practice and prioritises knowledge and skills that will be in demand in the labour market in the near future (Baidenko, 2005; Tatur, 2004; Zeer, Symanyuk, 2005). Within the framework of this approach and with the undeniable presence of information technologies in all spheres of life, the government and educational authorities of the Russian Federation initiated a process of informatisation of national education, and encouraged educational institutions to promote all possible forms of e-learning.

The term e-learning is widely used by researchers writing in English for the international community. In Russia e-learning is viewed as an educational format that should be institutionalised and carried out with higher educational establishment oversight. Thus, in the narrative of national

academic language education, the term *informatisation* is more relevant and inclusive as it covers not only the matter of educational content (what should be taught electronically), but also considers the reasons why the content should be provided in e-format and prescribes the procedure of integrating technologies into education.

The process of informatisation was a response to the recognition of the urgent need to introduce innovative ICT-tools and strategies into education, and has been confirmed by a number of legal and developmental initiatives. Among the most fundamental are the Order of the Ministry of Education “On Coordination of Work in the Sphere of Informatisation of Education” (2001), and the Federal Law on Education of the Russian Federation on Education (2012) (On Coordination of Work [see 2 lines above]; 2001; Federal Law, 2012). These documents laid the foundation for a set of significant changes in education in the Russian Federation and started the informatisation process.

In 2001, the State Institute of Information Technologies and Telecommunications “Informika” was commissioned to initiate work on creating a Federal Centre for Educational Resources, which was implemented in four stages: 1) collecting and storing all available educational information resources (accumulating relevant content); 2) designing a unified system of cataloguing and search of educational resources (the system of web-based subject directories); 3) designing the system of web-support of educational processes (virtual learning environments with integrated virtual lecture and practicum courses); and 4) designing integrated web-supported virtual learning environments in education (providing access to educational resources securing required learning outcomes and providing support for authors willing to create an educational resource). Although, in their mission statement, the Centre declares that they provide educational resources at all levels of education, in fact higher educational resources are currently underrepresented. There are no resources for EFL classes at university level at all. However, the institution is involved in a number of informatisation projects for education in Russia with Information and Telecommunication Technologies in Education (2003), One-Stop Access to Educational Resources (2005) being the largest (Titova, 2011; State Institute of Information Technologies and Telecommunications: Projects).

Informatisation of language education in Russia is also gaining momentum. In addition to this process, there are aims to systemise available linguistic and linguo-didactic knowledge and to foster new knowledge in these areas of education. E-learning, when introduced at the institutional level,



fulfills two fundamental strategic aims: firstly, to increase the effectiveness of each kind of educational activity by means of information and telecommunication technologies, and secondly, to promote a new type of thinking that can accommodate the needs of an information-oriented society. Using methods and means of education emerging with the informatisation of education, a future specialist in his or her problem-solving area should be able to apply knowledge about available and professionally relevant information resources, know where they are located, how to access them and how to use them to increase the effectiveness of professional activity.

The need to explore technical means, methods and technologies of integrating ICT-tools into educational processes resulted in the creation of a chair for Informatisation of Education at Moscow City Pedagogical University. There are similar departments in other higher educational institutions, for example: Yesenin State University in Ryazan, and the Novikova Institute for Development of Education in Vladimir. Research is based on founding the basis for the development of the information educational space, and searching for ways to motivate faculty members to integrate information technologies in their everyday practice.

Any educational process involves two main parties – teachers and learners – and Russia's pedagogic community is now concerned with the teacher-training aspect of e-learning. To work within an e-learning format, a teacher must be competent in the ICT sphere. The problem is currently being looked at by many scholars. Svetlana V. Titova, Moscow State University, is considering the issue in the light of the information-communication competency of language teachers in the context of the new higher education standards. Maxim N. Yevstigneev, Tambov State University, developed the methodology of fostering and designed the structure of ICT competence of foreign language teachers. Marina A. Bovtenko, Novosibirsk State University, is exploring the linguistic component of ICT competence for foreign language teachers. A great number of Russia's universities offer teacher-training programmes for preparation in the e-learning format of teaching, among them Irkutsk State Pedagogic University, Moscow State Institute of Electronics and Mathematics, Tomsk State University (Titova, 2009; Yevstigneyev, 2011; Bovtenko, 2010).

Gaining experience in the practical and theoretical problems concerning the informatisation of foreign language learning is also a focus of the International Scientific and Practical Conference on Information and Communication Technologies in Linguistics, Linguodidactics and Intercultural Communication, which has been held every two years since 2004, and has been inviting teachers and scholars involved in comparable investiga-

tions in many countries (See the collection of works at <http://conf.lingvo-grad.ru>). There are also individual attempts to accelerate the process of informatisation, such as the course on Theoretical and Pragmatic Basics of Integration of ICT Technologies into Linguodidactics (Theory of FL Methodology), developed by Prof. Emeritus A.L. Nazarenko, Moscow State University, at the wiki spaces educational service (Nazarenko, 2012).

The necessity to prepare ICT-competent teachers involves meeting the needs of a new e-Learner, as, according to D. Tapscot and M. Prensky, the educational process is divided into digital natives and digital immigrants (Bennett, Maton, Kervin, 2008). The net generation of students display new characteristics in their cognitive behaviour, galvanise the process of entrenching e-learning and necessitate changes in the content and organisation of language education (Kopylovskaya, 2014:173).

Some researchers consider different types or forms of e-learning to be a continuum (an entity of closely related phenomena), from integration of different web services into traditional classroom learning, to blended learning and then distance, on-line learning. We would like to discuss the state of the art and the challenges of some technologies in e-learning, mostly in Russia. We will start with distance learning.

## **Distance Learning – How Long is the Distance?**

The early history of ICT-based distance learning in Russia dates back to 1990, when, under the auspices of Russia's Academy of Education and under the guidance of Prof. Y.S. Polat, Herzen Pedagogic University, the Laboratory of Means and Pedagogic Technologies of Distance Learning (currently The Centre of Distance Learning) was created. In the 1990s "Telecommunication in Education" (1993), "Computer Telecommunication to School" (1995) and "Distance Learning" (1998) were published – all edited by Y.S. Polat.

In their project "The Concept of Distance Learning", the Centre's researchers consider patterns of organising distance learning, didactic characteristics and functions of ICT, and pedagogic grounds for distance learning. They distinguish four main types of distance education: 1) interactive television (two-way TV); 2) computer telecommunication networks (regional and global) in text file exchange mode; 3) computer telecommunication networks with the use of multimedia – information in interactive mode and with the use of videoconferencing, and 4) a combination of the first and the second (Polat, Petrov, Aksenov: <http://distant.ioso.ru/library/publication/concepte.htm>).

Even though distance learning has existed in Russia for about twenty years, the rate of its development is rather insignificant. According to the experts, distance learning accounts for no more than 15 percent of the educational market (Statistics, 2012). Information about universities and educational centres that provide distance learning can be found on the Federal Web-portal “Russian Education” ([www.edu.ru](http://www.edu.ru)). The flag ship in the implementation of the new format of education is Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics and Informatics (MESI) – the only Russian member of the European project HOME (Higher Education On-line), uniting universities from the UK, Portugal, the Netherlands, Israel and other countries. This portal demonstrates continuous growth in the number of higher educational institutions offering degrees in a distance learning format, but it is worth mentioning that there are no offers to receive bachelor’s or master’s degrees in foreign language education. Only one institution – the Office of Distance Learning at Moscow Institute of Economics, Moscow Institute of Psychoanalysis and Institute of World Economy and Informatisation (UNIK) – supplies web-based online courses, awarding a degree in the field of Translation and Theory of Translation (<http://unic.edu.ru/departments/translation/>). But on the whole, the analysis of the distance education market in Russian higher education leads to the conclusion that most Russian universities continue to prioritise traditional face-to-face education in the teaching of foreign languages.

The reasons for the constrained development of the new learning format were investigated by the Centre for Distance Education and Information Technology. The survey conducted by this centre revealed that the main reasons for the slow pace of implementation of distance learning are as follows:

- uncertain academic status of distance learning (84 percent of respondents);
  - lack of necessary regulatory framework in the field of distance learning (84 percent of respondents);
  - lack of qualified specialists in the field of e-courses development (63 percent of respondents);
  - lack of awareness in the professional community about the benefits of distance learning (57 percent of respondents);
  - unwillingness of students to change the education format (26 percent of respondents)
- (Lokteva, 2010).

Among secondary reasons, copyright issues were cited, which makes individual contributors reluctant to place their resources on the web for open

access; also there is the reluctance of “old school” teachers to change their methodology, and the lack of trust in the ability of distance education to train academically qualified and responsible specialists. This distrust of innovations is the reverse side of universities’ commitment to traditions and typical of these educational institutions’ resistance to changes, corporate culture and unwillingness to use internet resources as the information in them is derivative and unreliable (Kopylovskaya, 2014:171). Such reverence for traditions can be ascribed to the force of inertia; on the other hand, it could be interpreted as a reliable means of protection against hasty changes, which could lead to a lowering of standards in EFL teaching. In this respect, M. Taylor, a philosopher of religion at Columbia University, NY, emphasises the dangers which can result from an unsubstantiated drive for innovations, arguing that honouring the past is a bulwark against barbarian assaults on the present (Taylor, 2010).

Taking into account the results of the conducted survey, many Russian academicians and university lecturers view the advent of distance learning as a barbarian invasion which threatens to ruin the existing system of education that produces unique scholars and replace it with a new one aimed at churning out low-quality specialists.

Nonetheless, besides the above-mentioned factors, which are arresting the development of distance learning in Russia, there are incentives that promote its implementation. These are mainly external factors: first and foremost, the influence of market mechanisms, which forced universities to act as competitors trying to corner the niche in the market of distance education. According to some educators, the growing potential to obtain a degree abroad, without even leaving one’s native country, could lead to a mass outflow of students and, in turn, result in a diminishing of the current level of national security in the educational field (Smolin, 2008). V. Tikhomirov, science counselor at Moscow State University of Economics, Statistics and Informatics, underlines the necessity of giving an immediate response to the new challenges in distance learning: “American projects, Coursera, Udacity and other movements spawned MOOCs and, thereby, challenged the current systems of education. In fact, they are offensive in the struggle for intellectual capital. In this regard, Russia needs to strengthen its position in this area” (Tikhomirov, 2008).

However, merely an awareness of external pressure is not enough if the country wants to make real progress in the development of a national system of e-learning. There is an obvious need for intrinsic motivation, which can arise only out of personal testing of the new educational format and deep understanding of its benefits. For instance, Prof. A. Torkunov, Rector

of MGIMO (Moscow State Institute of International Relations), in his interview for Russian TV, 29 April, 2014, referred to his personal experience of re-assessing the potential of distance courses. He explained that he drastically revised his previous skepticism about the possibility of learning foreign languages via computers after testing the Korean language distance learning course (Torkunov, 2014). No doubt, the practical use of any language on-line courses can help to realise the overall potential of such courses, because when doing such a course students gain access to authentic audio, visual, and textual information about the linguistic features and the culture of its native speakers.

### **Blended Learning and Mobile Learning: What's New in Our Blender?**

The search for more reliable formats of learning, which, on the one hand, would include such advantages of e-learning as convenient time and place for learning, individual pace of learning with the learning material already selected and, on the other, would help to avoid the above-mentioned disadvantages of distance education, resulted in the development of blended learning.

Blended learning is often seen as a panacea and something of a compromise by many universities. The format combines distance learning, face-to-face learning and self-study. This educational strategy for foreign language acquisition is now widely used and well-developed in Russia. The system is effective and allows learners to be well-settled and supported as they gain experience and acquire necessary skills. This is the reason for investigating and developing different blended courses (See Chapter 4 for more details on blended learning).

In spite of the fact that blended learning allows for significant economy in funding, there are still areas of concern for universities that attempt the transition to a blended learning format. The most challenging is the process of transformation of materials required for studies into an educational information resource and designing means of transmitting these resources to students with maximum efficiency. In other words, the information scattered over different resources should be structured and digitalised. One more problem arises in the process – that of information density. Here, educators are trying to resolve the problem of correlating the amount of acquisition information to be presented, given appropriated academic hours, and the memory capacity of individual learners. The problem of implementing blended learning forms into language education is also a managerial

one and entails fundamental restructuring in the educational establishment. From the viewpoint of pedagogical innovations, the functions steering the educational establishment to non-stop development come to the forefront. Transition to blended learning implies ground-breaking changes in personnel, because preparing a blend requires an army of IT specialists: programmers, web-designers, testers, producers and creative directors. Even the largest universities seem unready to maintain such a staff (Kadyrova, 2009).

Speaking about innovative tendencies in e-learning, one cannot avoid mentioning mobile learning (m-learning). This term has different meanings for different communities, but is closely connected with e-learning and distance education. It focuses on learning with mobile devices: smartphones, iPhones, tablets and iPads. Although m-learning is just starting to gain its position in Russian higher education, the challenges with this form of e-learning are notable. First of all, teachers reject the idea of m-learning as they fail to believe that mobile phones can improve the educational process; moreover, the use of mobile phones is forbidden as they are often used as a crib. Secondly, teachers are often much less knowledgeable about mobile applications than their students. Teachers also feel insecure with mobile learning as there is no tested and reliable methodology for teaching with mobile devices, and, by the same token, the mobile applications corpora is neither classified nor sufficient to organise m-learning for students of different educational profiles and levels of proficiency (Titova, 2012). These fears may at least partly disappear as the first steps in m-learning methodology in Russia have already been taken: a manual on this new e-learning format has been offered to EFL teachers in this country (Titova, Avramenko, 2013).

### **Information Competence or How Not to Drown in the Information Ocean**

One more challenge notable in the realm of e-learning is the proliferation of information due to the growth of the internet. The world-wide web has exerted a ground-breaking impact on the cognitive sphere. In language education, the internet has provided teachers and learners with unlimited access to authentic information in the target language, and it was the same internet that simultaneously presented a livestock of digital instruments to help to convert this information into knowledge.

This dichotomy explains the steadfast interest in pedagogical research in this area and there is clear evidence that a new language educational paradigm has recently started to acquire more or less discernible contours (Raitskaya, 2009; Sysoyev, 2012; Kopylovskaya, 2013; Titova, 2009). Here,