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# **INDIVIDUALISED RESOURCES: DEFINITION AND EFFICIENCY IN THE RUSSIAN EFL CLASSROOM**

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## **INDIVIDUALISED RESOURCES: DEFINITION AND EFFICIENCY IN THE RUSSIAN EFL CLASSROOM**

In order to plan lessons that include effective instructional strategies, it is critical for teachers to be aware of student aptitudes, personality variables, learning strategies, interests, aspirations and talents. This paper presents a way for Russian teachers to improve their student's speaking abilities when learning foreign languages, called individualised resources, which are based on the concept of individualisation. Individualised resources are designed to help students to actively participate in the learning process, contribute to their productivity of learning and compensate for missing abilities when mastering foreign languages. In order to verify the effectiveness of this educational tool, qualitative and quantitative indicators were applied to experimental teaching. The findings illustrate how the approach enhanced the students' speaking abilities in terms of purposefulness, richness of speech content and logical progression of speech. We concluded that the students' mastering of these qualities, using individualized resources, did improve and that this type of training is sufficient to shape speaking skills when teaching English.

**Key words:** individualisation, individualised resources, qualities of oral statement, aptitudes, learning strategies, personality variables.

**JEL Classification:** Z

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## Introduction

Generally, individualised teaching is recognized to be an essential response to a number of pedagogical challenges and problems currently discussed with regard to the effectiveness of teaching (Diamond 1975, Kuzovlev 1997, Passov 1998, Bray & McClaskey 2015). From the late 1990s, the notion of individualisation has become a guiding principle for educational reform in Russia. The concept of modernizing Russian education highlights the need to ensure differentiation and individualisation by using effective teaching methods, in particular for EFL learning.

Individualised learning is a method of teaching, in which content, instructional technology and the pace of learning are based upon the abilities and interests of each learner (Kuzovlev, 1997:15). The principle of individualised learning has become an important aspect of teaching any school subject, and foreign languages in particular. Rogova maintains that

Languages are more difficult than most subjects to learn because of the complex combination of skills and information required for language mastery, which is why it requires an individual approach (Rogova 1988:46).

All learning is individual, and most importantly, human speech is individual as a product and a process of learning. Zimnaya (1978:109) contends that firstly, speech motivation is individual, i.e. different people react to different stimuli in different ways. Secondly, human speech is individual in terms of content and meaning, and in the way of expressing thoughts and formulating ideas.

However, existing resource kits for teaching English, although they are well developed, suffer significant disadvantages. They are designed for the 'average' student and cannot take into account individual characteristics of each student learning a foreign language. Therefore, the question arises: Is it possible to develop supplementary educational tools, which will correspond to individual characteristics and the needs of the students?

If teachers can develop and implement extra training tools, which take into account the individual and personal characteristics of students, such as the pace of progress, the abilities for foreign language acquisition, possible gaps in learning a foreign language, a personalized system of instruction, the way that teaching is structured and managed, the learning process will proceed more effectively.

In this paper, we argue that providing students with individualised learning resources will result in their active participation in the learning process, and contribute to their productivity when learning a foreign language.

This paper describes individualised educational resources and shows that they can be an effective educational tool in universities. Individualised educational resources are a special type of training tool designed for the individualization and personalization of the learning process. To be effective, student innate abilities for foreign language acquisition, their learning strategies and their personality in individual, pair and group work must all be taken into account.

The rest of this paper is organised as follows: first, the theoretical grounding for individualised resources will be reviewed. Second, the structure of individualised resources will be identified. Then, the interdependency of personal profile data and the content of individualised resources will be presented. The next section will describe the experiments and the qualitative and quantitative indicators, which were selected to verify the effectiveness of the resources. The final

section outlines the results of the experiments and suggests future educational practices in Russian universities.

## **Literature review**

Students collectively encompass a wide range of variables, including age, gender, intelligence, personality, learning style and previous learning experience, individual beliefs, attitudes, expectations, motivations and strategies for learning. This paper explores the notion of individualized resources, so for our research focuses on the following three areas:

- Aptitude
- Learning strategies
- Personality variables

This section reviews the literature on student variables with respect to language learning and then examines the issues that arise from the literature particularly on creating individualized resources.

### **1. Aptitude and intelligence**

Language aptitude is one the most significant factors which differentiate individuals. Carroll (1981) divides language aptitude into four components: phonemic coding ability (the capacity to identify distinct sounds and to code them for later retrieval), grammatical sensitivity (the ability to recognise the function of words in sentences), associative memory (the ability to learn associations between sounds and meanings and retain them) and inductive language learning ability (the ability to identify patterns in language use and to infer the rules that govern them). Skehan (1989) argues that Carroll's four components can be reduced to three: auditory ability, linguistic ability and memory ability. In his research, Skehan investigated successful and unsuccessful language students, and found that memory ability emerges as a key characteristic of outstanding language learners, more specifically in terms of its relevance to the 'coding, organisation, retrieval and use of existing information' (1998: 285). In this sense, language fluency is also seen as partly dependent on the role of memory in performance. In a later publication, Skehan (2002) suggests the need to relate different components of aptitude to four macro stages in language acquisition; noticing (e.g. phonemic coding and working memory), patterning (e.g. language analytic ability), controlling (memory retrieval processes) and lexicalising (e.g. memory abilities).

Sternberg & Grigorenko (2002:268) suggest that the theory of 'successful intelligence', that they have developed through general research on native-speaking students, may also be applicable to EFL learning. This theory distinguishes between three types of aptitude: analytical intelligence (i.e. the ability to analyse, compare and evaluate), creative intelligence (i.e. the ability to produce novel solutions to problems) and practical intelligence (i.e. the capacity to adapt to, to shape and to select environments suited to one's abilities).

O'Malley & Chamot (1993: 107) claim however, that while aptitude is generally assumed to be a fixed characteristic, it may be more adaptable to instruction than was originally anticipated. They find a close link between Carroll's four components of aptitude and language learning strategies, and propose that what has previously been defined as fixed aptitudes of learners may be redefined conceptually in terms of the strategies individuals use in learning situations. This has implications for pedagogic intervention, in terms of strategy training for language learners.

## **2. Learning Strategy**

A Learning Strategy is a person's approach to learning and using information. Students use Learning Strategies to help them understand information and solve problems. Students who do not know how or do not use good learning strategies often learn passively and ultimately fail at university. Learning Strategy instruction focuses on making students more active learners by teaching them how to learn and how to use what they have learned to be successful.<sup>2</sup>

A strategy is useful when: (a) the strategy relates well to the L2 task at hand, (b) the strategy fits the particular student's learning style, and (c) the student employs the strategy effectively and links it with other relevant strategies. Strategies that fulfil these conditions help students learn easier, faster and more enjoyably.

Oxford (1990) was developing her Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL), which uses factor analyses to group strategies into six categories. Oxford (1990) identified six major groups of L2 learning strategies:

1. Cognitive strategies enable the learner to manipulate the language material in direct ways, e.g., through reasoning, analysis, note taking, and synthesizing.
2. Meta-cognitive strategies (e.g., identifying one's own preferences and needs, planning, monitoring mistakes, and evaluating task success) are used to manage the learning process overall.
3. Memory-related strategies (e.g., acronyms, sound similarities, images, key words) help learners link one L2 item or concept with another but do not necessarily involve deep understanding.
4. Compensatory strategies (e.g., guessing from the context; circumlocution; and gestures and pause words) help make up for missing knowledge.
5. Affective strategies (e.g., identifying one's mood and anxiety level, talking about feelings, rewarding oneself, and using deep breathing or positive self-talk) help learners manage their emotions and motivation level.
6. Social strategies (e.g., asking questions, asking for clarification, asking for help, talking with a native-speaking conversation partner, and exploring cultural and social norms) enable the learner to learn via interaction with others and to understand the target culture.

Biggs' (1992) model exploits the probable connection between intrinsic motivation and deep strategies, in that he treats motivation in parallel with strategies, as indicated above. Ehrman (1996) points out, however, that students may not have the choice of using deep strategies, no matter what their motivation, because of a weak educational background, a lack of aptitude for learning, inexperience, or an inflexible learning style.

Thus, foreign language learning strategy instruction has had mixed results, as documented by Dörnyei (1995) and Oxford (2001). One main reason for these mixed results might be that the diversity of student learning styles and needs was not systematically taken into account in the presentation of strategy instruction. As with any type of instruction, strategy instruction is more effective when adjusted for learning styles.

## **3. Personality variables**

There are four main personality characteristics affecting foreign language learning discussed here: motivation, self-esteem, anxiety and engagement.

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<sup>2</sup>(<http://www.ku-crl.org/sim/strategies.shtml>, 2015)

### *3.1 Motivation*

Motivation is one of the most important variables in language learning. Not surprisingly teachers recognize the importance of motivation, both with regard to the motivation which students bring to the language classroom (extrinsic motivation) and the motivation that is generated inside the classroom through the choice of instructional activities (intrinsic motivation).

‘Motivation’ is defined primarily in terms of ‘motivational intensity’ (i.e. the effort learners were prepared to make to learn a language and their persistence in learning). Learners might demonstrate particular orientations but be weakly or strongly motivated to achieve their goals (Gardner 1985). Lambert & Gardner (1972) suggested that integrative motivation correlated most strongly with measures of L2 achievement but subsequent research has shown that in some teaching contexts (e.g. the Philippines or India) an instrumental motivation was more important. The extent to which each learner is prepared to pursue the learning goal (i.e. motivational intensity and perseverance) is important.

Kormos & Dörnyei (2000) investigated motivation in relation to oral performance on an argumentative task. They report a significant correlation between individual students’ willingness to communicate, their overall attitudes to the course and their attitudes to the particular task on the one hand and amount of speech produced on the other. This study suggests that task-based instruction needs to include consideration of individual differences.

### *3.2 Self-esteem*

Many researchers claim that no successful learning activity can take place without some self-esteem and self-confidence. Coopersmith (1967) defines self-esteem as a personal judgment of worthiness, which is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself/herself. Brodkey & Shore (1976) revealed that self-esteem appears to be an important variable in second language acquisition, particularly in view of cross-cultural factors of second language learning.

Heyde’s Self-Esteem Study (1979) also concluded that self-esteem generated by the high involvement of teachers led to better results in second language acquisition. MacIntyre, Dörnyei, Clement, & Noels (1998) studied the role of self-confidences in their model of ‘willingness to communicate’ in a foreign language. Their results showed that a better ability to communicate did lead to more willingness to communicate. But as in case with many other individual factors, it is believed that high self-esteem alone cannot cause language success.

### *3.3 Anxiety and expectations*

Anxiety can be treated as a ‘conceptually distinct variable’ (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope 1986: 125) for high anxiety level reduce performance when learning a foreign language. Studies into anxiety in language learning have focused on ‘a type of anxiety related specifically to language situations, termed ‘language anxiety’ (Gardner & MacIntyre 1993:5), which includes self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviours related to classroom language learning.

All learners come to their studies with their own particular beliefs, assumptions and expectations about the language learning process and themselves as learners. According to a survey done for the European Year of Languages 2001, 22% of the EU population do not learn languages because they believe they are ‘not good’ at them<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup>([http://europedirect.esgs.pt/Grupos/Noticias/highlights\\_EDL.pdf](http://europedirect.esgs.pt/Grupos/Noticias/highlights_EDL.pdf), 2015)

Like motivation, there is a link between anxiety and proficiency levels, with anxiety levels being at their highest early on in language learning, and then declining as proficiency increases (Gardner & MacIntyre 1993: 6).

### *3.4 Engagement*

Bray & McClaskey (2015) consider that the learners want to be engaged with the content and they want to learn more about something they are interested in. Engagement is the effective side of learning. Including what learners are interested in, have a talent in, or aspire to be. This can be what inspires them to learn something. The teacher should keep track of learners' aspirations, talents, interests, and passions. This will help define who they are as learners and how they learn best. If the teacher develops specific instructional and learning strategies it can bring better performance in foreign languages.

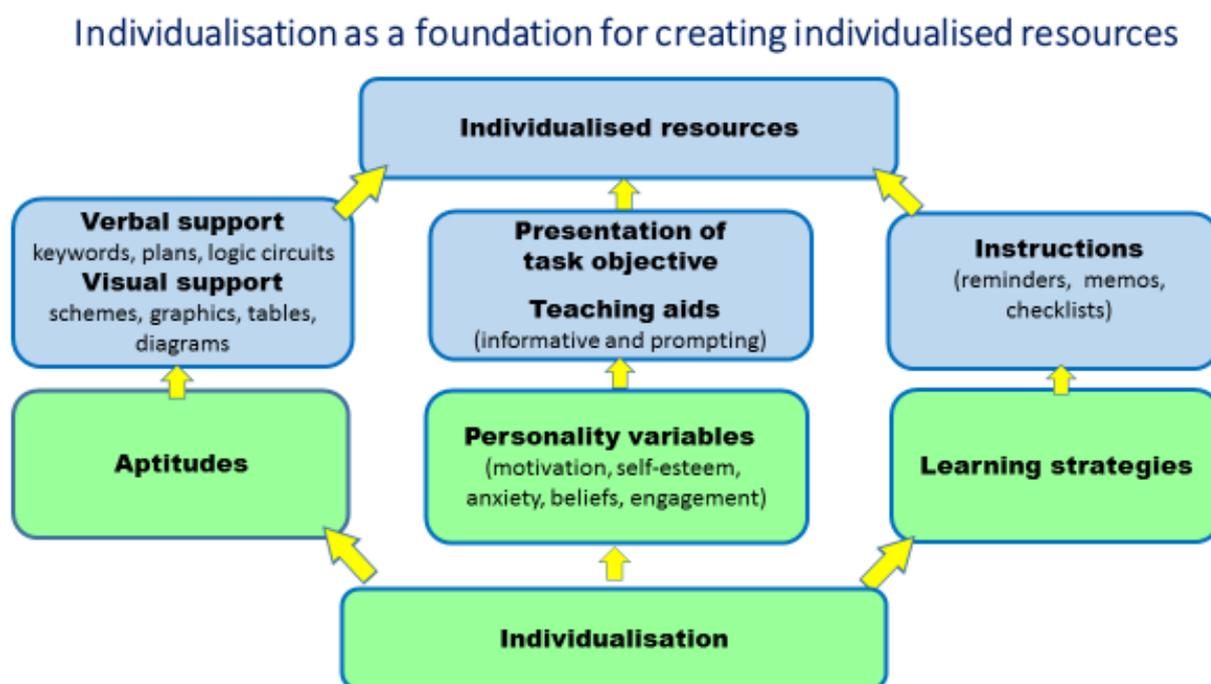
What is important about the study of individual differences is that it allows the teacher to explore how instruction can be adapted to take account of the person who is most involved, the actual learner.

## **Theoretical introduction to the interaction between individual differences and individualised resources**

In order to enable the most learners possible to learn as much as they can, we need to give them every advantage, including individualised resources that enable students to start out in a relatively comfortable and stress-free way. This means giving students the opportunity to learn in their preferred styles, to employ different kinds of supports (verbal or visual), different kinds of instruction (reminders, memos, checklists), motivating task objective presentations and material teaching aids which match their interests and other personal variables.

In Figure 1, we can see how each component of individualisation described above (i.e. aptitudes, learning strategies, and personality variables) is manifested in individualised resources. The structural components of individualised resources are: the task objective presentation that aims to motivate students for speech production; material teaching aids that create the informative and prompt basis for students' oral statements; instructions that demonstrate the sequence of task performances and aim to develop learning strategies; verbal and visual supports that may help students to produce statements, depending on individual aptitudes. Each of these components to a varying degree should contribute to the overall goal of teaching oral communication in a foreign language.

**Figure 1: The relationship between individualisation and individualised resources**



The teacher’s awareness of students’ personality variables could help the teacher to state the task objective presentation and to choose the right teaching aids that could be informative and prompting. Informative teaching aids may consist of a fragment or several fragments of text based on one idea, newspaper or magazine articles, letters, diaries, tables containing specific data, pictures, photos, illustrations, drawings, sketches, etc. Prompting teaching aids may include slogans, aphorisms and sayings, diagrams, charts, statistical data, symbols, posters and cartoons.

A teacher’s awareness of their students’ aptitudes is reflected in supports - verbal and visual - that allow the teacher to design individualised resources for students with a varied degree of speaking ability. Different kinds of supports help the students to cope effectively with the tasks.

Teacher’s awareness of students’ learning strategies is introduced in instructions, reminders, memos and checklists that describe the steps of performing the task. Instructions and prompts are especially important when the task is given for the first time. On the one hand, the regular use of instructions and prompts facilitates the students’ ability to follow instructions, and on the other hand, along with the supports they may help less able students to operate together with the class.

Before the teacher starts designing the individualised card, they should make a student’s personal profile and then analyse the aptitudes, learning strategies and personality variables obtained for each student. The next stage the teacher should determine the potential difficulties that they can acknowledge at different stages of a speaking task (in particular, what supports and instructions they may need, what material teaching aids will be the most effective in terms of calling communicative motivation).

Let us consider three different personal profiles of third year students (their names are Anton, Michael and Oksana) who study at the Faculty of Business Informatics at the Higher School of Economics (Moscow, Russia).

**Table 1: Anton’s personal profile**

Individual characteristics	Tactics for individualisation
Language aptitudes	
<p>Anton has low level of aptitude for learning English.</p> <p>He has a well developed phonemic coding ability and grammatical sensitivity.</p> <p>His communicative abilities, the ability to analyze, compare and evaluate; the ability to guess from a context; speak logically and his recall abilities all need further development.</p>	<p>To give him support, the teacher should offer key words as a memory developing technique, logical plans and thinking structures, and to plan activities that will recycle, integrate and reinforce a certain linguistic item in the context, prompting the use of the target item in a communication situation.</p>
Learning Strategies	
<p>His learning style is inflexible. Sometimes he is good at using previous knowledge to help his language learning, making use of language materials and monitoring mistakes. However, he has trouble with planning his oral statements, carrying on a conversation and working with peers.</p>	<p>The teacher should offer instructions about how to ask a question for clarification, explanation, help, etc.; memos about making a plan for his oral statements; recombination prompts that allow him to put together smaller meaningful phrases into new sentences; reminders about how cooperate with peers effectively.</p>
Personality variables	
<p>Anton’s favourite subjects at HSE are World Art Culture and Philosophy.</p> <p>His hobbies are surfing the internet and playing computer games. His professional interests include programming and computing support. He has a low communicative status (as a preferable speech partner he was chosen by one group member).</p> <p>He is weakly motivated to learn a foreign language, believing that it would not be useful in the future.</p> <p>He gets anxious about presenting in front of the group.</p>	<p>It is essential to increase his communicative status by integrating him with other members of the group, working together to solve a problem. Provide him with more informative texts and ask him to present in front of the group. Encourage any success.</p> <p>Motivation can be enhanced by an emphasis on professional interests. Anxiety could be reduced by using mental techniques that make him feel confident to present the learning task.</p>

*Individualized Card*(1) has been developed for Anton, and as a teaching aid it includes the informative text (recent information about the most popular coding languages of 2015) aimed to increase his motivation by relying on his professional interests. For support, he is given a logical plan to develop his ability to speak logically, and he was given instructions that could help him to overcome anxiety and shyness.

Figure 2: Individualized Card for Anton

Anton, read the article about the most popular coding languages of 2015, match paragraphs to the plan to make the story sound logical and present it to your group mates.

### Most Popular Coding Languages of 2015

(February 9, 2015)

- A. The index can be used to check whether your programming skills are still up to date or to make a strategic decision about what programming language should be adopted when starting to build a new software system. It's data we hope will be especially helpful for new computer science graduates or coders looking to stay ahead of the curve.
- B. Every year, we publish data on the "Most Popular Coding Languages" based on hundreds of thousands of data points we've collected by processing over 600,000+ coding tests and challenges by over 2,000+ employers.
- C. For the fourth year in a row, Python retains it's #1 dominance followed by Java, C++, and Javascript.
- D. TIOBE is a more accurate measure of language market share compared to the CodeEval index which is a much better indicator for language demand in the industry which can help people predict which languages are going to grow in popularity.
- E. The TIOBE Programming Community index is an indicator of the popularity of programming languages. The index is updated once a month. The ratings are based on the number of skilled engineers world-wide, courses and third party vendors. Popular search engines such as Google, Bing, Yahoo!, Wikipedia, Amazon, YouTube and Baidu are used to calculate the ratings. It is important to note that the TIOBE index is not about the best programming language or the language in which most lines of code have been written.

• Taken from <http://blog.codeeval.com/codeevalblog/2015#.VTaZbCHtmko>

### This plan could help your story be logical

1. The data origin
2. TIOBE definition
3. People who may be interested in TIOBE
4. February winners
5. The difference between TIOBE and CodeEval index

### Instruction 'How to Feel More Confident'

1. **Talk To Everyone.** One of the best ways to overcome shyness is to make it a habit of speaking to everyone. Talk to at least to 3 people before the lesson at which you are giving your presentation.
2. **Educate Yourself.** Many insecurities stem from a lack of knowledge about something. The more you understand and know about a situation, the more comfortable you will be .
3. **Practice and Be Persistent.** To overcome shyness you need to practice endlessly and never give up. The more you practice, the better you will become. At anything.

**Table 2: Michael's personal profile**

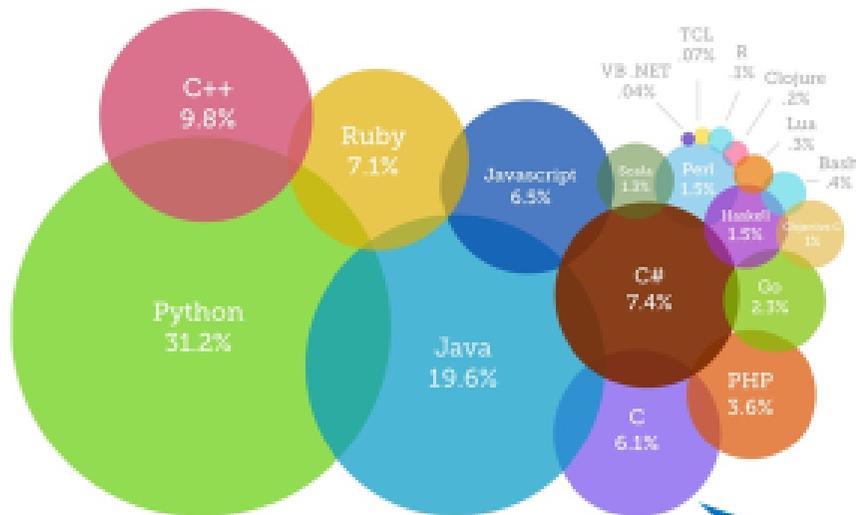
Individual characteristics	Tactics for individualisation
Language aptitudes	
<p>Michael has average aptitude for foreign language learning.</p> <p>He has well developed auditory and memory abilities, abilities for recognition, analogy and understanding of syntactical structures and the ability to associate sounds with symbols.</p> <p>However, his language analytical ability and ability for anticipation need further development.</p>	<p>As teaching aids, the teacher should offer semantically incomplete texts, so the student can generate ideas based on incomplete content. As supports, the teacher should provide him with schematic grammatical rules.</p>
Learning Strategies	
<p>Michael is good at visualising information for memory storage, guessing meanings by using available information and asking a teacher for explanation or help. He willingly works with peers to solve problems.</p> <p>Sometimes he has difficulties with placing a word or phrase in a meaningful language sequence and relating new information to other concepts in memory. It is essential to develop the ability to be a good conversation partner.</p>	<p>The teacher should offer instructions, which could help him to overcome his difficulties with contextualisation and elaboration, memos about making a plan for his oral statements and reminders about how to become a good conversational partner.</p>
Personality variables	
<p>Michael's favourite subjects at HSE are Computer Engineering, Computer Networks and English. His hobbies are playing basketball and drawing. Professional interests include programming and data security methods. His communicative status in a group is not very high (as a preferable speech partner he was chosen by three group members). His motivation for learning a foreign language is more practical (instrumental motivation). He believes that he could make a better progress if he spends more time learning a foreign language.</p>	<p>The teacher should provide him with material resources focused on his professional interests that will keep his motivation at high level. It is possible to increase his communicative status by offering him some topics for discussion that will be of interest not only for him but for other learners in the group.</p> <p>Appoint the students who chose Michael as a speech partner to be his class partner for oral communications.</p>

*Individualised Card(2)* has been designed for Michael. As a teaching aid, a bubble chart has been chosen (because visualisation is his preferable way of receiving information) and some facts about the most popular coding languages of 2015 aimed to maintain his motivation at a high level by relying on his professional interests. As a support, he is provided with a plan to overcome contextualisation gaps, and in order to develop the ability to be a good conversation partner, he is given a memo that will remind him of some basic rules.

**Figure 3: Individualized Card for Michael**

Michael, I know that you are interested in programming languages. Read about the most popular coding languages and share the main ideas with your partner. Make use of supports and bear in mind the three stages of your talk. Ask your partner about their opinion about the problem.

Most Popular Coding Languages of 2015



**How to describe a chart**

*Mind the three parts:*

**1 Introduction.** Here you say what the diagram is about. Note the title of it and do not forget to include the source.  
*The bubble chart is about ... / The bubble chart (clearly) shows ...*

**2. Message of the diagram**  
*It highlights ... / ... has the largest (number of) ... / ... has the second largest (number of) ... / ... is as big as ... / ... is twice as big as ... / more than ... per cent ...*

**3 Conclusion.** Do not repeat the global message in the conclusion  
*So we can say that..... / I was really surprised/shocked by the ...*

**Use of Tenses**

Note the correct use of tenses when describing a chart. If the charts deals with facts in the present (as in our example), **use the Simple Present**, if the facts are the past, then **use the Simple Past**. If there is a connection between the past and the present, use the **Present Perfect**. Passive voice is often used: **to be + V3**

The TIOBE Programming Community index is an indicator of the popularity of programming languages. The index is updated once a month.

Popular search engines such as Google, Bing, Yahoo!, Wikipedia, Amazon, YouTube and Baidu are used to calculate the ratings.

The index can be used to check whether your programming skills are still up to date. It will be especially helpful for new computer science graduates or coders looking to stay ahead of the trend.

- What makes people good conversation partners?**
- A desire to share some of their valuable knowledge
  - Balanced listening and speaking
  - Positive attitude
  - Respect

Taken from <http://blog.codeeval.com/codeevalblog/2015#vTaZbCHtmko>

**Table 3: Oksana's personal profile**

Individual characteristics	Tactics for individualisation
Language aptitudes	
<p>Oksana has a high aptitude for language learning.</p> <p>Her language analytic ability, auditory ability, grammatical sensitivity and memory abilities are well developed. However, she has to develop the ability to communicate her feelings and emotions in the foreign language.</p>	<p>As supports, the teacher should offer emotional and evaluative words. Teaching aids should include informative and meaningful texts which are semantically incomplete, visual means like illustrations, photographs and pictures which are able to involve her emotionally.</p>
Learning Strategies	
<p>Oksana can use cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies rather well.</p> <p>Her social and effective strategies like working with peers and keeping the conversation going with one or more speech partners need further development.</p>	<p>The teacher should provide her with instructions on how to become a good conversational partner, and how to work in pairs.</p>
Personality variables	
<p>Oksana's favourite subjects at HSE are Linear Algebra and English.</p> <p>Her hobbies are playing the guitar and collecting posters. Professional interests include programming and developing new applications for smart phones. Her communicative status in a group is high (as a preferable speech partner she was chosen by seven group members).</p> <p>Her motivation for learning English is integrative (social and emotional). She is willing to put in a lot of effort to learn a foreign language.</p> <p>She believes that a foreign language will be very helpful for her future studies and career.</p>	<p>To help her, Oksana should use the foreign language to meet her extracurricular interests. The emphasis should be on personal and professional interests to maintain a high level of interest.</p> <p>In pairs, she could assist less able students, because teaching is a great way to learn.</p>

*Individualised Card (3)* has been designed for Oksana. Relying on her professional interests, she is given some prompts and questions (as a teaching aid) that should become a framework for her conversation with a partner. As supports, she is offered a set of words and expressions to develop an ability to speak emotionally and to keep a conversation going. As instructions, she is offered some tips about working in pairs, which may help her to become a good conversational partner

Figure 4: Individualized Card for Oksana

Oksana, discuss with your partner if you should buy an Apple Watch, using questions and information given below. To make your conversation sound natural, use the following words and expressions given in the box.

**Should you buy an Apple Watch?**

- What is your approximate salary?
- How long do you like being outside?
- What's your favourite way of viewing information?
- What's your favourite way to tell people things?
- Should it be connected to an iPhone?



**Do you like apple products?**

**Multitude apps:** maps, calendar, phone calls, passbook, remote camera, music, e-mails, etc.

**Types of Apple Watch:**

- Apple Watch Sport
- Regular Apple Watch
- Gold Apple Watch

To make your conversation sound natural, use the following words and expression

<b>Stating an opinion</b>	In my opinion... The way I see it... As far as I'm concerned... If you ask me...
<b>Asking for an opinion</b>	What are your thoughts on all of this? How do you feel about that? What do you think?
<b>Expressing agreement</b>	I agree with you 100 percent. That's so true. That's for sure. You're absolutely right.
<b>Expressing disagreement</b>	I don't think so. I'm afraid I disagree. I totally disagree. Not necessarily. That's not always true.
<b>Expressing joy, happiness</b>	It's great! It's wonderful! Great! Beautiful! Excellent! Terrific! I'm dying to buy... I love it!
<b>Expressing disgust</b>	It's terrible! It's awful! How disgusting! I hate it! I can't stand it!

**Instruction 'How to work in pairs'**  
 It is important to show your interlocutor that you are interested in what they are saying. You may use questions for clarification: asking for explanation, verification, rephrasing and words expressing emotions, agreement and disagreement, happiness and disgust. It is important to keep eye contact and to maintain a balance between listening and speaking.

Therefore, it should be noted that individualised resources could be an effective learning tool, if they are adequately and consistently used in a series of lessons. When developing the components of individualised handouts, the teacher should take into account the students' aptitudes, learning styles and personality variables. Indeed, a lot depends on how well the students are able to take advantage of using the individualised cards.

## **Methods**

The aim of the experimental training is to prove that individualised resources are an appropriate tool to enhance the students' speaking abilities in terms of the purposefulness of their speech, the richness of its content and the way of logical progression of their speech. This includes the focused and consistent implementation of individualised resources, which consider students' individual personality traits and improve their quality of verbal expressions.

### **Data sample and experimental phase**

Experimental teaching, using individualized resources was conducted at the Moscow Higher School of Economics, while teaching English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course to 38 students from the faculty of Business Informatics. There were 16 students in the experimental group and 16 students in the control group. The experimental phase lasted for four months and in total took 72 academic hours (1 academic hour equals 45mins).

The topic for experimental training was the 'The role of the internet in the modern world', which included the following questions for discussion: What is the internet? What is computer-mediated communication? How do you create a website? How does your web browser find the page you want? What computer codes are used for creating a web site? What is HTML? How can you evaluate websites? How can you become a web-site designer?

For the experiment, a range of teaching aids were selected, such as newspaper and magazine articles, fragments or several fragments of text based on one idea, tables containing specific data, photos, illustrations, diagrams, charts and statistical data. The students were provided with individualized materials designed for their learning needs and considering their aptitudes, learning strategies and personality variables.

In the experimental training, the students' answers were tape recorded, then written down and analysed. In total, 570 statements were analysed according to qualities of the students' speaking ability such as purposefulness, richness of content and logical progression of speech. These traits were considered to be the most difficult for students to achieve and made the teaching process more problematic.

The experimental training was conducted in three stages:

- 1) Preliminary stage that determined the initial level of students' speaking ability.
- 2) Intermediate stage where the changes in students' speaking ability during the process of using the individualized resources was followed
- 3) Final stage, which reported the results of the experimental training.

### **Data qualification and evaluation**

*Purposefulness* was measured by the relationship of the phrases 'working' for purpose goal, to the total number of phrases completed semantically. Introductory phrases that provided a

transition to the main idea of their statements were taken into account as well. When determining purposefulness, every phrase was considered in the context of their statements. Thus, the total number of phrases in the students' statements was taken as 100%, and the number of phrases which were considered to be 'working' towards the goal was determined as a percentage of the total number of phrases.

*The richness of speech content* is understood as the intensity of the oral statement's information. The richness of content index/indicator for every statement was calculated using a formula implemented by Morskaya (1972: 162). The main idea of a sentence which was expressed by a subject (noun) and a predicate was equated to a 'unit of information'.

Any additions and clarifications were estimated at 0.5 of a 'unit of information'. Clauses were evaluated as separate sentences. If a subject or a predicate was expressed by homogeneous parts of speech (e.g. C++, Java, HTML) all of them were each assigned a unit of 0.5, but the first word was not. For example, in a sentence "*C++, Java, HTML are high-level computer languages*" the total unit of information would be 1.0.

Incomplete phrases, sentences distorting the facts, repetitions and phrases that did not contribute to solving the communicative task were not taken into account.

Therefore, oral expressions which were in accordance with the task objective directly characterized the richness of the context and indirectly reflected the development of certain qualities of speaking ability such as productivity, persuasiveness and emotion.

*The way of logical progression of speech* was defined as the logical progression of statements in the student's discussion, where a clear introductory sentence followed by explanations and conclusions could be identified. The unit of measurement was determined as follows: for the opening phrase, the speaker received 1 point, for every phrase that logically followed on, they would receive one extra point. Therefore, correct statement of the two phrases is worth 3 points (1 + 2), the statement of five phrases is 15 points (1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5). If the logical sequence is disrupted, the following phrase was estimated at 1 point, the next at 2 etc. For the concluding phrase that summarized the oral statement, the speaker was given one additional point. The use of compound sentences was marked with one point for every clause. Points were not given for repetitions and paraphrasing the same ideas. This counting technique was based on the understanding of consistency as a logical sequence of phrases which are fluently said to reveal the main idea of the statement. Therefore, the index of consistency also served as indirect evidence for qualities of speaking ability such as the richness of context and purposefulness.

Then, the students' results before, during and after the experimental teaching intervention were analysed and compared against each other using the growth index, to see whether the experimental teaching would improve their quality of speech.

## **Results**

The findings of this research illustrate how the intervention enhanced the students' speaking abilities in terms of their purposefulness, richness of speech content and speech progression. The data obtained during the experimental training is indicated below.

**Table 4: Purposefulness measured for the experimental and control group**

Group category	Preliminary stage			Intervention stage			Final stage			Growth index (%)
	1	2	3 Proportion of purposeful phrases (%)	1	2	3 Proportion of purposeful phrases (%)	1	2	3 Proportion of purposeful phrases (%)	
Experimental	8.4	6.1	70.8 %	10.5	7.9	75.0 %	12.6	10.3	81.3 %	+10.5 %
Control	8.2	5.7	69.5 %	8.5	5.9	69.4 %	8.8	6.2	70.7 %	+1.2 %

In Table 4, column ‘1’ indicates the number of phrases in the statements, which were completed semantically. Column ‘2’ indicates the number of phrases in the statements, which were ‘working’ towards the overall goal. Column ‘3’ indicates the proportion of purposeful phrases to the total number of phrases (in %).

In the control group, where the teacher did not use any individualized resources, it is clear that almost no changes occur, and the growth of purposefulness is 1.2% at the final stage.

The results of the intervention stage shows that the students’ performance improved compared to the results of the preliminary stage, which may have occurred because the task objective, support and instructions in the individualised materials were all used.

The number of phrases that invited discussion with an interlocutor and therefore facilitated the students’ speaking activity markedly increased: *I think that, I'm not sure that, as far as I know, there's no denying that, no way!*

The 10% increase in the final stage of the experimental group demonstrates that students are able to build purposeful statements when they communicate.

**Table 5: The richness of speech measured for the experimental and control group**

Group category	Preliminary stage	Intervention stage	Final stage	Growth index (%)
Experimental	7.8	10	13.5	+73.0 %
Control	7.7	7.9	8.2	+ 6.5 %

When analysing the data from Table 5, we can see that the control group’s growth index is only 6.5%, which is markedly lower than for the experimental group, which used the intervention.

As for the experimental group, the variety of material and operating tools, which were offered to the students, allowed them to make significant progress in learning how to vary the richness of their speech. The proportion of growth for the experimental group was 73%. This could be because teaching aids for experimental training are highly informative and aimed at their professional interests.

The review of the students' answers in the experimental group revealed that their speech patterns in the final stage, compared to the preliminary stage, were characterised by a higher degree of argumentation and relevance.

Thus, the data show the effectiveness of individualised resources as a way of shaping student's vocabulary.

**Table 6: Logical progression of speech measured for the experimental and control group**

Group category	Preliminary stage	Intervention stage	Final stage	Growth index (%)
Experimental	17	21.6	25	+51 %
Control	17,3	17,7	18,2	+5.0 %

Table 6 indicates that the average growth rate of the learning the way of logical progression of speech in control group is 51%. It is assumed that the impetus for this could be the systematic use of the supports and instructions, which aimed to develop the students' ability to express themselves more logically.

In the control group, there is a minor increase in the development of speech progress, and the index of growth is 5 %. This can be explained by the fact that the teacher from time to time assigned tasks, which aimed to develop the students' logical ability, although this was insufficient.

Over the period of experimental training, the students learned to expand their ideas gradually, to avoid repetition. Moreover, the number of clauses and summarising phrases increased as did the overall number of phrases in the statement.

**Table 7: Summary table of indicators of growth**

Group category	Growth in the purposefulness indicator, %	Growth in the richness of speech indicator, %	Growth in the speech progression index, %
Experimental	+10.5 %	+78.3 %	+51.3 %
Control	+1.2 %	+ 6.5%	+5.0 %
<b>The ratio of the average growth of indicators</b>			
	8.75	12	10.3

In Table 7, we can see an overview of the indicators in the experimental group as compared to the control group. Overall, in the control group, there is no significant growth of any indicator. The exceptions are the richness of speech, where we can see a 7% increase due to the quality of teaching aids which were specially prepared for the experimental training.

The ratio of the average growth of indicators in the control and the experimental groups for purposefulness is 8.75, for the richness of speech it is 12 and in for speech progression it is 10.3.

After comparing the data from the experimental and control group, it can be concluded that if teachers do not search for adequate ways to work on the development of their students' speaking skills, then they cannot expect high indicators of their oral speech performance.

## Discussion

The results of the research showed that after using individualised resources in the experimental group, the quality of verbal expressions significantly increased and the students' speaking abilities, particularly in terms of the purposefulness of their speech, the richness of its content and their logical speech progression also enhanced.

The final stage of the experiment showed that the students' performance improved compared to the results of the preliminary stage, which may have occurred due to the use of the task objective, supports and instructions in the individualised materials. Moreover, the variety of material and prompts, which were offered to the students allowed them to make significant progress in learning.

In the process of intervention, the students demonstrated an ability to relate to the facts and events presented using their own personal experience, interests and abilities. Structurally, the texts offer a model for future statements that the students will make. The task objective presentation aimed to motivate students to produce their own speeches. The verbal and visual supports help students to develop their recall abilities and to organise their speech more productively, using a variety of words and expressions. The instructions help them to perform their tasks more effectively and logically and develop the students' learning strategies.

There are two factors, which mean that additional training tools are required; first, a focus on the fact that the student body is comprised of diverse individuals, and second, the demand for personalised curricular materials to satisfy the needs of each student. (Bray & McClashey, 2015)

Within the context of this study, a solution has been found using the individualised handouts as an extra training tool for the development of students' speaking skills. However, it can only be an effective tool if it meets the following six criteria:

- a. Individualisation: the idea of individualisation must provide the theoretical grounding for the individualised resources, where the content and instructional technology of learning are based upon the aptitudes, learning strategies and personality variables of each student.
- b. Resources: each component of individualisation should be manifested in individualised resources (i.e. aptitudes should be represented by verbal and visual supports, learning strategies should be indicated by instructions and personality variables by the presentation of task objective and teaching materials).
- c. Process: the tactics of individualisation described in the student's personal profile should determine the content of these components.
- d. Components: the structural components of the individualised resources should be the presentation of the task objective, material teaching aids, instructions and supports. Each of these components to a varying degree should contribute to the overall goal of teaching oral communication in a foreign language.
- e. Consistency: in order to be an effective learning tool, individualised resources should be adequately and consistently used in a series of lessons, rather than in isolated sessions.
- f. Accessibility: The students must be taught to make use of the individualised resources, so that they achieve the maximum potential from them.

Following these criteria, the teachers create individualised resources, which could be an effective learning tool, if they are adequately and consistently used in a series of lessons.

## **Limitations of the current work**

There are some potential limitations in this study, which would affect the interpretations of the data.

First, it is time consuming to create a personal profile and individualised cards for every student. Each student is different and the teacher must be aware of their individual differences. However, in order to reduce the amount of work that the teacher will have to do, a personal profile, which includes language aptitude, learning strategies and personality variables could be created by the students at home, with guidance from their teacher and possibly their parents. This would be a very powerful tool because it helps the students to evaluate themselves and how they learn. This will save much more time for the teacher when making the individualised cards, and be very helpful for the students' further development. Another way to overcome this limitation could be to build a team of co-teachers and as a team work on collecting a database of teaching aids, and share them to create cards, which match the individual students' needs.

Second, the sample size is quite small. Thirty-eight students were involved in the experiment, as the author of the research was working alone and it was not possible to find other universities that were prepared to use the intervention. The sample size should be expanded by engaging other teachers who are ready to try the intervention in order to achieve better results in teaching a foreign language. We are already beginning to explore these possibilities with our colleagues at the Higher School of Economics.

Third, the study is limited to university students, not high school students or working professionals who study modern languages for business. Further study is required with the participation of high school students and business clients to obtain more data about the effectiveness of the intervention in different educational environments.

## **Further work**

Although the results presented here have demonstrated the efficiency of individualised resources, it could be further developed in a number of ways.

First, future studies should address the different ways of modifying individualised resources, particularly for pair and group work, and for different types of verbal expression (e.g. monologues, dialogue, group discussion) as well as the content of individualised handouts. A more detailed elaboration of all the structural components of individualised resources could be a good contribution to this research.

Second, the results above indicate that it might be worthwhile to selectively repeat the study in rural schools in Russia, but before this, the study should be well adapted and modified to the needs of teachers and students in large cities. In order to make this intervention more attractive to rural schools it could be incorporated in the secondary school curriculum and it must have the local support of the teaching staff.

Third, further investigation with a larger sample size and perhaps with a different study body such as high school students or working professionals, would be interesting to consider. This would lead to a wider range of data and allow the development of new types of individualised resources for different age groups and different needs. This would offer a better impression of the overall performance of the individualised resources, and allow a comparison between the results of different groups of students.

## Conclusion

In Russia, until the 1990s, the predominant instructional materials were printed textbooks and worksheets, which were fixed and inflexible. Since there were no obvious alternatives, the students became accustomed to only one method of learning. This has started to change with the advent of computer technology and influences from other countries on the educational system. However, creativity is still lacking in most Russian schools across the country.

Therefore, these individualised resources offer a creative alternative to the existing dry methods of teaching. They are based on the diversity of all students and can be adapted to a variety of their specific needs and the ways in which they learn best.

The original general hypothesis stated that if teachers can develop and implement extra training tools, that take into account the individual and personal characteristics of students, then their learning process is likely to develop more effectively. It should be noted that the findings of this research illustrate how the approach enhanced the students' speaking abilities, particularly their purposefulness, richness of content and way of logically progressing their speech. It could be concluded that the students' acquisition of these qualities, using the individualised resources, did improve and that this type of training is sufficient to shape speaking skills when teaching English. Thus, the experiment has found some evidence to support the hypothesis and contributes to an analysis of the individualised approach in teaching English as a foreign language in Russia.

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