ROLE OF STUDENTS' INDIVIDUAL WORK IN ACQUISITION OF A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

РОЛЬ САМОСТІЙНОЇ РОБОТИ СТУДЕНТІВ У ПРОЦЕСІ ОПАНУВАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ МОВИ

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The article focuses on the essence of individual work for mastering a foreign language, describes the ways of improving students' individual work, highlights the importance of this form of activity in stimulating the speech, improving educational and professional competence. The paper strives to illuminate that one of the most affordable ways to enhance the foreign language competence is by means of activating students' work as an appropriate organization of independent study. Types, forms and means of individual work used in the higher educational establishment are represented. The content and the objective of student's individual work, plan, methodical literature and assessment are outlined for proper organization of individual work. The article emphasizes the benefits of applying information technologies during students' individual work such as electronic textbooks, multimedia devices, the Internet network, synchronic and postponed teleconferences for communication, blogs, Web-browsers, data bases, searching systems, automatic libraries and electronic magazines specialized sites etc. in order to foster the students' linguistic competence and brush up their foreign language skills. Information and communication technologies are currently of a great interest because they play a crucial role in students' independent work. The ultimate goal of information technologies is to oblige teachers to guide their students to meaningful, ethical and healthy digital literacy as well as provide opportunities for creation of new forms of independent activities, and is characterized by great didactic stimulus and potential.

The necessity of striking a balance between traditional educational technologies and modern information technologies is accentuated. Extensive coverage is given to self-guided work which is to embrace individualization and intensification of the educational process, promotes responsibility for making independent decisions concerning students' activity, planning, organization, assessing, monitoring their performance. Out-of-class independent work guarantees wide opportunities for a student's independence self-improvement, assists in attaining various creative goals, stimulates a cognitive interest and, consequently, increases a steady motivation for the educational process. The research points out that students' independent work is built upon the stimulation of mental activity and creative potential of students, reliance on the previously gained knowledge, diversity of forms and elements of novelty. The findings confirm that proper organization of students' independent work is to intensify future specialist's cognitive activity, facilitate conscious search and analysis of scientific and methodological materials, encourage self-development and motivate to self-study as well as acquire necessary knowledge and skills.

Key words: *individual work, homework, information technologies, cognitive activity, foreign language learning, linguistic competence.*

У статті порушено тему особливостей організації самостійної роботи студентів у процесі вивчення іноземної мови, описано шляхи її вдосконалення, наголошено на важливості цієї форми роботи як засобу стимулювання мовлення, вдосконалення навчальної та професійної компетентності студентів. Обґрунтовано ідею про те, що одним із найдоступніших способів підвищення мовленнєвої компетентності студентів з іноземних мов є активізація самостійної роботи студентів.

Виділено й описано характерні типи, форми та засоби самостійної роботи, які використовуються у вищих навчальних закладах. Окреслено зміст та мету самостійної роботи, раціональне планування завдань, підбір навальних матеріалів з високим навчально-методичним рівнем та довідковим апаратом, впровадження об'єктивного оцінювання для належної організації самостійної роботи студентів. Запропоновано можливості оптимізації процесу вивчення іноземних мов, зокрема шляхом удосконалення самостійної діяльності студентів.

У статті висвітлено переваги використання інформаційних технологій під час індивідуальної роботи студентів, таких як електронні підручники, мультимедійні пристрої, мережа Інтернет, телеконференції, блоги, веб-браузери, бази даних, системи пошуку, автоматичні бібліотеки та електронні журнали, спеціалізовані сайти тощо, для сприяння мовленнєвої компетентності студентів та підвищення їхніх лінгвістичних знань. Узагальнено практичний досвід використання інформаційних технологій, які відіграють вирішальну роль у самостійній роботі студентів.

Увагу в роботі акцентовано на ролі викладача та його впливі на організацію самостійної роботи студентів закладів вищої освіти, враховуючи індивідуальні особливості студентів. Доведено, що під час застосування інформаційних технологій викладач зобов'язаний орієнтувати своїх студентів на змістовну, етичну та правильну цифрову грамотність. Адже інформаційні технології покликані надавати можливості для створення нових форм самостійної діяльності та характеризуються великим дидактичним стимулом та потенціалом. Наголошується на необхідності досягнення балансу між традиційними освітніми технологіями та сучасними інформаційними технологіями. Особливо варто відмітити, що самостійна робота, яка охоплює індивідуалізацію та інтенсифікацію навчально-виховного процесу, сприяє прийняттю самостійних рішень щодо планування та організації самостійної роботи студентів, оцінювання їхніх знань та контролю за їх виконанням. Підкреслюється доцільність автоматизованого контролю та оцінювання знань студентів, який повинен бути регулярним, усебічним і глибоким, спрямованим на виявлення того, чому зміг студент навчитися самостійно, а вже потім на ретельний аналіз помилок у його роботі, ймовірних шляхів і способів їхньої корекції.

Позакласна самостійна робота гарантує широкі можливості для вдосконалення самостійності учня, допомагає досягти різних творчих цілей, стимулює пізнавальний

інтерес та підвищує стійку мотивацію до навчального процесу. Отримані результати підтверджують, що коректна та виважена організація самостійної роботи студентів – це активізація пізнавальної діяльності майбутніх фахівців, сприяння свідомому пошуку та аналізу наукових та методичних матері-алів, заохочення до саморозвитку та мотивація до самостійного навчання та набуття необхідних знань та навичок.

Ключові слова: *самостійна робота, домашні завдання, інформаційні технології, пізнавальна діяльність, вивчення іноземної мови, мовна компетенція.*

Training students in modern higher educational establishments requires a proper organization of the students' independent work which creates the grounds for continuing education, gives the opportunity to improve their various skills and fosters willingness to self-education. A new paradigm to learning a foreign language involves finding the solution to an effective way of training future competitive professionals by developing the skills of independent work, rational application of methods for teaching students to master various language skills and their professional and subject competence.

The study of the student's independent work in the process of language acquisition is relevant under the conditions of tertiary education modernization because it enables the students to activate their potential to learn a foreign language independently, shapes necessary communication skills in every day professional situations.

The reform of various levels of educational establishments involves increasing students' independent activity substantially, which is an important prerequisite for further self-education.

The main objective is to investigate methods for improving students' independent work.

The scientific works of V. Buriak, O. Hurska, Demchenko, I. Dychkivska B. Yesipov, P. Pidkasystyi [1; 2; 3; 4; 6] highlight the essence of the concept, the principles as well as classifications, methods, forms and means of conducting and assessing independent work.

Autonomous learning is researched by I. Bim, I. Zadorozhna, I. Zymnia, S. Nikolaieva, E. Esh, D. Little, W. L. Littlewood, R. Prégent, etc. [10; 11]. W. Littlewood defines autonomy as a certain psychological attitude to the process and the content of educational activities [10, p. 79]. I. Zymnia stresses motivational factor that influences the effectiveness of independent educational activities. General didactic, psychological, methodological aspects of the individual work are researched by O. Hurska [2].

The independent work of students in learning a foreign language envisages processing lexical and grammatical material, developing reading and writing skills, consulting textbooks, dictionaries, reference books, application of computer and multimedia technical modes, the Internet. All of these means provide ample possibilities for students to study the material independently and advance the knowledge of a foreign language.

However, the teacher is in charge of appropriately organizing independent work of students. He/she is responsible for instructing the students how to manage their independent work in the most productive way, use and filter different sources of information in order to minimize the efforts but maximize the expected outcomes. The teacher's aim is not only to acquaint students with the subject but also to interest them, create conditions for the activation of cognitive activity, arouse desire to study. He/she is able to form the appropriate goals and motives for learning, set the tone, show the direction of the educational movement, determine the individual trajectory of educational activities for each student. Students want to see the lecturers who are capable of conducting a dialogue with the students, an experienced person, who does not teach according to the synopsis, but applies practical experience; the one who makes convincing arguments, giving and analyzing examples from practice; someone who is not only in charge of controlling the students' performance, but also plays an important role as a mentor to the learners, the one who gives guidelines and gives a helping hand with recommendations what material to study and inspires to benefit from self-study.

According to the methodological literature the independent work in a foreign language is understood as an independent educational and cognitive activity of students, which is an integral part of the system organization of the educational process aimed at mastering a foreign language as a means of solving professional problems. It is carried out in collaboration with the teacher, but without his/her direct participation [3, p. 69].

Independent work can be divided into several types: it is conducted during classroom hours, under the supervision of a teacher in the form of consultations, taking tests and exams; outside the classroom when students do homework or make project works.

The organization of independent work precisely is determined by the curriculum and methodological recommendations, and usually consists of the following types of activities:

– preparation for classroom lessons (lectures, practical lessons, seminars, etc.);

– carrying out practical tasks and exercises during the semester;

– independent elaboration of separate themes of the educational discipline due to the curriculum;

– translation of various foreign texts;

– fulfilment of all types of control papers, tests and exams (state exams, graduation qualification works);

– work in student scientific circles, seminars;

– participation in scientific and practical conferences, competitions etc;

– provision of other types of activities initiated by the university, faculty, department [3].

One of the types of individual work is homework which should be wisely dosed. Homework creates opportunities for training receptive skills, brushing up vocabulary, improving different competences. Home assignments include various exercises that revise the worked-out material and are intended to familiarize the students with new information that will be studied in the classroom [6, p. 18]. The tasks focus on grammar and vocabulary (substitution, use of the necessary forms, sentence transformation, error correction, etc.). When planning homework, the teacher is obliged to be aware of the factors that are related to the students' interest, to the topic and the form of work, their ability to perform the tasks at allocated time.

It is advisable to use the method of project work which is aimed at achieving the predicted positive results of independent work. It allows integrating students' knowledge from different areas for solving various problems, applying the acquired knowledge in practice, generating new ideas. This project work is applicable if the teacher organizes a set of actions which are expected to be performed independently by students and the outcome is the creation of a creative product. The project is valuable because students are taught how to acquire knowledge independently, express their own viewpoints, communicate feelings, gain level of foreign language proficiency, observe the progress made. The project work shows students' active involvement in the real activity, acceptance of personal responsibility for advancement in training. It is intended to transform foreign language lessons in a debate and research club, which solves practical, significant and relevant issues for students.

The project undergoes the following main phases: preparatory, organizational, executive and reflexive. The teacher is to organize strict monitoring of learner's performance to ensure active participation of all students in project activities.

A series of recent studies has indicated that information technology and the Internet also play an important role in organization of the independent work of students. These modes open up new frontiers for securing individualized learning, using forms of pair and group work, and, of course, for optimizing students' independent work.

The independent work of students with the use of information technology embraces a few aspects:
– work with electronic publications in the library;
– performance of individual tasks on the basis of information technologies use;
– electronic testing;
– application of educational sites and automated training software.

Advantages of multimedia training programs are as follows:
– clarity of the material presentation (use of color, illustrations, sound, videos, animations, etc.);

– variety of activities;
– quick feedback (built-in test systems provide instant control over the assimilation of material);
– interactive mode allows controlling the speed of educational material processing and grasping [4, p. 82–85].

Information technology is beneficial in terms of organizing effective and productive individual work. Students can be suggested to write and defense reviews, scientific reports, make profound presentations, prepare and elaborate a report on the specific topic related to the specialism. In that case the following Internet tools are recommended: chat technology, video conferencing, blogs, e-mail, mailing lists, forums. Web forums and chats help students communicate in a foreign language as well as gain experience in intercultural communication. They will not only promote the development of speech skills, but will also have a positive effect on the development of the logical thinking, the ability to respond clearly and quickly to the situation, the formulation of ideas. E-mail is the most well-known and frequently used Internet technology, which allows you to receive written assignments and send checked papers, provide additional support on moot points. Online dialogues can be designed for handling conversations with native speakers and discussing peculiar topics or conducting interviews. The results of the project works are reflected in the form of PowerPoint presentations in the blog of the group, followed by a discussion of the work [5].

Most Internet users fancy blogging, describing things at work, hobbies, their pets, social and political issues. They encourage to use website Blogger (www.blogger.com) or WordPress.

In addition, there are various reference materials in electronic form, dictionaries and encyclopedias namely the ABBYY Lingvo, Oxford, Webster's Dictionary, Longman Dictionary, Macmillan English Dictionary and Britannica Encyclopedia. These resources guarantee fast search for a word with all its definitions and possible grammatical forms, allow listening to the sounded transcription and viewing sentences using this word to better understand its meaning in different contexts [4; 5].

Programs for testing a linguistic competence (electronic testing with TOEFL, IELTS, CAMBRIDGE, PTE, FCE etc.) are used to test and control knowledge, determine general level of foreign language proficiency [8, p. 92–95].

These above mentioned examples highlight that information technology gives the opportunity to receive information directly from the Internet, teaches the users not to be limited to only general dictionaries, but also search necessary information from professional topics in explanatory dictionaries, improve reading skills by mastering texts from the Internet, increase listening competence while listening to the authentic materials. Working with audio

and video services promotes the development of listening and speaking skills [9]. The effectiveness of tasks for self-listening or watching videos in a foreign language as well as creating audio and video files has been proven. Students are eager to use podcast services with audio or video recordings available for download, listening or viewing. It is proved that such materials diversify the activities of students, increase level of motivation to learn a foreign language, enable the students to work with authentic language samples, create a foreign language environment. The effectiveness of videos for communicative language teaching is obvious.

Before being engaged in video activities, students are supposed to do preparatory exercises, a teacher provides students with a series of questions and tasks to predict the content of the film, and checks their readiness to perceive the information. The other exercises assess comprehension of the video extract, as well as the final set of activities concerning the discussion of the video material and completion of grammar, lexical and creative written tasks.

Watching movies and doing exercises promotes memory, attention, logical and creative thinking, as well as deepens students' knowledge about the cultural peculiarities of the language which is being studied [7]. It is vital to remember to strike a balance between traditional educational technologies and modern information technologies. Only in that case the success is guaranteed.

This paper shows that qualitative independent work largely depends on the control exercised under the guidance of a teacher. The control should be regular, comprehensive and deep, aimed primarily at identifying what exactly the student was able to learn independently, and only then include the careful analysis of student's errors, pragmatic ways and means of their correction.

Assessment is also one of the positives factors of intrinsic motivation of the student, as it enhances learning success. Exercises, tests of different levels, situational tasks, role-playing games, project technologies are individual forms of independent work control. The organization of individual work assessment includes specific stages: determination of the purpose of control, development of the content of control tasks and their sequence, choice of forms of control, design of the criteria for evaluating the results of control tasks and requirements for their analysis. Assessment of independent work is also carried out during training sessions. The method of current assessment includes: testing, oral interviews, discussions of the report, active self-control.

The broad implication of the research is that the productivity of students' individual work depends on the objectives and ways of achieving them; cognitive interests and motivation of students; quality of the educational information content for self-study; creation of advantageous conditions for self-realization of a student; the methodological provision of the discipline, its precise planning, organization and management; the competent use of various forms of current and periodic assessment.

The analysis leads to the following conclusions that the use of modern information technology in the organization of independent work of students in the process of a foreign language acquisition in compliance with certain methodological recommendations will promote not only effective elaboration of educational materials, the formation of communicative competence, but also the development of independence as a personality trait, shaping skills of independent search activity, ability to take on responsibility, independently make decisions on planning, organizing, evaluating, testing own activity and its results.

Thus, students of higher education institution should polish the technique of self-study for the subsequent independent acquisition of knowledge. Content, purpose and methodological basis should be clearly defined while preparing for independent work.

Prospects for further research envision the creation of a special methodological support for improving the independent work of students in order to master a foreign language and provision of favorable conditions for the student's self-fulfilment.

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