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Reshetniak Iryna

Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics

THE USE OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

The article considers the use of information technology in learning foreign languages, the vast opportunities that it gives to students in mastering their language skills and acquiring proficiency in a foreign language.

Key words: information technology, multimedia, independent work, moderator, e-learning tools.

Informatization of education is becoming increasingly important today and is entering a new stage of its development. New information, multimedia and other computer technologies are being widely introduced into the educational process. As a result, the issues that demonstrate the place, role, functions and importance of the information technology in foreign language learning are gaining popularity today. In order to improve and optimize the process of teaching and learning of a foreign language in higher education it is necessary to use various methods, including those based on modern information technology.

Recently, in higher education institutions of non-language specialties, there has been a reduction in the number of classroom hours and an increase in the hours devoted to independent work of students. The role of the teacher in the educational process is being transformed. A few years ago, the teacher served as the main source of information, and now he/she becomes the organizer and moderator, expert and consultant of independent student work. Bearing this in mind, it is desirable to use more effective forms and means of learning that would perform the informative, motivating, systematizing and controlling functions in the process of learning. These requirements can be met by the latest computer-based learning tools, which include electronic manuals, textbooks, guidelines, multimedia training courses, training and test programs, etc.

In order to comply with the above requirements, the three components of teaching should be provided. First, there must be material and technical base in the form of specialized language laboratories and technical means of training. Second, it is necessary to develop appropriate electronic teaching aids (manuals, glossaries, guidelines, recommendations for the use of electronic media). And, third, it is necessary to carry out appropriate training of teachers to increase their information technology competence.

The progress made in recent years in the introduction of new computer tools in the process of teaching foreign languages in higher education requires a deep scientific substantiation of didactic and methodological bases of their use, defining the conceptual foundations of e-learning tools for both classroom and extracurricular (distance) learning. The introduction of electronic tools in the educational process requires a comprehensive solution of such didactic problems as the development of theory, methods of distance learning technology and so on. Effective teaching requires high-quality didactic support – a set of different interconnected types of meaningful educational information on different media (paper and electronic forms) that have been developed taking into account the requirements of pedagogy, psychology and other sciences.

Didactic capabilities of e-learning tools are designed to promote better learning and the formation and development of various types of skills, namely, listening skills based on adapted and authentic audio and video texts, monologue and dialogue skills, translation and text abstracting skills, the ability to read and understand the materials from the Internet and other local networks. The use of e-learning tools can also result in increasing information capacity and visibility; in enlarging active and passive vocabulary of students as well as their acquaintance with modern vocabulary of the language which reflects the culture of a country, its political and social structure and other cross-cultural phenomena. With the help of different e-learning opportunities students will be able to form and develop their creativity and independent thinking, increase their motivation and cognitive activity. Students will also be able to use a foreign language in interactive communication as the use of various e-learning tools suggests either immediate or postponed feedback and can lead to encouraging their motivation for   independent work. The opportunities for individualization and differentiation of students' work are myriad: from choosing the pace and volume of learning material and the level of its complexity to expanding the possibilities of

control with feedback and diagnostics thus increasing its objectivity; from creating a positive psychological climate during the independent work of students to choosing the appropriate time and place of doing it.

The attractiveness of the Internet resource is obvious due to several factors. First, because the Internet is a limitless source of information, it allows the teacher to save time searching for the necessary modern authentic material and focus on methodical work on the processing of textual, audio and visual information. Second, the Internet provides great opportunities for creativity, because when using online material, the teacher becomes the author: he/she determines the purpose, develops the structure of the lesson, invents new types of work. Third, today's young people are so obsessed with the Internet that they spend part of their lives in cyberspace. The use of the Internet allows to increase the efficiency of foreign language learning by increasing the motivation of students, mastering the skills of critical thinking and conducting research online.

Computer programs and their functions can be divided into training, supporting, mentoring, giving reference, controlling and educational game. An essential feature of all types of computer training programs is their interactivity, the availability of feedback. Feedback can be both external and internal. External feedback allows the teacher to monitor, evaluate and adjust the interaction between the student and the computer. Internal feedback allows the student to draw certain conclusions about the effectiveness of their own learning activities, provides the necessary assistance and clarification, and, if necessary, demonstrates the correct answer or method of performing certain actions. A significant number of e-learning tools are multifunctional. These are electronic textbooks and manuals that contain systematic teaching material in accordance with the requirements of the foreign language curriculum. They should provide students with the necessary amount of information, as well as contribute to the formation of the appropriate level of skills and abilities for a particular stage of learning. The development of electronic textbooks is one of the leading activities of higher education institutions working on the introduction of distance learning. It is advisable to comprehensively apply such forms of modern information and telecommunication technologies in various types of classes in information retrieval, experimental research and independent learning activities, in particular, in the activities of students to process information, acquire knowledge and develop skills in communicating in a foreign language.

The independent work of students on the basis of information learning tools contributes to the formation of a high culture of intellectual work as well as the formation and development of techniques and skills to learn independently, the ability to spend and allocate the time efficiently. It also develops mental skills of analysis, synthesis, comparison and matching and teaches independent thinking. The use of information technology in the process of learning foreign languages leads to qualitative changes in all elements of the system of foreign language training of future professionals, namely:

• The shift in the content of the system of foreign language training from the logic of scientific knowledge to the solution of professional tasks. Thus, open education allows the transition from the subject principle of content construction to the creation of integrated training courses that reflect a holistic picture of future professional activity.

• The nature of knowledge itself is changing. The criterion of "knowledge - for certain type of activity" is becoming the main one in the selection of the content of foreign language professional training. The knowledge of future professionals begins to act not only as an ontology, but also as a means of solving specific professional tasks. However, this does not mean that fundamental knowledge disappears in the system of foreign language training. It remains, but it is being built on other laws: the knowledge is acquired not in store, but for the real needs and problems that may arise in practical activity of future professionals. Universal (methodological) knowledge that allows to assess and predict the future is of paramount importance.

• The requirements to the methods and forms of organization of foreign language teaching are changing, and the same applies to the level of teacher training and their roles in the educational process. Active individual and group (joint, collective) forms of work with educational material are becoming very popular and important.

• The type of activity and the nature of the relationship between a teacher and students are changing. The student is becoming a full-fledged subject in solving both educational and professional tasks, while receiving the necessary assistance from the teacher.

To sum up, information technology is indispensable for distance learning, given the specific features of the latter (interactivity, individuality, resource intensity, etc.), which cause changes in the nature of interaction between student and teacher and the

distribution of their functions. Potentially, the computer expands the capabilities of the teacher, is able to identify the existing reserves of the student's personality and learning abilities, contributes to the effective organization of the latter. On the other hand, the use of information technology may have certain shortcomings in methodological, psychological and technical terms. These include, in particular, insufficient consideration by developers of relevant programs of the peculiarities of education in Ukrainian higher education institutions (especially students of non-language specialties); insufficient motivation of some students and their incomplete readiness for self-control; insufficient level of preparation of some teachers to work with the use of IT; lack of proper technical support in some educational institutions, etc. The solution of these and other issues requires special research, development of appropriate methodological systems and their experimental verification.

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