CREATING THE MOST EFFECTIVE TOOLS TO FLIP YOUR FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM (TEACHING EXPERIENCE IN RUSSIAN AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE)

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Abstract

When do we actually need to flip the foreign language classrooms? And how to do that properly? How to create the effective tools for that? This paper explores reasons to choose the flipped learning strategy for your foreign language classroom, such as reduced curriculum, diverse level of student's progress, extensive grammar of the language you teach and more. The article describes the flipped model of teaching Russian as a foreign language and reveals the main principles for creating the most effective flipped learning tools. Authors emphasize that despite the common popularization of technology-based training tools both online and printed materials are important for the flipped strategy learning. Such materials - accordingly to the idea of the research - should be interrelated and complement each other, also should be organized and designed in a certain way. The teaching and learning tools developed by the authors have proven their efficiency in multinational and diverse level groups of foreign students who study Russian language in intensive immersion program.

Keywords: Flipped Classroom, Blended Learning, Teaching Foreign Languages, Teaching Russian as a Foreign Language, Teaching and Learning Tools.

1 INTRODUCTION

Learning a foreign language in the modern world has become less routine and more active and exciting activity. Language learners have the opportunity to practice their communication skills with bots, improve their grammar and writing with multiple online resources, train their listening and reading using podcasts, audio books, music, etc. Technical progress has provided teachers with a variety of tools and helped to solve most of the problems and questions in the language teaching field.

At the same time, precisely under the influence of technical progress the speed of people’s life is changing, it is significantly accelerating. Firms that quickly respond to consumer requests, specialists able to do work not only qualitatively but also quickly, personal devices that respond to user actions with lightning speed are in the greatest demand.

The education has also undergone that intensification process. The number of classroom hours has been reduced, many of which were redirected to students' independent work with online courses. The students’ mentality nowadays has also changed: clearly the words "intensive foreign language course" sound more tempting to them than just "foreign language course".

New processes have given rise to new issues in the language teaching field, and one of the main ones is “how to intensify and individualize the language teaching process without compromising the quality of education”. Many modern studies are devoted to this issue and suggest using the innovative models and new learning technologies and practice (blended learning, mobile learning, BYOD practice, smart learning, etc.) as the best solutions. A flipped classroom teaching model – which allows students to study the topic (theme/ unit) outside the classroom (independently, usually through a video lectures) and use that knowledge during the lesson with a teacher in the classroom – has gained a great popularity among others.

Therefore, the authors of the research have set the tasks: 1) to describe four-steps flipped classroom model they developed for teaching foreign students Russian language under the intensive program; 2) to describe the principles for creating the most effective training tools implementing the proposed flipped classroom model. The model itself as well as the tools providing it differ in their structure (and the principles underlying their creation) from the traditional and commonly used flipped classroom model. That fact determines the novelty of the research.
2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Literature review

In Russian methodology the flipped classroom model was used as early as 1970s – 1980s [1]. Such model did not have a special name and did not imply the use of the computer technologies, but only provided the “transposition” of the material presentation process to the independent self-work students’ field.

Later, in the 1990s the European and American scientists developed the flipped classroom model as part of the blended learning technology. Undoubtedly, this was due to the spread of information and communication technologies (ICT). Back then this teaching model did not have a special name either [2; 3]. In late 1990s and beginning of the new millennium, appeared more and more studies that described in detail and clearly the new learning model [4; 5; 6; 7; 8] In that time the term “peer instruction” appeared [4], as well as the terms “inverted classroom” [5] and “the classroom flip” [6, 8]. But eventually exactly the term “flipped classroom” has become associated with new teaching model we discuss further.

Nowadays the flipped classroom has become a learning and teaching model according to which students go through all the theoretical materials at home (mainly through the video lectures) and do the collaborative practical work in the class. However, in agreement with the Jon Bergmann’s and Aaron Sams’ fair remark, the “flipped classroom” is a term that means not creating a large number of video lectures, but to a greater extent solving the question: “What is the best use of your face-to-face class time?” [9]. Indeed, the main advantage of this teaching model should be seen precisely in the fact that “it frees up class time in which teachers can create engaging learning experiences for the students” [10].

Therefore, the flipped classroom model was quickly adopted by the foreign language teaching methodologies, which always suffer a lack of classroom time dedicated to the face-to-face students-teachers’ communication. However, in the process of its implementation, the teachers and curriculum developers “tend to focus on the technical “what?” rather than the pedagogical “how?””, i.e. they have targeted the online content creating rather than revising their teaching methods in the class. Steve Walsh [11] notes: “Achieving CIC [Classroom Interactional Competence] will only happen if teachers are able to understand interactional processes and make changes to the ways in which the manage classroom interaction”. Christopher Johnson and Debra Marsh [12] have also claimed: “Just considering some of the key characteristics of an effective flipped classroom, we began to realize the extent to which the “traditionally” trained language teachers face change in their classrooms, and these have little to do with the technology itself”.

In addition to, we believe that a truly effective flipped language classroom model entails inevitable the serious changes in all the traditional forms of work for both teachers and students. And above all, this model is determined by the qualitatively new – not only online, but also printed – training tools that ensure the effective model implementation.

2.2 Materials and methods

Before we describe our flipped language classroom model and the tools ensuring its implementation, let us briefly address to the specific reasons that served the model’s development.

Russian language, which effective teaching is our purpose, has a reputation of complex language with a specific grammatical system. The authors of this article, as native speakers, are ready to argue with this statement, but they certainly agree that Russian (along with some other world languages) has the features that may be difficult for foreigners: that language is inflectional, it has a peculiar aspect and time system, non-strict word order, variable word stress, etc. Certainly, such languages as Russian require the large number of the training (drill) exercises in the process of mastering them, i.e. require the routine, long, shaping automatic skills work. Nowadays performing such work in the classroom after the material presentation (as it usually happens) seems to us impractical. And this was the first reason for the new learning model development.

The second reason was the university’s requirement to reduce the number of the classroom hours in favor of increasing the students’ independent online work hours. This trend is not surprising and is common for universities around the world, seeking to "keep up" with the modern pace and trends in people's lives. Unfortunately, the teachers who teach the language according to the traditional "face-to-
face” model, this classroom hours reducing puts in a very difficult situation, from which there is no other way out but to change the learning and teaching model.

The third reason faced by many educators is the diverse level of students’ language proficiency in the same group. Therefore, the question of the efficiency of students’ independent work becomes fundamental. Obviously, it is necessary to solve this problem by individualizing the educational process.

Finally, as we have noted before, a lack of the classroom time dedicated to the face-to-face communication of students with each other and with a teacher also served for a decision in favor of the flipped classroom model. The experience of our foreign colleagues tells us that this problem, along with others that listed above, is relevant for many foreign language teachers around the world.

Having identified the above factors, as well as the negative consequences they entail, we came to the conclusion that it was necessary to turn to blended learning technology and, in particular, to the developing of the flipped classroom model.

Traditionally, the flipped classroom model has two steps: the independent students’ work and the classroom practice. However, we offer students to go through four phases while they study each grammar and lexical theme: 1) the presentation phase, 2) the training phase, 3) the communication phase and 4) the test phase (see Figure 1).

There are six key principles based on which we developed this model:

1. The independent work is preliminary and is carried out at the first and second (preparatory) phases of working with a grammar and lexical theme;
2. The learning tools of the preparatory phases provide students with the complete autonomy and meet their requirements (making their learning process as individual as possible);
3. The learning tools of the preparatory phases allow students not only to get acquainted with a lexical and grammatical theme, but also to do a set of the drill exercises;
4. All phases of the model are closely related: have the same lexical and grammar content;
5. The learning tools of the communicative phase are aimed to stimulating the students’ communication with each other and with a teacher;
6. The test phase includes various forms of checking students’ knowledge (online testing, oral and written form).

Now we would like to explain each of these principles.

The first principle should not be a difficulty for those who understand the specifics of the flipped classroom: during the independent work students master a given grammar and lexical theme, they do it before attending the class in order to prepare for communication practice.

The second principle, as we suppose, distinguishes our flipped classroom model from the other “traditional” flipped models, in most of which the video lectures are used as a tool for teaching students. But is this format actually giving students a comprehensible input during their independent work, especially when they have just started learning language? Is it possible to answer all probable students’ questions with the help of video lectures (in other words, can they individualize the learning process)? Can such lectures provide the training phase? All these questions concerning the training tools that should prepare students for the lesson are still relevant and controversial in the methodology. That is why we propose to
use for our model’s implementation a set of specially designed training tools that ensure student autonomy and individualize their learning process. We will provide more details about such tools later.

The third principle – the principle of moving the routine drill exercises out of classroom to the independent work phase – allows us to save a lot of class time and dedicate it entirely to the communication practice. Such decision is also due to the fundamental didactic principle of activity during the educational process: it is necessary to do a set of exercises after acquaintance with a new studying material.

The fourth principle is the cornerstone in our model’s construction – this is the principle of the close interrelation and interdependence of all the model’s phases. It suggests that exactly the same lexical and grammatical material that students master during the preparatory (independent) phase should be used during the communicative classroom work (when this material is used in speech, in a face-to-face communication), and then, obviously, the same material should be checked at the test phase. The implementation of this principle becomes possible if the teacher is well aware not only of the online content students use for the independent work, but also of each student’s personal progress in mastering a particular theme. In that case the teacher can build his/her classroom lessons on the basis of materials that are correlated to the materials for independent work. That ensures high level of students’ motivation during their work through the first two preparatory phases: without mastering the materials of these phases, it is impossible to succeed either at the communication phase or, especially, at the test phase.

The fifth principle of the proposed model claims that the classroom lesson should be as communicative as possible. All methods, techniques and tasks used by a teacher in the class should stimulate students to free conversations, and therefore they should be problematic, debatable, should affect the students’ personal interests.

Finally, the last principle underlying our model requires the use of various forms for checking students’ knowledge at the final test phase of mastering a particular grammar and lexical theme. Thanks to this principle, we are able to carry out a comprehensive checking: online testing for checking knowledge of the vocabulary, grammar and listening, and classroom test for checking writing skills and speech (where listening is also involved).

As we said, all these principles are the basis of the four steps student take during mastering just one grammar and lexical theme. Thus, students go through this path again and again while studying each new theme: firstly, they become familiar with the material, then do the drill exercises on their own; after they participate in conversations, discussions or debates in groups; and finally they take tests online and in the classroom.

As you may have already guessed, to implement such flipped classroom model (that works by principles outlined above), teachers need the special training tools. Such tools must be as much as possible (and individually) accessible, visual, allowing not only to observe language phenomena, but also to master it in the training mode. These tools should also be able to test students’ knowledge afterwards. In order to identify which type of the tools provides all that, we analyzed the traditional (print edition) and modern educational tools (video lecture and online course) used in the practice of language teaching. During that analysis, we found that, practically coinciding in goals and content, these tools nevertheless differ with their advantages and the intensity of their impact on user’s or reader’s perception. In Table 1 the intensity (strength) of the tool’s impact is shown with intensity of color (and in percent): the darker color and the higher percent number indicate the stronger impact; the white color and the hyphen indicates an absents of the advantage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Video lecture</th>
<th>Print edition</th>
<th>Online course</th>
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<tr>
<td>visualization</td>
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<td>20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>individualization</td>
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<td>availability of training mode</td>
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<td>40%</td>
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<tr>
<td>availability of the test mode</td>
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<td>accessibility</td>
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<td>availability of the creating various and different types tests' tasks</td>
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The analysis showed that the electronic resources (video lectures and online courses) have more advantages in visualization, as they combine animation, video, text and sound (providing multimedia content). However, exactly online course is the most individual learning tool, since it can be supplied with fast and effective help instruments and organized as a hypertext. The practice of the acquired knowledge also becomes easier and faster when online course instantly "checking" students results of assignments, identifying mistakes, demonstrating the correct answers.

It is important to note that the modern language learning video lectures also can provide training and test mode and be more individualized. But this topic deserves to become a separate study. For now, we only notice that the main advantage of the classical video lecture is its intensive visualization, in contrast to the online course and print edition, which have (to a greater or lesser extent) all the advantages presented in the table.

The online course is considered to be the most powerful training tool, although our analysis showed that its capabilities are often limited (for example, the chosen platform for launching an online course can have not enough instruments for creating different type tasks in tests). In this case, it is more convenient to use print editions, since they are able to offer students not only a big variety of test tasks, but also the creative, communicatively oriented assignments, as well as the project assignments. Besides it is important to note that the print edition is more accessible than other teaching tools as working with a book does not require connection to the Internet or having a special device. A print edition is available to students everywhere: in transport, in a café, or outside in the park. Of course, it cannot be called "mobile" tool because of its size and weight, but still we can consider it as accessible.

As a result of this analysis, we came to the conclusion that the teaching tools for the independent students’ preparatory work are mostly effective if they are presented comprehensively in two types: as an online course and as a print edition\(^1\). This allows us to cover the interests and take into account the preferences of a larger students’ and teachers’ audience, as well as to make the material more accessible. You have to admit that the same theme presented in different formats (online and in print) allows you to explain the material using different visual instruments and include various tasks forms in the training section, which is a good way to individualize the educational process. Moreover, we were happy to notice that during our experimental teaching (see the results of paper) the groups of students, who did not give the preference to any particular type of tools, studied the material sequentially, first through print edition, then though the online course (or vice versa), thereby they showed the highest test results among other students who studied the themes only through the one type of the training tools.

Now let us describe in more detail the training tools we created for our flipped language classroom model and the principles underlying their development. These principles were developed on the basis of a large practice of teaching Russian as a foreign language, as well as many years of experience in the development and use of ICT learning resources.

All educational materials (of the online courses or print editions) within a particular grammar and lexical theme are divided into four groups, according to the previously presented flipped classroom model. So, during their independent work, students study the section with some theory of a specific theme and take the tests in the training section after. During their classwork, students (along with teachers) turn to the next section of the theme – the communicative one. Finally, on the last step of mastering the theme students have to take the final tests (online and in class) of the relevant section.

The main requisition for such dividing of educational materials is the interrelation of their content – the fundamental principle of the model and one of the key principles for creating the teaching tools implementing the model. Again, we emphasize that the grammar and lexical material students studied in all four sections should be common (little additions should be justified by the teaching goals), only in this case learners will fix the material in memory and develop the communicative skills.

Let us draw the reader’s attention once again to the fact that absolutely all teaching materials are presented both online and in print. Here, perhaps, many teachers will have questions: “How the materials for effective independent work can be presented in a non-interactive print edition?” And also “How the materials for communicative students’ work with a teacher can be presented online?” These are the fair questions. The answer to the first question can be found in further explanations of the principles for creating our training tools (principles of visibility, individualization, etc.). The answer to the second question is given next. Both online and printed materials for students’ communicative work in the classroom set the same tasks for students and teachers: to develop dialogue, discussion, to express

\(^1\) Again, we have to say that the video lecture can also be a language teaching tool for the flipped classroom model, but it has to be designed in a certain way. So, hopefully, this will be the subject of our next study.
their own opinion on some questions, etc. Of course, the online form does not have (for now) the opportunity to evaluate students’ communication skills, and therefore serves in this case only as a visual (sound, animation) presentation of the content (dialogues, texts and communication tasks). It is certainly recommended to work with that material in the classroom under the guidance of a teacher. We also want to clarify the organization of the test section. The content of the test section is different depending on the tool's type: in the online course students are invited to take a vocabulary and grammar test; in printed study book, students are asked to complete some writing assignments on the topic, as well as orally answer the questions during conversation with a teacher.

The visibility is one of the key principles for creating the effective learning tools for independent (and classroom) students’ work. Obviously, the capabilities of the online course here are much wider and the visibility in this tool's type has a greater degree of impact on the students' perception channels (simultaneous animation, text, audio and video information). In spite of that, we tried to make our print editions as clear as possible: we used a large number of illustrations, colorful schemes and tables, added audio (available for download via a link or a QR code), included exercises for working with Russian voice assistant Alice (to read more about this: see [13]).

Maximum individualization of the content can be called a central principle for creating the most effective training tools for the flipped classroom model. This principle, we believe, distinguishes our model and training tools from those that is traditionally used by teachers around the world (video lectures, podcasts, web sites). A special organization of the training materials allows us to prevent the difficulties that students can face during their independent work and to answer their probable questions. First of all, to individualize the educational materials we present to students all the theoretical information in their native language (this is especially important for the beginners and elementary students of language learning). Embedded help system has also made the material more accessible and individual. In the online course, as you know, the help (hint, rule, example, or full answer) can be called by a single mouse click on the corresponding button. However, in print editions the help hints are also possible. Look at Figure 2. The material of the grammar paragraph was organized point by point: each of the points are separate rules. In the further drill exercises, we used references to paragraphs as a help-hint. There are two options for such references: 1) general reference – that is, hint to the whole exercise in the form of a single reference to the rule / rules; 2) context references, which is the hints for each position of the exercise (in case they are associated with different rules). As our long-term teaching practice has shown such organization of educational material in print editions turns out to be no less effective for the teaching goals than the work with the online courses that include the instant help system.

![Image of Figure 2](image)

**Figure 2.**

The hypertext organization of the materials also contributes to the individualization of training tools. It has been already noted in the work, that the level of students' language proficiency in one group is often diverse. In order to prevent possible difficulties of some students, as well as to deepen the knowledge of others, we use the hypertext organization of the materials in our training tools. Such organization requires additional explanations of many language elements that could be found in the online courses or printed study book available through a hyperlink. Everyone is, probably, accustomed to such hyperlinks of electronic resources; however, in print editions, their using is also possible. Look at Figures...
3, which show such elements of the printed study book. Of course, the prefix "hyper-" is not suitable for their definition, but the words "link" or "reference" are proper. These links explain the phrasal verbs, collocations, terms, a grammatical or a lexical phenomenon with help of the footnotes. The links of other type (references) help to check quickly exercises’ and tests’ results (see further) or connect the presentation, training and communication materials of the book with the reference materials section (see further).

The interactive learning principle is also one of the basic for creating the training tools implementing the flipped learning model. This principle implies the ability of the tool to respond to user’s requests and actions, which is also due to the fundamental didactic principle of conscious and active learning, that claims the key role of “action” in the process of learning and memorizing. In this regard, we offer students in the online course to work with the most interactive resources, supplied with a sound, help-hints, hyperlinks and with a function of instant checking the assignments’ results. Clearly, it is not possible to provide such interactivity in the print edition. Nevertheless, we tried to make the self-checking process of the printed assignments quick, convenient and accessible. And the reference system (see before) we embedded in the books helps students to do that: next to each exercise the number of a page is shown where students can find the correct answers for that exact exercise. It is important to note that these answers are given in the context of the full text of the exercise, in the lexical environment in which they should be in the exercise. This way of providing the correct answers intensifies the process of checking results and makes the answers more visual and clear to students.

The final principle is to provide students with the necessary reference materials. In our training tools, such materials are grammar tables, schemes and vocabularies, connected, as we have noted before, to the presentation, training and communication materials of the tools through a system of references. Grammar tables and schemes cover the material of the grammar and lexical themes but present them in more structured and organized form with examples, so the theme can be visualized and memorized more quickly. The vocabularies, as it may seem from the title, represent the lexis of the themes with translation. However, the vocabularies for more advanced levels of the training tools (intermediate) do not translate all the lexis of the themes (obviously, students more willingly will use the online translator for that purpose), but explain only the words or collocations, that require clarification, such as Russian names (full and short form), names of famous personalities of Russia, Russian toponyms, Russian verbs (that dictionary contains not only the necessary verbs and their translation, but also the examples of their usage, and all of their conjugation forms), etc. In the online course, reference materials can be embedded in the program and activated with one or a few clicks. In printed study books they are located at the end of the books in a special section.

Thereby, we have considered the basic principles underlying the creation of the training tools for the effective flipped classroom model implementation. In order to create the most effective training tools, we achieved the maximum use of the print edition capabilities, bringing it closer to the online one by including 1) help-hints (general and contextual), 2) contextual comments to some collocations or idioms (explained through the footnotes), and also 3) grammatical tables, schemes, vocabularies and the correct answers to the exercises, connected to the body of the print edition with help of the links (reference) system. Thus, we provide students with complete autonomy during their independent work both with online courses and printed study books at the first two phases of our flipped classroom model. That means we can be convinced that they will successfully learn the grammar and lexis and efficiently prepare for the communication in class.

The third phase of our model, the communicative one, is also fully provided with the training tools for students and a teacher (in two types to choose from; in both types audio is available). The materials designed for this phase are texts and dialogues that regard the personal students’ interests. The
complex of post-text communicative tasks is intended to stimulate discussion and free conversations within the study group, expressing one’s own attitude to the problem, describing personal experience in similar situations, etc.

The final phase – the test phase – is also provided with the materials of the relevant section of educational tools (online tests; written and oral assignments, presented in print editions).

The four-step flipped language classroom model proposed in the study, as well as the training tools developed for its implementation, were repeatedly tested (since 2015) during the Russian language teaching in the multinational students’ groups of the Peoples Friendship University of Russia (RUDN University). The last experimental teaching started at the beginning of November 2018, and ended at the end of February 2019. Among the students of this group were Chinese, Vietnamese, Arab nationalities, as well as people from the English-speaking African countries and Latin America. The total number of the students who participated in the experiment was 17, and their age ranged from 15 to 36 years old. The initial level of Russian language proficiency of these students was different: some of them were familiar only with the Russian alphabet and knew several etiquette expressions, some knew letters and could read and write a few simple words, while others were completely unfamiliar with the Russian language (their level can be called “zero level”). At the same time, all these students arrived in Russia late (the beginning of the studying year is in September) and they formed a “late” group that is forced to undertake the intensive Russian language program.

The teachers of this “late” group (we will call it “Group A”) faced with the task of the intensively teaching Russian language students whose level language proficiency ranged from zero to the level A2 (elementary). And the model of the flipped classroom proposed in this study was chosen as the most appropriate training model in that case. The students were thoroughly instructed on how and with the help of what tools they would study Russian. And the results of that studying are described further.

3 RESULTS

The results of the experimental teaching demonstrated the students’ complete mastering of all the necessary lexical and grammatical themes of a given language level, as well as developed ability for free communication on the offered topic and the general engaging of students in conversations with native speakers. Moreover, the experimental group demonstrated higher ratings (see Diagram 1) compared to the results of another group (we will call it “Group B”), that began to learn Russian earlier (in October) and learned it using the traditional “face-to-face” model and some online resources of independent work.

The comparative results of the average test scores of both groups for each of the grammar and lexical themes (32 topics) they have studied during the experimental period are presented in Diagram 1.

It is interesting that at the beginning of the experiment, students of the Group A showed low ratings. This can be explained both by the new learning model, which was initially unusual for students and demanded a certain amount of independence, responsibility and awareness during the learning process,
and by the "not-turned on" (at that time) mechanism of motivation. As you can see on the Diagram this mechanism, exactly like the students’ diligence, began to work towards the fourth grammar and lexical theme, and as a result, the students’ scores were only getting better afterwards. Unfortunately, we cannot say the same about the results of the Group B that was not included in the experimental teaching. As we see, the average scores of this group for tests at the beginning were higher than the experimental group showed, but subsequently they could not overtake the results of the Group A. And the rating of the Group B can be called quite unstable compared with ratings of the Group A.

During the experimental teaching, we also observed what types of the training tools was preferable for the students of the Group A. As already mentioned, students of different ages (from 15 to 36 years old) and different social groups took part in the experiment (some were from province regions of their countries, others were residents of capitals). In connection with this, students’ preferences are divided (see Diagram 2).

![Diagram 2.](image)

To our surprise, a significant number of students (42.5%) preferred to work with printed study books. The students explained this by saying that these resources did not require access to the Internet, and therefore they can use them everywhere: “They are the same as online ones and the audio can be downloaded to the phone… so, there are no problems” (Hassun Ahmad, Syria, 21 year). Supporters of online course (33.8%) explained their preferences as follows: “They are brighter, more active, you can immediately listen to the audio, and don’t need to write the exercises in a notebook” (Y Zigan, China, 15 years old); “The online course is more interesting. I get tired quickly when I read paragraphs of a book, but there is animation and audio right away. So, it is more interesting for studying” (Aida Raphael, Angola, 28 years old); “I like to do the exercises there, because the program immediately shows if there are mistakes and where … you don’t have to look for yourself. It saves time” (Marcos Farag, Germany, 36 years old). However, those students, who chose to work with both types of the training tools (23.5%), benefited the most. Such students studied the paragraphs first by the book, and then through the online course (or vice versa) and showed the highest scores at the test phases of mastering the themes. That is what such students say about their experience: “At first I thought that I would quickly go through the online topic, because I was already familiar with the material through the textbook, but it turned out that it was not so easy. I think it’s because the online course requires more action: you need to type carefully and move some elements of the screen, and compare … well, I think this is a great training” (Donald Obama, Cameroon, 22 years old); “I liked to study the topic online first, where animation helps to understand everything better, the sound is immediately available, and then repeat it in the textbook where you need to do the writing exercises. So, I studied at the same time quickly, correctly typing and writing carefully in Russian” (Lorena, Ecuador, 32 years old).

As we see both types of the training tools proved their efficiency, but their joint use improved the students’ knowledge even more that we expected. It confirms that the various types of the training materials and the interrelation of their content contribute to enhance the quality of education.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The paper raised the question “how to intensify and individualize the language teaching process without compromising the quality of education”. As a solution, a four-steps flipped classroom model and the specially developed training tools were proposed. This decision was due to several factors at once: 1) the specific grammatical system of the language being studied (Russian), 2) the reduction in the
classroom hours; 3) the diverse level of the students' language proficiency in one group; 4) a lack of students' communication practice (more time is spent for explaining the topic).

During the research and the experimental work, the authors came to the following conclusions:

1 An effective flipped classroom model should include at least four phases of work on each grammar and lexical theme: 1) presentation phase (independent theme learning); 2) training phase (independent doing drill exercises); 3) the communication phase (the use of the acquired knowledge in the classroom conversations, debates, discussions); 4) test phase (online test; writing and oral classroom assignments).

2 Training tools that support the four-step flipped classroom model, can and should be presented both online and in the print edition. This increases the availability and quality of education.

3 The online course should be maximally visual (simultaneous animation, text, audio and video information), interactive and individualizing the learning process (should be provided with a help system, instant checking of users' results, be organized as hypertext) and also have to include the necessary reference materials.

4 The print edition should be as close to online course as it is possible so students could work independently, which means that such study books must be visual and include a special help system together with the necessary reference materials and a system of references to them. Such books should also provide an audio material via links or QR codes.

As it is shown by the results of experimental teaching, the efficiency of the four-steps flipped classroom model and the special training tools designed for its implementation, was fully achieved: students who studied the Russian language under the intensive program demonstrated higher ratings than students who studied the language by the traditional model and with more learning time. In addition to that, we should note that together with the high scores, students of the experimental group also demonstrated a greater autonomy, organization, concentration and motivation during the semester, that is, personal qualities which contribute to success both in studying and in their future professional life.

Overall the prospect of this study is the further development of the training tools for more advanced levels of the Russian language learners (B1-B2), as well as the creating the materials for mastering the Russian language in the professional aspects: Russian for physicians, engineers, linguists, journalists, historians, etc. We also hope that the results of this work will form the basis for similar teachers' and researchers' developments of other foreign languages.

REFERENCES


