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Interactive learning environment as a powerful tool of students' personal learning responsibility upgrading

At present, the information revolution has led to the emergence of information society, whose next phase is knowledge society, where knowledge and information will be transformed into the most important factors of social development. Under conditions of information society formation, the content of education has changed to a considerable extent. One of the main factors of it is the informatization of the learning process, applying different media technologies. Mediation is a global process of the life and intellectual individuality space transformation via extension of informative and communicative field in the digital revolution era, implementing new media tools (the Internet, social network etc.). This tendency has influenced not only the educational process as a whole, but also its every participant, such as teachers, students and the learning process itself. This has led to a new paradigm emergence in education, as well as the evolution of new concepts in content development, and the emergence of a number of innovative methods to successfully render the information to the learners. Educators are constantly in search of more effective ways to engage their students in the process of learning, as well as increase students learning outcomes. This new learning environment will undoubtedly influence the way teachers teach and students learn. Taking into consideration rapid information society development, the use of modern teaching methods in higher educational establishments, particularly in teaching foreign languages, has become topical.

Noteworthy are the studies of the essence of interactive learning principles that have been furnished by such scholars as O. Pometun, I. Zimnya, N. Kuzmina, and especially foreign language teachers – S. Nikolaeva, N. Tuchina, D. Byrne, J. Harmer, A. Hopkins, M. Lewis, T. Woodward and others. The effectiveness of using information and communication technologies in the foreign languages teaching process has been studied in the works of O. Minkova, Ye. Polat and others. Despite a wide range of scientific papers, this problem remains scantily researched in terms

of interactive learning models usage for foreign languages teaching, proficiency of foreign languages teachers evaluating, specifically in modern context of e-society development.

The work covers the results of analyzing effective ways of students' individual responsibility development via introducing modern learning techniques into the educational environment.

The tasks of the work are to distinguish the features of interactive learning environment and techniques for students' individual responsibility development, foreign languages teaching under modern conditions of the information society development, taken as an example, to describe the results of such techniques implementation in teaching English to non-linguistic major higher school students.

Of importance in this context is the semantic analysis of the relevant core terms. To begin with the term "environment": accordingly, an environment is "external conditions or surroundings, esp. those in which people live or work" (Dictionary ABBYY Lingvo). Taking into consideration this definition, we regard an educational environment as the surroundings in which teachers and students co-work together, which tends to influence their development and behaviour. "Educational activity" then, is a "sphere of mutual relations between individuals from different social groups with the purpose of giving or taking an educational service" (Dictionary ABBYY Lingvo). Consequently, it is very important to make the educational environment innovative and self-organized, specializing that the environment is the surroundings, which influence the quality of relations between system's elements.

According to the Road Map of Educational Reforms in Ukraine (2015–2025), the main idea of the National Curriculum is individual students' development, up-bringing such qualities as self-assurance, self-esteem, successfulness, self-realization of one's potential and one's life mission, initiative, cultural awareness, social activity, creativeness, self-motivation, individual responsibility, ability of human values orienting, ability of setting goals and fulfilling tasks, as well as managing one's life. In view of the above, the contents of educational environment should be revised. A new, emerged, pedagogical model should include a new learning style, embracing digital literacy, intercultural awareness, as well as individual responsibility for one's life upgrading.

We adhere to the definition of the notion "learning" given by S. Emmett: "Learning is the process by which you use your personal knowledge and experience to enable you to: make sense of things, by thinking; make things happen, by doing; bring about change, by moving from one position to another" (Emmett, 2008, p. 14). Thus, as it is highlighted by the concept "I think – I do – I move", it involves students' personal responsibility for one's learning results.

J. Harmer, one of the leading British methodologists put forward a triad "engage – study – activate", ensuring the success of learning/teaching of English (Harmer, 2007). We believe that the application of interactive techniques will definitely increase the efficiency of the learning/teaching process at all stages of the triad.

The following core term to be discussed is "interactive" (interaction – a mutual or reciprocal action or influence), and it means 1) allowing or relating to continuous two-way transfer of information between a user and the central point of a communication system, such as a computer or television; 2) (of two or more persons, forces etc.) acting upon or in close relation with each other; interacting (Dictionary ABBYY Lingvo). Thus, an interactive learning model is the learning process that is accomplished under conditions of continuous active mutual activity of all learning process participants (stakeholders). This model presupposes that students and teachers are partners. It creates some real-life situation simulations where joint responsibility for the learning results is in focus. There are a lot of interactive techniques that teachers can use in class. The most popular techniques are dilemma decision-making, case study, brainstorming, different role-plays, games, debates, different kinds of discussions and others, so any tasks that can simulate real life situations. In any simulation the situation may be contrived but, once in it, students have the freedom to respond as they think fit. This method brings about the real-life situation to make students react on the spot, requiring them to employ their ability to complete a task. As soon as the simulation begins, the students have to rely on their own communication and problem-solving skills. Effecting the task successfully brings a sense of true achievement and greatly boosts one's learning confidence. For example, with the students of our university (S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics) the most popular and effective simulations are a business meeting, various presentations, some games connected with business situations and debates on business topics. The students are by far more highly motivated and less stressed when involved in the activities that appear to be less difficult, yet are relevant to their own particular learning or future professional situations. Such activities mostly serve as useful practice in presenting an argument and expressing opinions, which is very importing for gaining the necessary skills that are very vital for students' personal responsibility upgrading.

We would like to stress that interactive techniques can be applied for all learners' intelligence types, stimulating personalization in class, either in individual or pair, group, distant instruction that modern educational framework can offer. Thus, the benefit of using information technologies in the interactive learning environment is obvious, being both real-life productive and motivating, particularly for learning foreign languages. The late emerged interactive learning environment on the basis of multimedia tools provides extra opportunities for teachers to implement a more effective complex of methods, based on modern didactic, pedagogic and psychological principles, as well as to make this process even more interesting, creative, learner-centered and friendly. Students also have more advantages while working in this environment: it opens up intellectual possibilities for individual style of learning and individual learning responsibility enhancement, giving more autonomy, making the student more creative, self-motivated. While acting in the environment the student gains the ability of setting goals and fulfilling tasks, as well

as managing one's life goals. Besides, information technologies can be used to take advantage of the fact that our brains access information in nonlinear ways.

It is generally acknowledged that one of the aims of learning foreign languages is to help students develop general and professional communicative language competences for effective communication in an academic and professional sphere. It is obvious that to become an effective communicator it is necessary to create certain real-life situations and in the interactive learning environment. In order to achieve this aim the students are to be involved in discussions and various problem-solving tasks. The best way to do it is to use the most powerful students learning tool – the computer, since e-learning is not only a modern technology, but also an integral part of students' life. Beyond doubt, today, the computer has become an effective learning tool. There are many pros and cons of using e-learning models in teaching English, in particular English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The main advantages of this model are the possibility of a direct/personal contact with a teacher via the Internet at any time, study at convenient time and place, have a self-assessment option, next to reduced costs of education and others. The disadvantages may comprise various issues related to computer-mediated communication in real life, both for students and teachers, in particular, English language teachers, issues related to creating an adequate content for e-learning, problems involving blended learning in the teaching process, shortage of time and facilities to implement e-learning techniques in classes and so on. But one thing is clear: the e-learning mode has become an inseparable part of modern education (Borova, 2013).

Experts highlight that students succeed in environments that provide multiple means of accessing information and knowledge, supported by content that is presented in multiple formats. Advances in multimedia technology provide students with new opportunities of using digital media to gain and share knowledge and work collaboratively on projects with their peers. These exchanges and experiences are rich, social, and often more meaningful than word-dominant classes (Borova, 2013).

Consequently, information technologies create "virtual reality" of real life environment, and allow to involve almost all students' feelings, which is a powerful motivating factor in developing students' personal learning responsibility for their learning outcomes. If a student has one's own responsibility for one's learning results it manifests one's personal responsibility. If a student is more responsible in class, he/she will, beyond doubt, become more responsible in real life.

Considering the above-mentioned, it is possible to highlight that the process of using multimedia in English classes betrays such core didactic principles as complexity, universality and interactivity that are central to learning English. Moreover, multimedia tools application brings about a personalized attitude to individuals, as well as task differentiation in ESP teaching, taking into account simplicity, availability and individual student's pace of learning. Implementing live channels, one can watch news, navigate the internet, watch different video materials, films, use multimedia programs in the process of learning, as well as read electronic books,

dictionaries, thus creating an active communicate environment to learn English. All these simulate conditions that reflect real-life situations in English, especially with the authentic language environment being absent.

It is fairly evident that no innovation can be efficiently introduced without highly qualified teachers who implement all the possibilities in the process of learning and teaching. The quality of knowledge provided by an educational establishment depends on the proficiency level of its staff. In our opinion, it is the professional development that brings to the fore the uniqueness and integrity of those individuals who seek self-improvement. Continuous self-improvement is the basis of professional activity of any English language teacher. It is common knowledge that the professional activity of English teachers is based on subject-subjective relations. A skilled, proficient, creative, socially active, humanistic value-oriented teacher is considered a true professional. The level of higher school teachers' proficiency depends on their competence, on the level of their professional-pedagogical thinking upgrading, as well as on their educational and research work standards (Borova, 2011).

We strongly believed that teachers' proficiency also should include a definite foreign culture awareness, raising-oriented takes that comprise a certain individual socializing, awareness-raising competence of the scientific and pedagogical worker, namely, one's socio-communicative competence, i.e. one's ability to efficiently create, a definite favourable socio-psychological interpersonal group climate, enhance mutually-supportive personal features of the personnel, both their moral, civic, as well as health maintenance competencies. Of essence on this context is one's ability and skill to be an efficient communicator, i.e. to be fully culturally aware of the emerging communicative tasks, as well as the required potential for self-development.

To fully analyze the dual process of learning responsibility upgrading on both sides: by teacher and students, it is necessary to determine the foundation conditions of the personalization-directed professional self-organization. This appears to be a three dimensional process. The first place is taken up by some economic conditions that substantiate the motivational sphere, providing the necessary system of material encouragement and rewards with a scientific and pedagogical worker individual rating to meet the posed objectives. The second dimension is a socio-professional one, the goal of which is to create an innovative educational environment, stipulating both one's vertical and horizontal career growth, while the third dimension specifies the development of scientific and pedagogical worker individual cultural awareness. Now, let us switch over to emphasizing peculiarities of the above-discussed dimensions. As was mentioned, the first dimension provides the necessary material incentives, helping a scientific and pedagogical worker to be motivated and effectively self-developed, it also substantiates an unbiased evaluation of the work of both a scientific and pedagogical worker and the department.

The second direction embraces basic professional necessities of a teacher. Creation of an innovative educational environment, that causes some changes in maintenance, methodologies, technologies of studies, permanently stipulating the

beginning of personal development in a particular professional sphere, brings about constant progress of the educational system and all its constituents. The satiation of the educational space provides access to the newest educational methodologies and technologies, both within the limits of an in-plant training (of seminars, trainings, consultations, conferences, classes' lectures cross-attendance, webinars and chats participation) (Borova, 2011).

The next important condition is one's inner realization of the necessity to self-develop, with a motivational aspect being of greatest essence in this case. It is worth noting that, at present, higher educational establishments strive to channel their ability to meet the employment requirements; in view of it, the professional needs of students have become a formative factor in the professional development of scientific and pedagogical personnel, as well as that of a higher educational institution itself.

The third direction embraces certain cultural development of personality of any teacher, which is an important condition of one's professional development under modern society conditions. Support on the part of leader in this context also plays a significant part. Organization of cultural events, stipulating scientific and pedagogical workers participating in some international events, in sum, intensifies the distribution of knowledge of scientific and pedagogical staff in the cross-cultural terms.

The introduction of the above-discussed interactive learning environment has appeared to be fairly fruitful, increasing implementing interactive learning environment has increased both students' learning outcomes and English teachers' professional development at S. Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics (S. Kuznets KhNUE). The term exam results at S. Kuznets KhNUE have revealed a 28% increase in students' ESP skills development level (years 1–4) due to constant implementation of interactive learning techniques and organizing an interactive foreign language surroundings for university students.

The administration and academic body of Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics are fully aware that foreign language proficiency (especially that in English) is of great importance for modern experts in the field of economics, informatics, computer technologies and tourism. That is why in 2011 it was decided to give students an opportunity to participate in reading for and taking Business English Certificate (BEC) exam (administrated by the Cambridge English Language Assessment Department) at the university. This option has proved to be a more attractive one than others for S. Kuznets KhNUE students and staff. For the last five years, 253 students and 142 teachers of Economics received a BEC certificate. The university supports students' initiative to take BEC exam, since the grade obtained at the exam will be taken as an acceptable final mark in English, as well as the English state exam. This mark is also valid while going up to a postgraduate study. The worldwide recognition of Cambridge certificates ensures that the students who have successfully passed BEC exams are by far more likely to be enrolled for

the Master degree programs, administrated at both S. Kuznets KhNUE and abroad, with the training conducted in English, as well as to have access to education, employability and social mobility worldwide. Our university is a pioneer in preparing and taking BEC exams in Ukraine. It received a Gold Membership of Cambridge Exams Preparation Centers award in Ukraine from the Cambridge English Language Assessment Department.

Thus, the studies of several years' standing have proved that the informative technologies allow to successfully combine all methods of learning foreign languages, particularly interactive, that can simulate linguistic and communicative reality and improve speaking, listening, writing and reading skills of learners. These technologies help to realize the principles of integrated skills learning.

Thus, applying interactive learning environment in ESP classes is fairly more advantageous: this mode of learning is more promising than traditional modes, but still needs much deeper further analysis.

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Abstract

The work covers the results of analyzing of effective ways of students' individual responsibility development via introducing modern learning techniques into the educational environment. It is distinguished the features of interactive learning environment and techniques for students' individual responsibility development, foreign languages teaching under modern conditions of the information society development, taken as an example. The results of such techniques implementation in teaching English to non-linguistic major higher school students are described.

Key words: individual responsibility, interactive learning techniques, educational environment, students' personal learning responsibility

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