



## Project Work Management Addressing the Needs of BVI Learners of EFL

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**Introduction:** it is known that inclusive education that opens access to education and facilitates students with special educational needs to socialize successfully is concentrated in special schools whilst mainstream teachers generally lack the methodology of teaching disabled students inclusively. The aim of the article is searching the best ways of educating students with special needs and providing specific conditions of the educational process in mainstream schools.

**Materials and Methods:** the research is based on the results of fulfillment of a number of projects that deal with teaching and educating blind and visually impaired learners and in which all the authors of the article were involved. The problematic approach, the logical method and observation were applied to the research; analysis, comparison, generalization being the most important components of the study. The quantitative data were collected, analyzed and resumed as well.

**Results:** the impact of project work implementation on academic and social skills development of blind and visually impaired students is shown and various types of projects that can be made by visually impaired learners are presented. The authors give their comments when analyzing different ways of adapting research activities to the needs of BVI learners. When speaking in detail on the role of web tools as maximizers of students' potential the authors refer to their own experience in implementing web tools in project work with blind and visually impaired learners.

**Discussion and Conclusions:** university teacher-training programs should be revised and improved by offering additional courses aimed at educating impaired students through doing research or project work. Special attention should be paid to developing the instructors' project management skills in terms of teaching English as a foreign language to learners with special needs. It should be noted that different methods and various technological tools are to be used in order to develop research and creative skills of blind and visually impaired learners in an EFL classroom. The article itself, its references and links can be used within the course of lectures and seminars on Methodology of Teaching Foreign Languages, and can also be applied when developing a course of re-training of in-service teachers with particular focus on teaching foreign languages to students (pupils) with special educational needs.

**Keywords:** English as a foreign language, blind and visually impaired, project work management, academic and communicative skills, web tools

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## Руководство проектной деятельностью слепых и слабовидящих, изучающих английский язык

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**Введение:** инклюзивное обучение, которое открывает доступ к образованию и способствует успешной социализации обучающихся с ограниченными возможностями здоровья, сконцентрировано в специальных школах, тогда как учителям общеобразовательных школ не хватает методических знаний и опыта для успешного инклюзивного обучения таких учеников. Цель статьи заключается в поиске наиболее эффективных способов и наиболее приемлемых условий инклюзивного обучения в обычных школах.

**Материалы и методы:** исследование основано на результатах реализации ряда проектов, в которых участвовали авторы статьи и которые были связаны с вопросами обучения и воспитания слепых и слабовидящих. Использовались также сбор количественных данных для последующего анализа и обобщения, проблемный подход, логический метод и метод наблюдения. Основными инструментами исследования стали анализ, сравнение и генерализация.

**Результаты исследования:** показано влияние внедрения проектной деятельности в учебный процесс на развитие академических и коммуникативных навыков слепых и слабовидящих обучающихся; представлены различные типы проектов, которые могут быть реализованы при работе с данной категорией обучающихся. Подробно описывая роль интернет-ресурсов в качестве интенсификаторов в развитии коммуникативной компетенции обучающихся, авторы представляют собственный опыт использования веб-инструментов для повышения эффективности проектной деятельности слепых и слабовидящих.

**Обсуждение и заключения:** программы подготовки учителей в вузах должны быть пересмотрены и дополнены специальными модулями, нацеленными на обучение людей с ограниченными возможностями здоровья посредством проектной и исследовательской деятельности. Особое внимание следует уделять формированию навыков руководства проектной деятельностью при обучении английскому языку как иностранному обучающихся с особыми потребностями. Материалы статьи могут быть использованы в рамках курса лекций и семинаров по методике обучения иностранным языкам, а также стать основой разработки курса повышения квалификации учителей, фокусирующего особое внимание на обучении учащихся с особыми потребностями.

**Ключевые слова:** английский язык, слепой и слабовидящий, руководство проектной деятельностью, академические и коммуникативные навыки, интернет-ресурс

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### Introduction

The need for social inclusion and access to education for children with disabilities has necessitated inclusive education. Its implementation implies the ability of mainstream educators to teach learners with special needs effectively. While special schools have accumulated considerable experience in this field, mainstream teachers generally do not have the required professional training to teach disabled students inclusively. So there is a growing need for pre-service and in-service teacher education programs that specifically address teaching disabled learners inclusively. The need has been emphasized by the Federal

State Education Standards, which require that school/university curricula should be adapted for impaired learners.

The Department of Linguistics and Linguacultural Studies of the Institute of Foreign Languages of Moscow City Pedagogical University (MCU) faced the problem when providing pre-service EFL teacher education training to a blind student inclusively. So the Department has decided to make its contribution to effective inclusive education by combining defectology expertise with methods of teaching English as a foreign language.

The project “Teaching English to Blind and Visually Impaired Students”



was launched by MCU in 2013. It has acquired additional international dimension by joining the international project “Equal Opportunities: Teaching English to Blind and Visually Impaired Students in Russia” (BVI-Project), which helps to explore both international and national experience in the field.

To meet the objectives of introducing lessons and activities that are developmentally appropriate and that cater to BVI EFL learners’ characteristics the Department has been conducting research into best practices of in-service EFL teacher education programs around the world. An associated “EFL Novice Teachers’ Training” project was launched as a regular series of webinars run by Russian and American experts in the area. MCU has organized and hosted three international conferences “Modern Foreign Language Inclusive Education: Challenges and Solutions” held on April 24, 2015, April 22, 2016, April 28, 2017.

Using the experience of arranging an annual Moscow city contest of school English projects MCU has held three similar contests named “Breakthrough: New Challenges” of English projects for BVI EFL learners throughout Russia with Kazan, Lipetsk, Moscow, Orenburg, Saransk, Ufa, Yakutsk and others participating. The idea has been found appealing by both BVI teachers and learners that is proved by the yearly increase in the number of participants.

The focus of this research is on developing educators’ project work management competence in order to increase the achievements of all their students, no matter what their health background is.

The purpose of this study is therefore to find out whether the implementation of adaptive teaching techniques and the accommodation of learning activities different from those that predominantly rely upon visual clues (such as project-making tasks, for instance) are an efficient way of teaching English as a foreign language to BVI students of all ages and levels.

The competence required for successful project work management is more or less a combination of various competences, i.e.

critical and creative thinking, project implementation competence, IT competence, etc. This article aims to research educator’s competences needed to organize and monitor blind and visually impaired students’ school research and project work in order to make the process of being academically educated active, productive and effective. Some aspects of project work management, including digital tools that can be applied, are explored further.

### Literature Review

A number of researchers highlight the fact that the use of actual real-world social interactions that involve various activities with both people and objects, rather than drills and isolated skill exercises make the language learning process most effective. Thus, Shopi differentiates between communication and speaking skills and points out the importance of students fulfilling personal objectives while working in groups or at presentations [1]. Doll describes the developments in contemporary curriculum design that allow to implement more of social interaction into education [2]. Jarvela and Jarvenoja analyze the positive impact of socially constructed learning in collaborative groups on motivation [3]; while Sorden and Ramirez assess the degree of student satisfaction levels and social presence as achieved through blended collaborative learning [4].

Cambourne speaks on eight conditions of active learning that include among others engagement, expectations and responsibility [5]. Kroeker and Henrichs underline the significance of using content-learning tasks when teaching adult learners in terms of whole language strategies [6]. Weaver shows that educational process (reading instruction taken as an example) is more effective when real purposeful tasks (reading for comprehension) are involved [7].

It is the so-called ‘unfocused’ tasks, according to Ellis, that can cause the highest level of linguistic production and representation [8, p. 103]. These tasks are nowadays entwined with various technological tools, such as social networks [9] and project-based activities that, according to Devkota,



Giri, Bogale, are key technologies in terms of the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills development [10].

Most authors researching the issue of teaching blind or visually impaired learners, for example, Kashdan [11], Christidou [12], Topor and Rosenblum [13] point out that having special educational needs such students experience more difficulties while learning in comparison with their sighted peers, since language teaching has traditionally depended heavily on the visual format of presenting study materials. While BVI students definitely suffer from the absence of visual input of information or its clipped scale, the opportunities for implicit foreign language acquisition are also supposed to be reduced. Deepa points out that modifying commonly used teaching tasks is vital for enhancing the opportunities for learners with visual impairment to be fully included into class activities [14].

Thus, the research in question aims to answer the question if there are any methods applicable for the effective learning process for BVI students in an EFL classroom.

In the context of EFL teaching and learning, implementing successful project work gives blind and visually impaired students access to activities which put them on par with their sighted peers. Recognizing and promoting research and project work may change public perception of the education system in an unprecedented way and help bring more resources and support for educating impaired students.

Notwithstanding the fact that with certain basic skills and curriculum being adequately adapted for their needs blind and visually impaired students can meet the academic standards expected of sighted students, many of them are not adequately prepared for being involved in complex challenges of today's world<sup>1</sup>.

The task of educating blind and visually impaired learners thoroughly still remains enormous. Blind and visually impaired students deserve the same academic and social success that seeing peers receive. It should be noted that for blind and visually impaired students who are mainstreamed, the responsibility for being appropriately instructed in the skill areas required to meet their needs as visually impaired individuals rests primarily with their parents and educators.

When prioritizing the educational needs of blind and visually impaired students, emphasis is usually placed on those needs, which enhance their integration into the adult (sighted) community. When educators prioritize the needs of blind and visually impaired students, they take on a powerful responsibility as they decide for someone else what is important to know right now and what can be delayed for later instruction. Technically to maintain proficiency in academic skills is considered more important to teach. As for the instruction in non-academic areas it is continually delayed until the individual acquires the skill independently when confronted with the need. Thus, it is essential that educators are involved in planning and implementing different projects for blind and visually impaired students in order to enhance their later development and education opportunities. It is imperative that such planned opportunities for successful experiences should be of more benefit than mastering another academic skill at regular lessons<sup>2</sup>.

While participating in such practically-oriented projects aimed at acquiring new experiences, blind and visually impaired students can also be developing and improving a social ability to work in a team. Educators' efforts should be directed toward the development of new models, the

<sup>1</sup> Castellano C. Making it work: Educating the blind/visually impaired student in the regular school. Greenwich, CT: IAP-Information Age Publishing, Inc., 2005. Available at: [https://books.google.ru/books?hl=en&lr=&id=nvgnDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Castellano+C.+\(2005\)+Making+It+Work:+Educating+the+Blind/Visually+Impaired+Student+in+the+Regular+School&ots=3Eh5drNEZy&sig=BW0Wz0kRpv0k4vSw2TeNsHJ09Y&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.ru/books?hl=en&lr=&id=nvgnDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PP1&dq=Castellano+C.+(2005)+Making+It+Work:+Educating+the+Blind/Visually+Impaired+Student+in+the+Regular+School&ots=3Eh5drNEZy&sig=BW0Wz0kRpv0k4vSw2TeNsHJ09Y&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q&f=false).

<sup>2</sup> Tsotova D. Project "LISTEN & TOUCH": a basic English course for the visually impaired. Socrates Compendium: Lingua Action 2. Available at: [http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/static/Bots/docbots/Documents/Compendium/Lingua/comp\\_L2\\_2002.pdf](http://eacea.ec.europa.eu/static/Bots/docbots/Documents/Compendium/Lingua/comp_L2_2002.pdf).

ones that emphasize meeting blind and visually impaired students' needs such as problem solving, critical thinking, collaboration, and creativity. Doing project work is very much tied up with culture, exposure and experiences<sup>3</sup>. Educators should as well be competent to bring experiences and exposure to blind and visually impaired students through project work.

### Materials and Methods

The research is based on the results of fulfillment of a number of projects in which the authors of the article were involved. The projects deal with teaching and educating blind and visually impaired learners.

Observation is one of the most frequently applied methods in research of any kind. Its application goes through several stages. At the first stage the goals and objects of observation are defined, a scheme of observation is developed. Then results of observation are registered, finally the collected data are analyzed and summarized. In our case the goals of observation included studying the work of teachers of English with blind and visually impaired learners in order to understand how the competence of managing project work of BVI learners can be developed and what technological tools can be the most effective in this respect.

Observation was applied together with studying experience of EFL teachers who have worked with BVI learners and managed to involve them into project activity of any kind. The teachers gave information on what types of project they have done with their students, what resources and web tools they have used, what results they have obtained.

The quantitative method has two aspects of application in Humanities. First, it can be applied to calculate results of observation and experiment; second, it is used for modelling, diagnosis and forecasting. Frankly speaking, it is difficult and in most cases impossible to reflect in numbers results achieved in Humanities. In our case the quantitative method was used to

calculate the number of winning projects done by BVI learners at the contests from 2014 till 2016 (table 1). It is also applied to show in numbers the increasing quality of the projects involved into the contests mentioned (table 2).

The problematic approach is essential when managing project work of students. In many cases a research team of learners is built and a project is developed to solve a particular problem. The problematic approach in education implies that the teacher formulates a problematic issue for their learners and organizes active independent learner's work to solve the defined problem. As a result of such an activity learners acquire relative knowledge and develop creative skills.

The logical method was also applied to the research; analysis, comparison, generalization being the most important components of the study.

### Results

The quantitative data that concerns All-Russia and International students' projects contests held from 2014 till 2016 years were collected, analyzed and resumed in table 1.

**Table 1. Number of projects and BVI participants of All-Russia and international students' projects contests**

**Таблица 1. Число проектов, выполненных слепыми и слабовидящими учащимися, и число слепых и слабовидящих участников Всероссийских и международных конкурсов**

Показатели / Indicators	2014	2015	2016
Number of projects done by BVI learners / Число проектов, выполненных слепыми и слабовидящими участниками	10	18	24
Number of BVI participants / Число слепых и слабовидящих участников	15	29	37

It is worthy of notice that in 2016 learners with other types of disabilities educated inclusively joined the contest for the first time. Implementing project work with BVI learners has resulted not only in the grow-

<sup>3</sup> Nikitina I.V. [Project work as a means of creating educational context: PH.D. Thesis (Pedagogy)] . Moscow, 2007. Available at: <http://www.dissercat.com/content/proektnaya-deyatelnost-shkolnikov-priizuchenii-monograficheskoi-temy#ixzz4ndHnMCEi>.



ing number of participants throughout Russia but also in the obvious progress in their academic, research and communicative

skills. It is reflected by the positive dynamics of points they scored at the contests for their projects (table 2).

**Table 2. The average number of points scored by the winning projects done by BVI learners at the All-Russia and International students' projects contests**

**Таблица 2. Среднее количество баллов, присужденных проектам, выполненным слепыми и слабовидящими учащимися – победителями конкурсов**

Indicator / Показатель	2014	2015	2016
The average number of points (out of 100) scored by the winning projects done by BVI learners / Среднее количество баллов (из 100), присужденных проектам, выполненным слепыми и слабовидящими учащимися – победителями конкурсов	75	81	87

The statistics presented above illustrates the relevance of project work implementation in the contemporary educational context of teaching BVI learners.

After analyzing best practices of both school and university teachers of English, it can be concluded that project work has numerous advantages for learners of English as a second language of all kinds including blind and visually impaired students.

A wide range of possible types of English projects enables an educator to choose the ones that are, on the one hand, feasible for BVI students, and on the other hand, challenging, i.e. facilitating their development in different ways: integrating their mastery of English, critical and creative thinking, research skills, etc.

Though a paper, a text describing the process of project work is usually an integral part of an English project, an educator together with BVI students can easily find types of projects requiring a reduced amount of paper work. This helps to partly avoid technical problems of writing or printing for the sake of concentrating on the development of more important skills relevant to the nature of project work. These types include practical, creative and role-playing projects [15]. Practical projects are targeted at producing an end product of practical use, including making visual aids for EFL classes or aids useful for learning English by BVI students. An additional value of these kinds of projects is that they help BVI students to socialize by producing something useful for everybody.

Creative and role-playing projects are another type involving lesser volumes of

text and thus giving additional opportunities for BVI learners of English. Particularly valuable can be creative projects with a linguistic focus, i.e. the translation of verse from English into Russian, which is in essence a cross-cultural communication project, or, a more creative one: writing one's own piece of poetry and then translating it into English.

As for other types of projects (information, research ones, or in the case of EFL projects linguistic and cross-cultural ones in particular), they are not to be avoided for implementation by BVI students. This is in the context of the requirement to expect the same academic progress from BVI students as from students with normal vision. BVI students are not to be excused from assignments, including project work. Although they may do things differently, they are as capable of doing academic work as their peers.

It was one of the findings that group projects rather than individual ones are more preferable for BVI students for a number of reasons: need for collaboration, mutual help, socializing, etc. Though individual work should not be excluded and is even a must in some types of projects, i.e. involving individual creative work.

In managing project work an EFL teacher should keep in mind that while making the necessary adaptations and modifications for BVI students *project integral parts* should be kept intact in order to fully utilize the advantages of project work.

The integral parts are: *a problem to solve, a research element, a creative element, an end product* with its practical application. Let us look into each one in detail.

*A problem to solve* underlies any project. Sometimes the problem can be observed in the title of the project: *British Insularity: a Myth or Reality? Social Outcast in Juvenile Society, The American Dream and the Russian Idea, Food in the School Canteen (Ways to Improve)*<sup>4</sup>. Or it can be formulated in the Subtitle: *Celtic Culture in Present Day Britain (What is left of Celtic culture after numerous invasions?)*.

A problem can be of different character: that of research or practical – to create something new.

Since project work is a kind of research activity, some kind of research should necessarily be done. While planning and conducting research, educators should be aware of the fact that research and seeking information are different processes and should not be mixed up, which, unfortunately, happens rather frequently.

Research is done when students while making their linguistic or cross-cultural projects, compare some phenomena in their native and English language cultures, as, for instance, they did in the following projects: *Plants and Animals as State Symbols (the UK, the USA, and Russia)*, *Homonyms in the English, Russian and Yakut languages*, *Freedom and Patriotism (Russia, the UK, and the USA)*.

In linguistic projects, research is made when students study theory and apply it to analyzing some relevant material – English language literature and its translations, English language press, dictionaries, other texts (songs, films, etc.) – for example, in such projects as *Ways of translating some lexical or grammar phenomenon of an English language text into Russian*.

The introductory part of a linguistic project provides an explanation of what kind of material was analyzed.

Another common way to make a research is to conduct a survey, an opinion poll. This is done very frequently in different types of projects. But very often the description of the poll in the project paper is

somewhat or more than somewhat sketchy. Sometimes it is limited to diagrams. What often lacks is a detailed description of the survey, including its preparatory stage, the process of conducting it, the analysis of the results with some conclusions.

*A creative element* is another integral part of a project. In fact, a project of any kind should contain both research and creative elements. In practice the latter is often mistaken with activities when children do something practical: e.g. schoolchildren make something with their hands using plasticine, draw a picture (young learners), or stage a play in English. An educator should keep in mind that creative skills, which project work is designed to facilitate, include generating new ideas, suggesting multiple solutions to a problem, forecasting results of a solution. Trying to make research projects “more creative” by adding pictures does not always help.

As for creative types of projects, the best variant for them is a similar combination of a creativity element with research. It means schoolchildren not only stage a play, but also make a research about the book, its author and characters, write a script, make a survey on what their schoolmates think of the problem raised in the book. For example, in the creative project made by learners of Private Educational Institution “Gazprom School” on *Pippi Longstocking* by Astrid Lindgren schoolchildren analyzed Pippi’s character, conducted a poll, finding out what features of character a free person should have, wrote a script, and staged a performance.

*The end product* depends on the type of a project. It can be an album, a map, visual aid, brochure, poster, newsletter, journal, newspaper, film, script, website, etc.

The experience of making EFL projects shows that it is sometimes difficult to come up with an end product. In practice not all projects have an end product. Possible end products for linguistic projects include a glossary of terms, relevant vocabulary,

<sup>4</sup> The titles of the projects given as examples in the article are those of the participants of the annual city contest for Moscow schoolchildren “Breakthrough: Paving the Cultural Way”, which has been held at Moscow City University since 2009 and three similar contests for BVI schoolchildren across Russia “Breakthrough: New Challenges” held in 2014, 2015, 2016.



making a report or writing an article on the results of the analysis conducted.

A practical application or use of the produced end product is the element which is very often missing. Usually project results are presented at the final stage of the work, at a contest (at school, in the town) and are not used further, at least presenters mention rarely how they are going to use the results of their project work or how they have already used them. But there are various ways to improve the situation: a project can be presented to students of another form, to parents; if visual aids or glossaries were produced as end products, they can be used in EFL classes.

If project work meets these requirements it can really support academic progress and the development of more independent and eventful lives of students with visual impairments.

### Discussion and Conclusions

In a BVI classroom technologies can address some of the most challenging educational issues by providing new opportunities which allow BVI students to learn or perfect the skills of communication, collaboration, and creativity.

The generation of learners nowadays has been brought up with digital tools at their disposal. Reliance on technology is a given and it is nowadays commonly recognized that new technologies must be adopted and used as an integral part of classroom activities which enhances student engagement and learning [16]. Using the tools that learners find appealing can definitely help them prepare for the future in terms of further education and career. When Web tools are brought in the classroom regardless of the fact whether it is a class with fully sighted learners or an inclusive class, or a class with blind or visually impaired learners, they, undoubtedly, serve to maximize students' potential. Learners are different nowadays while edu-

cational practice and supporting materials have been changing rather slowly.

Web tools are here to help the educator establish a community of learners by making learning much more contextualized. Moreover, researches nowadays investigate the issue of designing or perfecting the existing evaluation techniques that can be applied for assessment of Web-based applications used or planned to be used in a contemporary class [17]. Thus, computer applications allow to change the predominant pattern of writing and submitting traditional written papers. Students can now edit peers' work and revise drafts; they can now post and share their work and get feedback from readers worldwide. The potential of addressing a real audience determines that students will work harder to perfect what they want to communicate. Among these tools are *blogs*, *microblogs*, and *podcasts*<sup>5</sup>.

Collaboration, that is often viewed as a key component of successful project work, can also be effected via online tools which can be used to transform both the process of working with others and the product that results. Students working on the project can brainstorm to define the concept, discuss their ideas, share research, thus really collaborating. Tools such as *wikis* and some *productivity applications* (*Google Docs* being perhaps the most well-known) allow educators to watch the progress of individual students or students' groups in the process.

Digital learning is, as well, a unique way of demonstrating students that everything and everybody are connected somehow, which is particularly important in a BVI classroom. Young people use social networks to interact on a personal level, educators can use this phenomenon for student learning and professional development. What might be referred to as learning communities are electronic spaces of practice where groups of people who have

<sup>5</sup> Dudeney G., Hockly N. How to teach English with technology. Harlow, England: Pearson Education. 2007. Available at: <https://www.google.ru/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=8&ved=0ahUKEwjK64PhyKHVAhXJYJoKHW5GCjcQFghkMAc&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.twirpx.com%2Ffile%2F753453%2F&usq=AFQjCNGONnURI2K-x0gmp2cuwwyS4Wlkaw>.

a common educational or research topic can interact on an ongoing basis<sup>6</sup>.

It is also vital to mention that Web tools are expected to be cost-free or low-cost. The most wide-spread tools that exist today are blogs, microblogs, podcasting, productivity applications (word processing, spreadsheet, presentation tools), social networks, video and photo sharing (visual learning tools), virtual world (Second Life environments), and wikis. Some of the tools are more limited in scope, yet they also provide opportunities that can make a difference in the classroom. These include Audacity, Delicious, Drupal, Evernote, Google Forms, Wordle, Skype, and others<sup>7</sup>.

Definitions and comments regarding the use of the most prominent tools when working with BVI learners are presented below.

*Wikis* are web pages that learners can use to write or edit elements to create collaborative projects. Wikipedia, a collaborative encyclopedia, is the most well-known wiki in public use. The most popular wikis in education are Wiki spaces. Wikis are excellent when it comes to class assignments that include elements of project-based learning. The possibilities for classroom use also include group collaboration, peer editing, and electronic portfolios. Everyone in the group can add, edit, delete, or change the contents and these changes are visible instantly what enhances responsibility for learners' actions. Examples of Wiki projects developed by students worldwide are available at Creative Web Tools For and By Kids (<http://weewebwonders.pbworks.com>). The specificity of using Wikis when managing BVI learners' project work is that screen reader software that transmits any text displayed on the computer screen into a form that is possible for a BVI learner to process is supposed to be installed. Among most wide spread free screen readers are NVDA, Serotek System Access, Apple VoiceOver, ORCA, WebAnywhere, Spoken Web, etc.

A *Blog* is a website maintained by an individual. Blogs are primarily texts, though they can include audio enhancements, videos, photos, charts, and other features. In the classroom blogs can be compared with personal journal writing as they contain personal opinions as well as facts. Writing for an audience means considering one's own ideas first which develops the skills of critical thinking. The entire process of researching a topic for a project can be made public through blogging. The reasons for doing project research with blogs are that they create an easy way for formative assignment, an interactive format, an easy way to check electronic sources, an effective way to share sources and build a class community that is also a part of the larger world community. Creating a blog is relatively easy by using Blogger at [www.blogger.com/start](http://www.blogger.com/start).

The experience of using blogs when shaping BVI learners' project work showed that they are of utmost importance in creating a kind of educational community meant for developing a group project. Blogs make effective communication possible while allowing BVI learners to share their ideas with peers more independently.

*Delicious* (<http://delicious.com>) is a social-bookmarking tool. It allows users to save a link to a website and tag it with a few key words. The web-based Delicious tagged sites are accessible from any computer. It is a powerful tool both for educators and learners which among other things makes it easy to create an annotated bibliography for a research project.

*Evernote* ([www.evernote.com](http://www.evernote.com)) is an online organizational tool, which allows to clip texts, images, audio, and PDF files from the web and save them to one location. It is a particularly useful tool when learners are doing research since it allows students to organize immediately the information they find in the Internet. It can

<sup>6</sup> Solomon G., Schrum L. Web 2.0 how-to for educators. Eugene, Oregon: International Society for Technology in Education. 2013. Available at: [https://books.google.ru/books?hl=en&lr=&id=0qapCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Solomon+G.,+Schrum+L.,+\(2013\)+Web+2.0+how-to+for+educators&ots=DyX-k8IfTY&sig=R2v9XQRvTG3ChFSqyIuOnXv-3AE&redir\\_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Solomon%20G.%20C%20Schrum%20L.%20\(2013\)%20Web%202.0%20how-to%20for%20educators&f=false](https://books.google.ru/books?hl=en&lr=&id=0qapCgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA1&dq=Solomon+G.,+Schrum+L.,+(2013)+Web+2.0+how-to+for+educators&ots=DyX-k8IfTY&sig=R2v9XQRvTG3ChFSqyIuOnXv-3AE&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Solomon%20G.%20C%20Schrum%20L.%20(2013)%20Web%202.0%20how-to%20for%20educators&f=false).

<sup>7</sup> Sperling D. The Internet guide for English language teachers. Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents. 1994. Available at: <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=523809>.



also be useful while managing students' projects.

*Audio and podcast tools* are essential while working in a BVI classroom (VoiceThread, Audacity, Audiopal, Chirbit, Gabcast). VoiceThread is a tool for making media public presentations. VoiceThreads can be created with voice, video, text, or images; it allows anyone not only to view the work, but communicate with the author by leaving questions or comments. Feedback can be typed or recorded. The other tools named mainly allow to record one voice and incorporate the audio into a web page, blog, or social networking site.

One more tool that should be mentioned is aimed at making the process of assessing students' projects much easier. *RubiStar* (<http://rubistar.4teachers.org>) allows to create quality rubrics very quickly. Registered users can save and edit rubrics online. The created rubrics can be printed out and are accessible.

University teacher-training programs should be revised and improved by offering additional courses aimed at educating impaired students through doing research or project work. Currently, the majority of pre-service teachers' time is spent on developing competencies in regular classes. The programs need to be redesigned in order to reflect the essential needs of impaired students more accurately. Pre-service programs should include detailed information

about educating impaired students in the areas of their needs including project work as part of the programs of their students from preschool until graduation.

Special attention should be paid to developing the instructors' project management skills in terms of teaching EFL learners with special needs. Although the main constituents of an effective research project (e.g. a problem to solve, a research element, a creative element, an end product with its practical application) correspond with those inherent of the project produced in a BVI classroom or by BVI students, it should be noted that different methods and various technological tools are to be used in order to develop the BVI learners' research and creative skills in an EFL classroom.

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Tatiana S. Makarova – formulating the concept of teaching EFL to BVI learners in Russia; initiating research into the best practices of teaching EFL to BVI learners via project work; studying Russian and foreign source materials on specifics of teaching disabled learners; result analysis; writing the article.

Eugenia E. Matveeva – exploring and reviewing source materials on teaching EFL to BVI learners in Russia and abroad; analysis; writing the article.

Maria A. Molchanova – formulating the concept of implying web tools in BVI learners' project work management; researching into the best practices of implementing web tools in blind and visually impaired learners' project work in English, reviewing source materials; analysis and primary conclusions; writing the article.

Elena A. Morozova – formulating the concept of BVI EFL learners' project work management, analyzing Russian and foreign experience in developing EFL teachers' project management skills to learners with special needs; initiating a contest "Breakthrough: New Challenges" of English projects for BVI EFL learners throughout Russia; critically reviewing source materials; analysis; writing the article.

Natalia V. Burenina – participating in the discussion of the materials; reviewing research methods; analysis; proof-reading; editing and adding to the text of the article.

*All authors have read and approved the final manuscript.*

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Макарова Татьяна Сергеевна – формулирование основной концепции обучения иностранному языку слепых и слабовидящих; инициация исследования; поиск и критический анализ материалов в отечественных и зарубежных источниках по обучению иностранному языку лиц с ограниченными возможностями здоровья, в том числе инклюзивно; формулирование выводов; подготовка текста статьи.

Матвеева Евгения Евгеньевна – проведение критического анализа материалов, связанных с обучением иностранному языку слепых и слабовидящих; обобщение зарубежного и отечественного опыта; критический анализ и подготовка текста статьи.

Молчанова Мария Александровна – формулирование основной концепции использования веб-технологий в процессе руководства проектной деятельностью слепых и слабовидящих на иностранном языке; компьютерные работы, связанные с разработкой веб-инструментов в руководстве проектной деятельностью слепых и слабовидящих; проведение анализа и подготовка первоначальных выводов; подготовка текста статьи.

Морозова Елена Александровна – формулирование основной концепции руководства проектной деятельностью слепых и слабовидящих при изучении иностранного языка; обобщение опыта руководства проектной и исследовательской деятельностью; инициация проведения конкурса проектных работ в области иностранного языка для слепых и слабовидящих; анализ и подготовка текста статьи.

Буренина Наталья Викторовна – участие в обсуждении материалов статьи; анализ материалов в отечественных и зарубежных источниках по методам исследования; редактирование и дополнение текста статьи.

*Все авторы прочитали и одобрили окончательный вариант рукописи.*