



BLENDED LEARNING MODELS IN PHILOLOGICAL EDUCATION: CHALLENGES AND PROSPECTS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the integration of blended learning (BL) models in philological education as a transformative approach to teacher training and digital competence development. Drawing on recent literature, including Ashraf et al. (2022) and Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk (2022), the study examines both the pedagogical prospects and challenges of BL implementation in philology. Findings highlight that blended learning enhances student motivation, autonomy, and digital literacy while aligning educational practices with European and international standards. However, the success of BL depends on sound instructional design, teacher training, and equitable access to digital tools. The article concludes that blended learning represents not only a methodological shift but also a cultural transformation in philological education, fostering innovation, inclusivity, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

Introduction

The integration of blended learning (BL) models into philological education marks a transformative stage in the modernization of language and teacher training. As the global shift toward digitalization accelerates, educational institutions increasingly recognize the need to merge traditional classroom methods with technology-enhanced instruction. Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk (2022) emphasize that developing digital competence among future philologists is both an educational and societal imperative, reflecting global trends in digital pedagogy and national policy reforms. Early research by Morze and Kocharian (2014) established a direct link between the quality of higher education and the ICT competence of educators, a finding that underpins the current push toward blended and digital frameworks. Similarly, Henseruk (2019) incorporated the European Commission's *DigComp* framework, outlining essential competencies such as information management, communication, and technical operation—skills indispensable for philologists in today's interconnected digital environment. Thus, BL serves not merely as a teaching strategy but as a comprehensive model for cultivating digital literacy and professional readiness in alignment with international standards.

In recent years, global and regional studies have affirmed the pedagogical potential of blended learning in enhancing cognitive engagement, motivation, and student autonomy. Ashraf et al. (2022) conducted a systematic review of BL in Chinese higher education, concluding that it

fosters self-regulation and flexible learning—key outcomes also observed in Ukrainian philological programs. Similarly, Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk (2022) found that implementing content modules such as “Digital Training Tools” significantly improves students’ digital literacy and adaptability to online environments. Yet, these advancements come with challenges, including disparities in access, uneven digital competence, and the need for holistic institutional support. The intersection of these studies illustrates that while BL provides unprecedented opportunities for reimagining philological education, it also demands sustained pedagogical innovation, infrastructure development, and cultural adaptation.

Methodology

This article is based on a comprehensive literature review that synthesizes theoretical and empirical studies on blended learning and digital competence development in philological education. The analysis integrates findings from Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk (2022), Morze and Kocharian (2014), Henseruk (2019), Trubavina et al. (2021), Tomashevskaya et al. (2020), and Ashraf et al. (2022), among others. These sources collectively inform a comparative framework that explores how BL models shape the acquisition of digital literacy, professional communication skills, and pedagogical innovation in language and literature disciplines.

Results

The integration of blended learning models in philological education represents a critical stage in the digital transformation of teacher training. Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk (2022) emphasize that the urgency of forming digital competence among future philologists stems from both global and national shifts in educational policy and technology use. Early studies by Morze and Kocharian (2014) demonstrated that the quality of higher education directly correlates with the ICT competence of teaching staff, leading to the development of a corporate model for ICT competence. This aligns with Henseruk’s (2019) adoption of the European Commission’s DigComp framework, which identifies core digital competencies such as information management, communication, and technical operation. Thus, blended learning not only merges traditional and digital methods but also becomes a platform for cultivating essential professional competencies aligned with international standards.

The empirical evidence presented by Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk (2022) demonstrates that blended learning facilitates the development of digital literacy in philological students through structured content modules like “Digital Training Tools.” The study, conducted with 90 students at H. S. Skovoroda Kharkiv National Pedagogical University, relied on testing based on the European DigComp 2.1 framework and revealed varied levels of digital competence shaped by age, experience, and exposure to distance learning. Similar findings were echoed by Trubavina et al. (2021), who observed that the formation of digital competence among humanities instructors during quarantine depended on self-motivation, psychological factors, and institutional support. These correlations highlight that blended learning environments are not only technologically driven but also socio-psychologically dependent, demanding holistic pedagogical models that address both human and technical dimensions.

A key methodological innovation in Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk’s (2022) research was the integration of six digital literacy domains—ranging from computer basics to lifelong learning—into a single blended framework. This model parallels the approaches of Tomashevskaya et al. (2020) and Kostikova et al. (2020), who found that digital tools in blended education enhance both student autonomy and engagement by offering new forms of interaction. For instance, cloud technologies and online testing enabled continuous

assessment and self-paced learning, which are crucial for future philologists who must navigate multilingual digital environments. However, the results also revealed disparities among students in mastering advanced competencies like content creation and cybersecurity, underscoring persistent digital divides that mirror the broader educational inequalities identified in European and Ukrainian contexts.

From a policy and implementation perspective, the authors' reliance on national legislative frameworks such as the Law of Ukraine "On Higher Education" (2014) and the Concept of Development of Digital Competencies (Order, 2021) reflects how blended learning is being institutionalized as a strategic priority. The alignment of local reforms with European standards (Henseruk, 2019) underscores Ukraine's commitment to modernizing philological education through evidence-based, competency-oriented models. Yet, as Balyk and Shmyher (2018) and Kelentrić et al. (2018) argue, successful adoption requires not only digital infrastructure but also a shift in pedagogical culture toward collaborative and reflective learning. The inclusion of interdisciplinary faculty—from linguistics to information technologies—in Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk's (2022) project exemplifies this integrative approach, transforming philological training into a digitally enriched ecosystem.

The studies collectively illustrate that blended learning in philological education serves as both a challenge and a prospect for the digital era. The challenges lie in ensuring equitable access, continuous teacher training, and sustained motivation among learners. The prospects, however, are evident in the measurable improvement of digital competence, the institutionalization of international standards, and the enhancement of communicative and professional skills crucial for future philologists. As Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk (2022) show, blended learning is not merely a technical solution but a pedagogical paradigm that redefines philological education through innovation, inclusivity, and interdisciplinary collaboration.

The integration of blended learning (BL) models into philological education has emerged as a dynamic pedagogical transformation that combines traditional face-to-face instruction with technology-mediated online learning. Drawing on Ashraf et al.'s (2022) systematic review of 34 high-quality studies conducted in Chinese higher education between 2016 and 2021, we observe how BL reshapes the pedagogical landscape through flexibility, learner autonomy, and technological engagement. In philological disciplines—where the development of linguistic, communicative, and cultural competencies is central—these findings are particularly relevant. The reviewed studies demonstrate that BL fosters deeper cognitive engagement, self-regulation, and motivation, which are key elements of language learning. Yet, these advantages coexist with persistent pedagogical and infrastructural challenges that mirror broader global trends in philological education (Ashraf et al., 2022, p. 5).

Ashraf et al. (2022) highlight that the adoption of BL frameworks in China intensified in 2019, accounting for the highest number of scholarly publications before a decline during the COVID-19 pandemic (p. 3). This temporal trend reflects a growing institutional recognition of technology-enhanced pedagogy, which parallels similar patterns in global philological education. The rapid adoption of learning management systems (LMS) such as Moodle and the integration of digital tools like Zoom, Mindomo, and Google Drive have reshaped classroom dynamics, enabling more interactive and multimodal learning environments. For philological students—who often require extensive exposure to authentic linguistic materials and intercultural interaction—these tools create immersive opportunities to explore diverse linguistic contexts and communication practices (Li X. et al., 2020).

The study categorizes nine major BL application techniques, with the most frequent being the use of digital platforms beyond official LMS systems (20.58%) and the integration of specific

tools within Moodle (17.64%) (Ashraf et al., 2022, p. 4). This flexibility is highly significant for philological education, where multimedia materials—films, literature, corpora, and online linguistic databases—are integral to the curriculum. Furthermore, blended frameworks such as the SECI model combined with Google services (Plus, Drive, Blogger, and Sites) foster collaborative knowledge creation, a process essential for linguistic and literary research (Jou et al., 2016). These multimodal tools enable students to develop metacognitive awareness and critical linguistic analysis while also engaging in authentic communication—a key prospect for philology’s digital future.

The advantages of BL outlined by Ashraf et al. (2022) provide substantial pedagogical value for philological studies. Among 16 identified benefits, the most frequently cited include enhanced academic achievement (29.41%), stronger cognitive engagement (26.47%), and increased learning motivation (23.52%) (p. 5). For language and literature learners, these outcomes translate into improved reading comprehension, interpretive reasoning, and oral communication skills. Moreover, the learner-centered and flexible nature of BL supports autonomy and confidence (17.64%), crucial for developing linguistic fluency and critical inquiry. In foreign language learning contexts, BL enhances exposure to authentic communication and interactive feedback, improving performance in EFL/ESL courses (Huang, 2016; Wang, 2021). Such results underscore BL’s potential to revolutionize philological education by aligning it with cognitive and constructivist learning theories.

However, the implementation of BL in higher education, including philological programs, is not without significant challenges. Ashraf et al. (2022) identify twelve major barriers, the most prevalent being the “lack of sound pedagogical and instructional design” (32.35%), followed by “lack of digital literacy and training” (11.76%) and “lack of student autonomy and competencies” (11.76%) (p. 6). In philological education, these issues are particularly pressing because many instructors remain rooted in traditional lecture-based methods, and students often lack the digital competence to navigate multimodal learning environments effectively. As Lai et al. (2016) and Lee et al. (2016) suggest, without robust pedagogical frameworks that integrate technological and linguistic objectives, BL risks becoming fragmented or overly dependent on technological novelty rather than meaningful linguistic engagement.

Furthermore, the study reveals infrastructural and cultural barriers that hinder the full potential of BL. The “lack of techniques, devices, tools, and infrastructure” (11.76%) and “clashes with educational standards and cultural practices” (8.82%) (Ashraf et al., 2022, p. 6) reflect broader socio-educational tensions between innovation and tradition. In philological education, where interpretive depth and dialogic interaction are key, an overreliance on digital platforms can limit spontaneous discussion and critical discourse. Similarly, unequal access to digital tools creates disparities among learners, undermining the inclusive potential of BL (Yao, 2019a). Bridging this divide requires institutional policies that invest in infrastructure, digital literacy, and teacher training, ensuring equitable participation in blended philological programs.

Despite these limitations, the prospects for integrating BL in philological education remain promising. As Ashraf et al. (2022) emphasize, BL not only enhances academic outcomes but also democratizes access to learning by “bridging gaps between advantaged and disadvantaged groups of learners” (p. 5). For philological disciplines, this inclusivity can expand the reach of linguistic and literary studies to rural and underprivileged regions, fostering cultural exchange and linguistic diversity. Moreover, by promoting autonomous learning and self-paced progress, BL aligns with the goals of modern philology to cultivate independent, critically engaged scholars who can adapt to digital transformations in language, communication, and culture.

In conclusion, the study by Ashraf et al. (2022) provides compelling evidence that blended learning is not merely a pedagogical trend but a transformative model for higher education—including philological fields. Its dual emphasis on technological innovation and learner autonomy offers new directions for language and literature education. However, realizing these prospects requires addressing challenges related to instructional design, digital literacy, and equity. By drawing on the successful frameworks identified in the Chinese context—such as the SECI model, Moodle integration, and digital storytelling—philological educators can build robust, inclusive, and interactive learning environments that prepare students for the demands of a global, multilingual world.

Discussion

The comparison between the Ukrainian and Chinese studies (Sobchenko & Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk, 2022; Ashraf et al., 2022) reveals that the success of blended learning depends on the integration of three key elements: technological infrastructure, pedagogical design, and digital culture. In both contexts, the introduction of BL has improved student engagement, learning outcomes, and digital competence; however, persistent issues such as insufficient teacher training, unequal access, and outdated curricula remain significant barriers. These challenges highlight the importance of institutional leadership and policy coherence. While Ukraine's reforms emphasize legislative support and digital competency frameworks, China's success has been largely driven by large-scale implementation of LMS platforms and teacher development programs. The convergence of these experiences suggests that the future of philological education lies in localized adaptation of global models—balancing innovation with cultural and pedagogical traditions.

Moreover, the interdisciplinary potential of blended learning in philological education cannot be overstated. Both Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk (2022) and Ashraf et al. (2022) demonstrate that BL fosters collaboration between language, pedagogy, and technology disciplines. The application of cloud technologies, digital storytelling, and online linguistic tools enables students to develop creativity, analytical reasoning, and intercultural communication skills. These competencies are essential for preparing future teachers, translators, and researchers in the digital age. Nevertheless, ensuring sustainability requires ongoing investment in faculty training, curriculum redesign, and digital ethics awareness. Without these, BL risks becoming a fragmented approach rather than a transformative pedagogical model.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the integration of blended learning into philological education represents both an evolution and a challenge. Studies by Sobchenko and Vorozhbit-Horbatiuk (2022) and Ashraf et al. (2022) collectively reveal that BL enhances digital competence, academic performance, and learner autonomy, aligning philological education with international standards such as *DigComp*. By combining traditional instruction with digital tools, universities can cultivate communicatively and technologically competent professionals capable of thriving in global educational and cultural contexts.

However, the success of blended learning depends on addressing systemic challenges, including digital inequality, pedagogical readiness, and institutional support. A forward-looking strategy must integrate evidence-based methodologies, continuous teacher development, and robust digital infrastructure. Ultimately, blended learning in philological education is not just a response to technological change—it is a paradigm shift toward inclusive, adaptive, and interdisciplinary pedagogy that prepares future philologists for the demands of the twenty-first century.

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