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ENHANCEMENT OF EXTRAMURAL EDUCATION BY ELEMENTS OF DISTANCE LEARNING

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The article is dedicated to the paradox of increasing demand of extramural education in the 21st century and its decreasing level of training. Today the traditional extramural education is unable to ensure high effectiveness of specialists’ training. The existing potential of e-learning in modern education and the poorly developed organizational and pedagogical support of the process of preparing extramural students are flagrant.

Extramural education is still the integral part of higher education and most of its time it is devoted to student’s independent work. The aim of this work is to reveal the perspectives of development of extramural learning of foreign languages by implementing various elements of distance technologies.

Key words: Elements of distance education, extramural education, modern technologies, self-learning.

Галстян А.Г. Удосконалення заочної освіти елементами дистанційного навчання. Стаття присвячена феномену зростаючого попиту на заочну освіту в XXI столітті й зниженню рівня викладання за цією формою. Сьогодні традиційна заочна освіта не в змозі забезпечити високу ефективність підготовки фахівців. Протиріччя існуючого потенціалу електронного навчання в сучасній освіті й слабо розвиненої організаційно-педагогічної підтримки процесу підготовки студентів-заочників є очевидною.

Заочна освіта, як і раніше, є невід'ємною частиною вищої освіти, й більшою мірою спрямована на самостійну роботу студентів. Метою даної роботи є виявлення перспектив розвитку навчання іноземної мови шляхом упровадження різних елементів дистанційних технологій.

Ключові слова: заочна освіта, елементи дистанційної освіти, самонавчання, сучасні технології.

Галстян А.Г. Усовершенствование заочного образования элементами дистанционного обучения. Статья посвящена парадоксу растущего спроса на заочное образование в XXI веке и снижению уровня его преподавания. Сегодня традиционное заочное образование не в состоянии обеспечить высокую эффективность подготовки специалистов. Противоречие существующего потенциала электронного обучения в современном образовании и слабо развитой организационно-педагогической поддержки процесса подготовки заочных студентов очевидно.

Заочное образование по-прежнему является неотъемлемой частью высшего образования, и большую часть времени оно посвящено самостоятельной работе студентов. Целью данной работы является выявление перспектив развития заочного обучения иностранному языку путем внедрения различных элементов дистанционных технологий.

Ключевые слова: заочное образование, самообучение, современные технологии, элементы дистанционного образования.

Nowadays, ‘lifelong learning’ is the slogan of many higher educational institutions in the world. Lifelong learning is interpreted as a continuous process of education throughout life.

In most countries with the establishment of extramural education, universities have offered lifelong education, which has started actively developing since the beginning of the 20th century [6]. Today extramural education is the integral and important part of tertiary education in training specialists. It is a form of education that combines student’s self-learning at home with sessions at the University. In intersessional period students are supposed to study independently in the course of 4–5 months. During the session period (usually there are two sessions in the academic year and they take place in winter and summer holidays) extramural students attend 3 weeks’ lectures and consultations and at the end of the session they take exams.

The popularity of extramural education in Ukraine is conditioned by the following features:

- it presents an opportunity to work and study, or to obtain higher education in various tertiary education institutions simultaneously: it helps to balance work, home, and study;
- it pushes aside all geographical restrictions: remote place of residence is not an obstacle in receiving higher education;
- it gives vast possibility to people with medical constraints to obtain higher education;
- it provides students with great autonomy: it is mostly a self-paced learning process;
- it is cheaper than full time education;
- it affords an opportunity to relate theory to practice while combining work with study: moving from theory to practice and vice versa, a student interpenetrates into cognitive and practical activities.

The topicality of this paper is conditioned by the fact that, despite the significance of extramural education within the system of higher education, despite all its advantages, year by year the level of extramural education decreases: extramural education is considered less qualified as opposed to full time education.

The aim of this paper is to reveal the disadvantages of extramural education and to create conditions for modernizing the existing system of extramural learning of foreign languages. The changes and improvements of extramural education require both the creation of new teaching and assessment tools and the appropriate preparation of instructors to use those tools effectively.

The object of the paper is the process of studying foreign languages by extramural students at tertiary level.

The subject of the paper is the conditions of modernization of extramural education.

Requirements of having a perfect command of foreign languages by graduates are constantly increasing, but, meanwhile, the level of language proficiency is reducing. This paradox is due to the fact that extramural education, its methods and tools do not fully meet modern demands in preparing specialists of foreign languages. In the system of organization of educational process the peculiarities of extramural education, students' individual qualities and their working conditions are hardly taken into account.

Traditionally organized system of extramural education has a number of restrictions. In intersessional period

1. It requires great skills of self-learning: if self-learning is an advantage for some extramural students, for others, however, it may be a disadvantage, as it requires self-motivation and self-discipline.
2. There is lack of motivation:
   - no face-to-face interaction either with the instructor or the peers;
   - no immediate consultation;
   - no control over the process and 'result' of training activities;
   - no feedback.
3. It is impossible to organize teamwork, accordingly, to develop communication skills, confidence, or to create personal presentation techniques.
4. It provides passive involvement of students into the learning process.
5. Students are not provided with a study guide and they have no self-control device.
6. There is no possibility to 'timely' update educational resources and to make them more accessible.
7. There are limited opportunities of organizing education according to individual education plan, taking into account students' interests within the frames of educational standards.

Accordingly, for achieving a new level in extramural education of foreign languages today it is urgent to update the existing methods of training foreign languages, to apply new ones, to find new approaches in solving the issues mentioned above and, if necessary, to adopt the experience of foreign higher educational institutions.

Taking into consideration all the difficulties and obstacles facing the extramural system of education, we underline the importance of *technological development* of the learning process of foreign languages within the frames of extramural education. It is vital today to implement new elements and approaches preserving, meanwhile, the old ones. We suggest creating a system of **blended education**: extramural education with elements of distance learning.

Today distance learning is the integral part of development of modern education. New technologies provide students with active involvement into the learning process. This fact is especially valuable for an extramural student, who is involved into the learning process and sets regular contact with his instructor only during the sessions (it's a sign of extramural

learning). At the end of the session extramural student returns home and this student-instructor contact is getting lost. In intersessional period this contact can be reestablished and further developed thanks to modern technologies, which provide a student-instructor dialogue over a distance and stimulate a feedback (it's a sign of distance education).

V.I. Ovsyannikov [1] has realized the analysis of similarities and differences between the distance and extramural educations and revealed the following common features:

- the prevalence of self-study;
- no age restrictions;
- social equality;
- wide grasp of a large number of trainees;
- no geographical limitation;
- possibility of on-job training;
- learning opportunities for the disabled.

According to a number of scholars (D. Keegan [11], I. Tavgen [3]) distance and extramural educations are not identical: extramural learning is based on regular meetings with an instructor in lecture halls of higher educational institutions and its aim is to combine work with study rather than to «overcome the distance». While, the aim of distance education is to provide people in different countries with an opportunity to receive higher education.

Further we shall highlight each problem of traditional extramural education of foreign languages mentioned above, and will suggest a solution within the frames of blended, that is extramural-distance education.

1. Development of self-learning skills

As it was already mentioned, the traditional system of extramural education is a combination of 'lecture hall meetings with an instructor and, in intersessional period, the independent learning of a student'. In fact self-tuition realized by a student occupies approximately the 70% of the whole process of learning. For some students 'self-learning' is the biggest disadvantage of extramural education, as they have the feeling of isolation not having any interaction with instructors and peers. Other issues with self-paced learning are self-motivation and self-discipline. Students who lack motivation may fall behind as can those with bad study habits. Students who are used to traditional lecture hall environments may have a hard time not having an instructor controlling their work.

Accordingly, the main role of the instructor is to create students' self-learning skills, to develop their independent cognitive activity. Naturally, today self-paced learning techniques are highly developed thanks to modern information technologies. If in traditional educational system self-learning was realized mainly through reading books, in nowadays, new technologies suggest a great variety of methods and learning resources (audio and video materials, e-books and journals, computer training programs, etc.) and the task of an instructor is to teach dealing with various sources of information and training materials. It means the instructor's role is not limited merely by revealing the techniques of studying foreign languages, discussing the most difficult sections, highlighting typical mistakes that can occur when doing the home tests, but the instructor should also form a positive attitude towards self-education through the development of skills and abilities of doing independent work [2]. This can be realized when learning environment is based on modern information technologies, which give access to certain educational resources, as well as provide students with the opportunity of creating personalized learning paths, different modes and forms of communication with instructors and students.

2. Development of self-control skills

One of the most important components of self-learning is self-control. As E.N. Khusainova mentions [4]: self-control plays a special role in the process of learning by an extramural student. Self-control is the ability of a student to find and correct his mistakes independently, as well as to prevent the emergence of new ones. For this purpose she suggests to use not only «control keys» to create and develop certain skills, but also «teaching keys» which would contribute to creating correct standards in the system of self-regulation of the speech act itself.

Indeed, while doing home tasks independently, students frequently need instructor's advice and control, which, in traditional system of extramural education, is lacking. This gap can be filled by the provision of 'teaching keys' which partially may replace the instructor. Teaching keys are indispensable in grammar aspect. With the help of them while doing grammar tasks a student can realize self-control any time he needs.

In modern life self-control can reach the top of its development based on distance education technologies, such as electronic textbooks, automated training software, educational and informative audio and video materials, automated library and information systems etc.

3. Display of control by an instructor

Still, the development of self-control is not enough for a student to raise self-confidence and competence in language learning. Very often a student, used to strict control by an educator, gets disappointed in 'the freedom of action' granted to him by the system of extramural education. The awareness of making progress (which can be confirmed by an instructor) brings satisfaction and serves internal motivation for a student. Hence, in intersessional period systematic, ongoing control of the process and results of student's work should be displayed by an instructor, which can be realized via modern technologies. By this we don't agitate by any way an instructor-centered teaching. On the contrary, through controlling the work of a student, the role of an instructor is to transform a student from passive into active participator of learning process, who is able to manage independently and with responsibility his own training activities.

4. The importance of feedback

The role of an instructor in this case is reduced to provision of feedback. In order to inspire students to be self-motivated independent learners, instructors need to give frequent, positive feedback.

Feedback is any response from an instructor in regard to a student's performance. The purpose of feedback in the learning process is to improve a student's performance [13].

Extramural students need support and direction in the process of adaptation to self-directed learning. They need help in evaluating their knowledge, in revealing what they already know and what they still need to know. Accordingly, timely feedback and evaluation are important in study process and in intersessional period they must be provided by an instructor through internet. The main task of the latter is to give a student an explanation what he is doing correctly or incorrectly.

One of the tips mentioned by Laura Reynolds is the organization of 'one-on-one' meetings with a student. «Providing a one-on-one meeting with a student is one of the most effective means of providing feedback. The students look forward to having the attention and never miss the opportunity to ask necessary questions. A one-on-one conference should be generally optimistic, as this will encourage the students to look forward to the next meeting» [13]. Such meetings can be organized by such video chat apps like Skype, Face Time, Duo or such social networks like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and so on.

Today modern technologies provide a range of tools to enhance ongoing feedback. F.e computers can keep track of early efforts, so instructors and students can see the extent to which later efforts demonstrate gains in knowledge, competence, or other valued outcomes [8].

5. Development of Virtual Teamwork Skills

Though, in modern life, students aspire to independence and autonomy in learning process, and distance education is considered a popular form of nontraditional education, nevertheless, modern students like the interaction with an instructor and peers. Accordingly, self-learning cannot be a passive activity, on the contrary it is an active cognitive one and it is important for students to learn through social interaction. For this purpose, teamwork, joint projects are particularly effective in English language courses, as students learn in groups and with each other more effectively than alone. «Team or group work teaches students the fundamental skills associated with working as a collective unit toward a common goal. This type of teamwork introduces a variety of skills that will be valuable for students later in the workforce, such as communication, compromise and collective effort. In any type of group work, students must agree about who will handle various components of a project and work in tandem using one another's strengths to accomplish assigned tasks. This teaches time management, resource allocation and communication skills» [12]. Realizing the importance of conducting teamwork for motivating students, one of the main tasks of an instructor is to create necessary conditions for developing virtual teamwork among extramural students. For developing virtual teamwork skills instructor should organize an interactive communication among group mates. He can use synchronous and asynchronous methods of communication with extramural students, organize group projects, monitor

students' activities, adjust the performance of assignments, provide them with educational and methodological recommendations of self-study, etc. All these can be realized via chat, forum and e-mail.

6. Implementation of the project method

The idea of teaching in collaboration still arose at the beginning of the century in the works of American educators – researchers: H. Parkhurst (the Dalton Plan), and W.H. Kilpatrick in his essay, «The Project Method», which became known worldwide (Kilpatrick, 1918).

Today one of the best manifestations of collaboration in teamwork is the method of projects.

The main purpose of teaching / learning a foreign language based on project method is the possibility of obtaining the communicative competence by students, which is the practical mastery of a foreign language. The main idea of this approach in teaching a foreign language is to move the accent from different exercises to real active process of thinking, which will allow students to acquire some linguistic skills. The method of projects motivates extramural students to work in groups, to turn their foreign language self–study into learning through interaction and discussions with mates, when students think over real, interesting, practically valuable and accessible problems, taking into consideration the cultural peculiarities of the country and, if possible, working on the basis of interaction between cultures.

Thus, the method of project is described as: student-centered; learning by doing; cooperative learning; problem-based learning; means of developing skills of self-expression, self-manifestation, self-presentation; educating purposefulness, tolerance, individualism and collectivism, responsibility, as well as initiative and creative approach to the work.

In extramural education the project method can be used according to the curriculum and it can be devoted to various topics. With the help of this method it is possible to introduce a new material, revise the old one or deepen the existing skills.

The project work includes three stages:

1. The initial stage: at the 'kick off session' together with students the instructor defines the general topic, identifies sub topics, analyzes the importance of that material and the ability of students to learn the given thematic material and, finally, brings it up to "projection».

2. The main stage: the project work is realized by teammates during the intersessional period. They search the information and collect the necessary materials, analyze the methods and purposes of the work. In the course of project work an instructor:

- arouses students' interest and encourages them;
- helps students in their search of necessary sources of information and becomes a source of information himself/herself;
- coordinates the entire process and provides feedback for a success and fruitful work of students in the realization of the project.

Most of the communication is held via email, video conferencing with periodic discussions via Skype, Viber etc.

3. The final stage of the project work is the presentation and discussion of results, which take place at the coming session. Presentation is an obligatory stage. It is necessary to complete the work, to analyze the work done and to demonstrate the results. All prepared by students in the course of the preparation is called a project activity product. It can be in a form of pictures, posters, slideshows, videos, web-sites and so on. All these are visual presentations of the problem solution.

In fact presentation implies a very important educational, pedagogic effect conditioned by the method itself: students learn to convincingly express their thoughts, ideas, to analyze their activities, to present the results of individual and cooperative work. They demonstrate a visual material and display the result of the practical realization of the acquired knowledge and skills. In the course of the presentation the self-esteem of a student increases and he obtains self-evaluation skills.

Consequently, the project work is a cooperative activity between an instructor and a student, as well as a student and his group mates which develops special skills: the ability to communicate openly with people, to express opinion and be able to reason it, to accept constructive criticism, to respect others' opinion and views, and resolve conflicts. Popular social networking sites such as Facebook and LinkedIn provide opportunities for language learners to work collaboratively, and enhance their linguistic and pragmatic proficiency.

7. Lack of technological literacy

In fact a parallel can be drawn between extramural education and flipped learning.

Flipped learning is a pedagogical approach in which the classroom-based learning is inverted: students are introduced to the new material before class, while 'in-class time' is devoted to exercises, projects, or discussions through interaction with peers and instructors to deepen the knowledge in the given material. There is a variety of tools to present the new material outside of class: textbooks, lecture videos, Powerpoint presentations, printable slides etc.

Like flipped learning, extramural education is also considered a self-learning at home with further revisions, control, discussions and problem-solving activities during the session. As it was already mentioned above, in high technological era the implementation of distance technologies is crucial. But lots of instructors report that they do not feel confident in utilizing the advanced technologies [10].

They also feel wary about changing a well-tested paradigm of teaching [9]. Adoption of new technologies is perceived by many instructors as a risky, if not an intimidating change, and therefore quite often faculty members in many higher education institutions are not keen on participating in online initiatives [5; 7; 8].

Trucano [14] concluded that the limited confidence of many teachers using the new technologies affects the way in which the learning / teaching processes are conducted. He stressed the need of developing incentives in order to promote effective teacher participation in continuing professional development.

Accordingly, it is evident, that in modern life instructors need to go training and upgrade their qualification in the sphere of innovative technologies. Indeed, the success of implementing modern technologies into the learning process of extramural students depends largely on the ability of instructors to execute those changes. Higher educational institutions should provide incentives and encourage instructors to learn about technology. They should require courses or make other provisions to ensure that instructors are, at the very least, scientifically and technologically literate. Various forms and means of computer communication are important for instructors to realize precise administration of the students' educational activities.

Conclusion. In conclusion it must be mentioned that it is high time to make radical changes in the entire educational system, particularly in extramural learning of foreign languages. New models and methods with elements of modern technologies should be created. Thanks to the establishment of information technologies we will obtain great opportunity not only to modernize the traditional educational process but also to provide lifelong learning by overcoming age, time and spatial barriers. The implementation of technologies in extramural system will make the learning process more attractive and will undoubtedly motivate our students.

Naturally, much time and great efforts are demanded for improving the extramural educational system but, unquestionably, it is worth directing all our efforts in achieving this goal.

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