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THE NEW APPROACHES TO ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS' INDIVIDUAL WORK IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING IN UKRAINE AND ABROAD

ABSTRACT

Different approaches to organization of students' individual work using information technologies in Ukraine and abroad have been presented in the paper. The authors have analyzed the concept and role of students' individual work in the language learning process. It has been revealed that students' individual work is a rather flexible process and involves such activities as preparation for lectures, practical tasks, workshops, preparation for different types of control, solution of different complexity level problems in and out of class; work with various sources of information and writing essays, reports, summaries. It has been concluded that information technologies can be a powerful tool for everybody who wants to learn foreign languages through individual work and an efficient facility to enlarge students' creative potential. The concept of "information technologies" in education has been analyzed and the advantages of using information technologies in organization of students' individual work have been determined. Language practice at phono and video laboratories, the use of the Internet resources, special computer software and online courses, e-books, electronic encyclopedias and dictionaries have been analyzed as the most effective means to organize students' individual work in the language learning process.

Key words: *individual work, types of individual work, information technologies, e-learning.*

INTRODUCTION

The 21st century, often called the information age, is bringing about changes to the traditional teaching of a foreign language. The use of information technologies in language teaching is very important due to their new possibilities. Penetration of information technologies into the education process results in the appearance of new forms of work and technologies of e-learning (electronic studies) and its varieties of blended learning (mixed studies) and on-line courses which are especially effective in providing students' self-study at famous higher educational establishments of Great Britain and the USA, such as the universities of Harvard, Stanford, Belfast, Birmingham and many others.

Students' individual work can be arranged in various ways and with different purposes. The learning process should be organized for the students to learn not only the content of the subjects, but also the ways of acquiring knowledge. The information technologies help us to solve this problem. For the successful organization of students'

individual work in Ukraine it is essential to analyze the pedagogical technologies used in the process of organization of self-study in Britain and the USA, to properly understand and creatively implement them into practice of individual work in Ukraine.

THE AIM OF THE STUDY

The aim of the research is to analyze different approaches to organization of students' individual work using information technologies in Ukraine and abroad.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODS

The research methodology includes a critical survey of contemporary literature on students' individual work. The frequently raised issues are students' self-study, the most popular approaches to organization of students' individual work, and the importance of innovations used in a self-study process. This can be proved by numerous works of psychologists, educators and modern scholars. Thus, the problem in question was raised by O. Cherednyk, O. Hryshchenko, O. Kotsiubynska, Ya. Kolisnyk, V. Kozakov, V. Lutsenko, L. Rybalko, O. Rohova, V. Yevdokymov, L. Zhuravska et al. The scientific and pedagogical principles of individual work were developed by Ukrainian scholars: S. Arhangelskyi, T. Bila, M. Nikitin, N. Nychkalo, P. Pidkasystyi, O. Pometun, I. Zazyun et al. The problem of students' self-study in the process of English language learning was studied by A. Aleksyuk, Yu. Babanskyi, V. Buryak, V. Kozakov, O. Zaikaet al. The works of foreign (K. Beatty, R. Bell, J. Blumstuk, J. Bump, E. Cheyne, D. Keegan, J. Koumi, A. Lemos, S. Maynard, D. Nunan, D. Passey, A. Ugaz, Q. Wang, C. Zhu et al.) and Russian (O. Andreyev, I. Lerner, M. Moiseeva, I. Zimnyaya et al.) scholars are of significant interest for students' individual work organization.

General and peculiar features of students' individual work organization in Ukraine and abroad have been defined due to such methods as analysis, synthesis, comparison, individualization and generalization.

RESULTS

Urgency of management of students' individual work is obvious. Individual work is an important component of any education process, which comprises formation of the necessary skills, abilities and knowledge, and, further, provides students with the knowledge techniques of cognitive activity, interest in creative work and, ultimately, the ability to solve technical and scientific problems. A. Lemos, J. Sandars (2014) claim that the Bologna Process emphasizes the importance of students' individual work. They point out that this system introduces students to the idea of taking responsibility for their learning activities, increased retention of the content, improved student engagement and improved status of the learners.

A certain scientific controversy as to the interpretation of the term "individual work" has arisen and continues emerging. Some scientists consider it as a dominant activity among other students' activities at higher educational establishments; others treat it as the most important component of academic work that is performed without the direct involvement of teachers, but under their guidance (Журавська, 1999). Thus, A. Aleksyuk and P. Pidkasystyi (2003) argue that individual work is any students' work organized by teachers and aimed at achieving a certain didactic purpose within a specifically allotted period of time. Other authors believe that individual work is a kind of work that is planned by a student, performed according to the set tasks and with methodological guidance of the teachers, but without their direct involvement (Грищенко, Коцюбинська, 2012). Some scholars (Zhu and Engels, 2013) consider students' individual work as an integral part of the education process, which involves personal accomplishment of the tasks according to the curriculum under indirect supervision of teachers.

C. Zhu and N. Engels (2013) claim that students' individual work is the most important innovation on the micro level that can be placed beside the communication technologies and the use of collaborative learning approaches. The authors mention that innovations like individual work are most typical in organizations that have integrative structures, emphasize diversity and that also place an emphasis on collaboration and teamwork.

According to the modern understanding of learning as a process of future professionals' identity formation, the interpretation of students' individual work is the process of developing self-reliance and individual activity, their reproductive and creative skills, the ability to apply theory in practice, to set and solve theoretical and practical tasks (Грищенко, Коцюбинська, 2012). The aim of students' individual work is to develop personal traits such as independence, namely, the ability to organize and implement their activities without any outside guidance and assistance (Козаков, 1990).

Students' individual work is a rather flexible process that involves the following activities: preparation for various occupations (lectures, practical tasks, workshops, etc.); preparation for different types of control (current, landmark, final et al.); solution of different complexity level problems in and out of class (performance tests, homework, course and diploma projects, etc.); work with various sources of information (paper and electronic textbooks, teaching aids, searching for information on the Internet, etc.); writing essays, reports, summaries on a given topic; preparation for the conferences, etc. (Дичківська, 2004).

Thus, students' individual work can be of two main types: self-study in class (lectures, workshops, laboratory works, etc.) and extracurricular independent work of students. Analyzing scientific pedagogical literature, we can summarize that individual work is the main form of organizing learning process that includes different types of individual and collective training tasks, activities carried out personally by students in class and out of class which are based on their individual characteristics and cognitive abilities under indirect guidance of teachers or without their direct involvement. Efficiency of students' individual work depends on its organization, concept, correlation and types of tasks and achieved results (Козаков, 1990). Since the main purpose of learning a foreign language is the development of communication skills, the teachers' task is to organize the process of individual work in a specific way to enable students to learn more and to create possibilities for their creative activity. We cannot organize individual work in an appropriate way using just traditional ways of studying. The use of modern means, such as awareness programs and Internet technologies allows us to solve these problems.

Thus, the most important factors that have recently influenced the education process are information technologies. Important changes resulting from providing information technologies for the education process have become the source of basic changes in the class and out-of-class study. The most important changes have roots in the fact that technology has enabled students to accent the out-of-class information and this has caused the increase of their motivations for learning.

Ukrainian scientists R. Hurevych and M. Kademiya (2009) claim that the concept of "information technologies" determines facilities and methods of data processing which provide a purposeful transmission, treatment, maintenance and reflection of informative product (data, ideas, knowledge). In our research we consider this concept as the system of facilities and methods of collection, accumulation, processing, analysis and use of information about the object of study that aims to increase the efficiency of students' professional training.

Today various information technologies are widely introduced to facilitate teaching and learning processes (Passey, 2006; Wang, 2008). Information technologies,

compared with other training technologies, have a number of advantages as they provide opportunities to identify and support students' linguistic abilities; represent the basis of distance learning; provide access to best practices in education and training through the educational world of the Internet and an extensive communication network; create an artificial language environment, allowing the study of foreign languages at students' own pace, increasing the independence and responsibility of students when organizing foreign language training for all age groups.

So, information technologies can be a powerful tool for everybody who wants to learn foreign languages through individual work and an efficient facility to enlarge students' creative potential. In Ukraine, as well as in Britain and the USA, it can be organized as the system of practice at phono and video laboratories and the use of different Internet resources, specialized computer software and training courses, e-books, enhanced e-books (which utilize multimedia to enhance the learning experience), electronic encyclopedias and dictionaries.

Moreover, information technology integrates audiovisual information in several media (text, video, audio, graphics, animation, etc.) and in this way implements interactive dialogue with user systems and various forms of self-study. Work at phono laboratories is aimed at mastering phonetic skills. These labs give possibilities not only to listen to the samples of foreign sounds, words, proverbs, dialogues but also to repeat them after the speaker. Pronunciation work in particular has benefited from multimedia. Most pronunciation programs now incorporate some sort of voice recording and playback to let students compare their recording with a model. Students' individual work at video laboratories is aimed at watching educational and documentary films corresponding to the educational themes.

With the help of the Internet we can listen to and communicate directly with the best teachers from many countries through the software. Students can also use the Internet resources while writing compositions, reports or searching for some additional information on the subject. In this way students acquire new skills necessary to work with educational materials, electronic databases and educational computer programs. As the research shows, the Internet resources most often used to facilitate individual work in learning foreign languages include: e-libraries, educational portals, theme websites, bibliographic data bases, websites with e-books and magazines that are free.

One of the very popular techniques for students who want to learn a foreign language through individual work is using e-books. American scientists S. Maynard and E. Cheyne (2005) found out that electronic textbooks are widely accepted by students in their process of education. The authors suggest that students using electronic textbooks had a higher desire to learn; therefore, they increased their learning capacity and became more self-motivated. Other scientists such as A. Ugaz and T. Resnick (2008) compared the use of print and electronic textbooks in the Medical Science Library and found out that the total use of electronic titles was dramatically higher than that of print titles. They made the conclusion that electronic textbooks are not only widely used but they can help to save a great amount of time.

J. Mompean, M. Ashby and H. Fraser (2011) emphasize the importance of such educational online resources as dictionaries and glossaries, flash-animated web libraries, real clips of various speech production, transmission and perception facts, online transcription typewriters, web tutorials, blogs, social networking services, file hosting and sharing services, corpora and database hosting websites, e-learning courses and environments.

Online dictionaries can be monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual. Besides, they contain information on word forms, pronunciation (quite often voiced by professional

speakers) and word collocations. They may also include dictionaries in particular fields of science (applied mathematics, physics, biology, medicine, religion, engineering, etc.), idioms, slang, etc. Many publishers of traditional printed dictionaries such as *Langenscheidt*, *Collins-Reverso*, *Oxford English Dictionary*, *Duden*, *American Heritage* and *Hachette*, offer their resources for use on desktop and laptop computers. These programs can either be downloaded or purchased on a CD-ROM and installed. Other dictionary software is available from specialized electronic dictionary publishers such as *iFinger*, *Abbyy Lingvo*, *Collins-Ultralingua*, *Mobile Systems* and *Paragon Software*. Some electronic dictionaries provide an online discussion forum moderated by the software developers and lexicographers.

In this context, it is necessary to mention free multilingual machine translation services such as *Google Translate, PROMT Online Translator, BabelFish, Bing Translator, SDL FreeTranslation, WorldLingo* which are available online and may be used by students to translate texts, speech, images and websites from one language into another. Such services usually offer a web interface and mobile apps for Android and iOS.

A blog is a publication mechanism, like a journal or bulletin. Subject-specific blogs can promote open dialogue and encourage exchange of opinions, ideas and attitudes between bloggers and commenters.

Social networks are now firmly established as a primary means of communication for many students. They encourage group work and information sharing between the members of subject-specific interest groups; facilitate communication between students from different language environments which is essential for individual language learning activities.

Corpora are large and structured sets of texts usually electronically stored and processed. They are used to do statistical analysis and hypothesis testing, checking occurrences or validating linguistic rules within a specific language domain. Some linguistic corpora are available online for free.

These resources may help students in their everyday work to prepare for classes and to write scientific reports and articles.

In Britain and the USA learning with the help of computer and information technologies, which is called e-learning, is very popular. It is often interpreted as a synonym of such concepts as distance learning or computer assisted learning. Electronic learning itself is a type of learning based on the use of electronic materials available in a personal computer, mobile telephone, DVD-record player, on television, etc.

More than half of colleges and universities in the USA have e-learning programs. The influential state universities of Maryland, Pennsylvania and Massachusetts play the main part at the e-learning market of the USA. 12 well-known universities of Great Britain have confederated to establish an online university. The main participant of this union is Open University. Its aim is to give the possibility for students to learn all the necessary subjects individually. Students have the right to take those modules that are interesting and useful for them. The university offers more than 650 free courses from a wide spectrum of subjects.

The characteristic feature of implementation of information technologies in the education process is using computer software. K. Beatty (2004) and J. Bump (1990) claim that there are many benefits of using a computer component in language learning, and they include: practice with feedback; individualization; the fun factor; variety in the available resources; working with great language data; improving skills in computer use. There are many available grammar and vocabulary programs. Computer vocabulary programs are, in most cases, contextualized and they include a great amount of graphics, audio recording and playback and video. So students, who are at the first stages of vocabulary acquisition,

are given the same information in multiple modes, such as visual plus oral plus textual, it enhances recognition and recall. More complicated error-checking programs can provide students with real help in the feedback they receive, directing them to further practice or moving them to the next stage. Those who do need extra help with those aspects of language that improve with practice can use specially focused programs to give them additional time and assistance outside of regular class time.

CONCLUSIONS

Summarizing the above-mentioned, it should be stressed that the education and professional training process of higher school requires a rational use of traditional teaching methods and development of new educational technologies. We should pay more attention to the organization of students' individual work at higher educational institutions. The introduction of information technologies in the organization of students' individual work provides access to best practices in education and training of the general public through the educational world of the Internet and an extensive communication network and creates an artificial language environment, allowing the study of foreign languages at students' own pace, increasing the independence and responsibility of students.

The study does not conclude all the aspects of the problem. Perspective directions for further studying can be creation of an artificial language environment and application of e-learning in the students' individual work at higher educational establishments in Ukraine and abroad.

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