

Solving practical problems and problem situations with use of ICT, laboratory experiment data processing allow students to participate actively in learning process, teach observe scientifically, work independently, check solutions and make conclusions.

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INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES IN THE PROJECT TEACHING OF ENGLISH

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The use of information technologies in teaching English is being broadly discussed. They provide learners of English with a variety of efficient tools to improve their language level. This paper gives an account of implementing information technologies and e-learning tools in teaching English by means of project activities.

Keywords: teaching English, project, information technologies in teaching

Dramatic shifts in information environment have occurred on the contemporary stage of society development. Information flows formed by mass media and the Internet in particular have fundamentally changed both the pattern of information consumption and university education development.

Formulating the main goals and tasks of education process it is vital to take into consideration various factors connected with the objective characteristics features of the environment as well as the frame of reference of the central participants of educational process – students and professors. Availability of information sources is one of the key characteristics of educational environment on the contemporary stage of society development. Fast change of educational paradigm makes students regard traditional education methods and techniques with scepticism. The gap between a dramatic social change and conservatism of university education formed to satisfy needs of industrial production has become obvious in postindustrial age. Much has been said about it in the works of education theorists [1].

We witness not only a dramatic shift of teaching paradigm but also the change of learning patterns. Students realize to a greater extent the objective limitations of knowledge they get at universities. Priority must be given to providing them with tools and instruments of gaining knowledge, enhancing motivation and use interest to the subject to the benefit of higher level of education [5].

Desire to get the maximum amount of information within a short space of time prevents students from critical evaluation of information sources. It makes them “omnivorous” consumers of information; moreover, they stop thinking critically and form a very specific way of information assessment – according to its position in the Internet search results. If the source is at the top ten of search results it is automatically considered as

valuable. Needless to say that neither libraries nor academic networks are regarded as trusted sources of information. Former school leavers are typically used to writing long papers uncritically compiling them from randomly chosen sources and giving no references to them.

At the same time, information redundancy, unlimited availability of information sources and cursory pre-university educational patterns form educational habits and models which do not allow to acquire complex analytical study skills. Students often fail to make a sustained effort, demonstrate analytical reading skills, evaluate and analyze information, undertake a study task and find the most efficient ways of solving it.

Taking into account objective conditions we suggest formulating critical characteristics of educational process and students' expectations, after that we will set the goals of using information technologies and digital educational tools in the project teaching of English and set educational tasks on their basis.

First, availability and redundancy of information lead to inefficiency in reading and processing information sources, difficulties with selecting most relevant sources according to a criteria set. In addition, practice shows that preparing papers for their majors students try to avoid plagiarism and give proper references while making reports or presentations in English they do not even bother to solve the ethical problem of quoting other people's works and giving references to the sources. In this case impunity causes copyright abuse and creates ethical threat.

Second, students on the one hand tend to criticize a teacher-centered approach at the lesson (teacher ranking adds to the problem) on the other hand they are always ready to blame their failure on professors. Students often regard skeptically excessive professional theoretical background provided by profound university education and reject traditional teaching approaches but paradoxically they tend to rely heavily on teachers support and judgment. The factors mentioned form "educational consumerism" and seriously afflict students' educational activity.

Third, a traditional subject-object teacher-oriented educational paradigm and reproductive tasks and activities drastically limit the effort of the students; they do not provide them with instruments of self-development and efficient achievement of educational tasks.

From the above reasoning we set a goal to modify to a certain extent a teaching approach to English so as to adjust it to a new educational environment and to benefit from the use of information technologies and digital e-learning tools. The concept was implemented in Business English for Business Informatics (second year undergraduate students).

We assume that it is important to organize learning in a way which allows to achieve the main goals set by fast developing educational environment. We prioritized sharing with students responsibility for mastering the English language, gaining and implementing academic skills and special educational strategies. The project teaching of English was chosen as a tool to achieve these goals. It is important to introduce e-learning tools provided by The Higher School of Economics Learning Management System in particular to carry out the project teaching of Business English. In addition, various e-learning instruments and information sources are implemented in learning process. For the sake of convenience we divided them into two groups: information resources (library and media sources – Jstore, EBSCOhost, etc. and access to the Internet and personal computers) and language e-learning tools: various dictionaries on CD-ROMs. Functional significance of the digital dictionaries for the project teaching will be discussed later.

Unfortunately, quite often the use of information and technological tools are given priority at the expense of achieving educational tasks. Practically unlimited opportunities provided by PC should not end in themselves; in our opinion, computers should be used only to efficient achieving educational tasks.

Last three years Business Informatics students of Perm regional campus of National Research University the Higher School of Economics are involved in the project activities. By the project teaching of English we mean organized incremental learning activity which allows to teach students to set study goals and tasks, organize pre-project preparation focused on possible solutions to the tasks, making record of the project, developing the project per se – multimedia educational products and presenting the project. Project activities are designed to form academic and study skills which are the instruments to solve similar tasks independently in future (please refer to the works of Polat, Sapugol'tseva and Yanchenko) [6], [7], [8], [10]. We assume that in the project teaching competency and individual approaches to teaching are realized successfully. On the one hand, the project teaching is based on individual approach as on each stage students rely on their own values and interests and improve their skills, on the other – they regularly assess their language level using CEFR - the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: Learning, teaching, assessment* [2]. The significance of competence and individual approaches integration is discussed in A.Verbitskyi's works, for details refer to [9].

The project in our case is a multimedia educational product, consisting of three parts: the text with hyperlinks to the glossary, the glossary and power point presentation of the project. A detailed look at each element gives us its description. The text up to 5000 thousand characters and B2-C1 level at least (approximately the level of popular science journal), should be written in a formal academic style, compilation from several sources is allowed but references must be provided; the text should present the topic chosen by students and contain target topic vocabulary. The glossary includes vocabulary valuable in terms of grammar, terminology, or be suitable to improve the level of the language competence in general. Several selection criteria were defined: terms; collocations; nouns, adjectives and verbs with prepositions; phrasal verbs, etc. The text refers to the glossary through hyperlinks. The forms of organizing the glossary may vary; students can choose any suggested by the teacher or create their own system. The presentation is a short report (five - seven minutes) meeting several criteria. It should reflect the content of the project (the text), be well structured, logically organized and properly formatted.

The main stages of the project are marked and discussed with students; broad topic fields leaving space for creative adaptation are prepared; proposed outcome of the project is described; goals and tasks are set and assessment criteria are given. The projects are managed through the LMS, regular file and materials exchanged via the LMS and corporate e-mail. Learning Management System allows to organize fast and efficient work on the project for students and teachers as well.

Topics are formulated broadly deliberately so as to give students opportunity to research most timely issues of the field. The list of topics refers to the course book *New Market Leader (Intermediate)* [4]. In the second term students are offered topics on Quality, Ethics in Business, Leadership, etc. On the first stage students are to formulate research question, make literature review and highlight most timely problems in the field. It makes students prepare a research question and focus on a particular problem, for example, in a broad field "Ethics" students after research and discussions have chosen the research question "Could business be ethical?"

Allocation of duties comes after formulating the research questions. Given that the project teaching is a process activity and takes a lot of time to be completed it is natural to assume that collaboration requires mutually beneficial respectful complementary relationships and fair allocation of duties. It is worthy of notice that students seldom have difficulties with effective communication, as a rule the most charismatic student takes responsibility and becomes the leader of the group, providing gradual movement to success. Thus, in the project

teaching students can show their socially significant features of the character: tolerance, respectfulness, ability to find compromise, etc.

The next stage is creating the text of the research addressing the research question. For this stage selection of the most valuable information resources and literature is essential. The text as it was mentioned above may be a compilation from several resources with references provided and it is one of the final multimedia products.

Text processing and highlighting the most valuable language items are carried out on the next stage of the project. Typically, marking target vocabulary, describing it through the means of e-dictionaries and creating a glossary are the most challenging tasks for students. Practice shows that students find implementing criteria of selection and evaluation of target vocabulary difficult. This stage requires serious support of the teacher as students are only getting used to improve their language consciously. Regular file exchange and active collaboration within the group and teacher's support help students overcome difficulties. We selected collocations as a valuable option due to the fact they are a serious obstacle to mastering English especially for students with low language awareness. All language items are later on studied with e-dictionaries.

Using e-dictionaries in the project teaching of English requires special explanations. The general idea is that the use of bilingual dictionaries is the only possible option while learning a foreign language. We regard this opinion as quite disputable. Teaching how to use study and special dictionaries is critical for learners' independence. Advanced learner's dictionaries, defining business English dictionaries, thesauruses and dictionaries of synonyms and collocation dictionaries are at any HSE - Perm student's disposal; all dictionaries are available in the library and can be installed on personal laptop computers [11], [12], [13], [14], [15]. Moreover, students are informed and instructed how to make use of the most quality and efficient online dictionaries (graphical dictionaries inter alia re recommended) [16], [17], [18], [19], [20], [21], [22], [23]. These digital sources bring synergy effect to the learning process providing more than sufficient level of information support to achieve educational goals. If students have a high level of study skills and demonstrate ability to set research questions and formulate tasks working with dictionaries usually does not pose any challenge. It must be noticed though, much attention is usually paid to train students to use monolingual dictionaries properly.

It would be useful to run through a particular example of the article to show the technology of text processing. Students chose this article as one of the sources for their project "Could business be ethical?" We have taken a short piece from the article of Jonathan Steel «Corruption in the third world is our problem», published in «Guardian» 13 December 2000 to illustrate the technology of text processing: «You bribe a foreign official to give your company a contract. It works and you get the business. You escape prosecution in Britain because corruption performed abroad is not illegal here. Better still, the British government gives you a tax break because "commissions" paid abroad are accepted as a deductible expense. Not bad going, and in the fourth year of New Labour's tenure there is still no action to change things. The tireless Clare Short made a big issue of corruption in the Department of International Development's white paper on globalisation this week, but much of her fire was directed at kickbacks taken by foreign officials from their compatriots rather than from foreigners» [3]. This piece provides us with a range of language items according to several criteria:

- **“terminology”**: bribe, corruption, prosecution, tax break, commissions, tenure, white paper, to explain terms Oxford business English dictionary is recommended;
- **“synonyms”**: bribe – kickback – commissions; Oxford learner's thesaurus: A dictionary of synonyms can help identify synonyms and explain the choice in any particular case, etc.

Various monolingual dictionaries offer invaluable help; they explain the use of words and collocations, sentence samples are provided, common errors are identified and explained, information of the proper use of prepositions with these words is given; in case students struggle to pronounce these words electronic dictionaries have sound services. This painstaking work takes a lot of time and effort but gives key language study skills, forms study independence and builds the basis for future self-improvement.

The glossary is created with the items selected from the text and then hyperlinks to the text are made so it could serve as an electronic reference on this topic. This shared resource helps other students to study the topic and prepare for the exam. After that a power point presentation with the notes taken from the text is created. The presentation is given in the lesson at the end of the time period allowed to study this topic.

Making presentations students should take into consideration principal rules and criteria implemented for their assessment. For instance, students learn how to make presentations of different styles (more or less formal), learn how to affiliate correctly, to use elements of corporate style (style guidelines – HSE brand book). Paradoxically, students usually enjoy preparing presentations but the quality on the first stages are typically rather low, that is why it takes time to improve presentation skills.

The most serious problems students face with creating and presenting their presentations may be divided into some categories: content, “technical” and language problems. Content problems are caused by careless considering the topic of the project and uncritical material use. “Technical” problems (to be more exact, insufficient presentation skills because evidently Business Informatics students rarely have “technical” problems with their presentations if any) appear due to a low level of presentation techniques: students sometimes underestimate their nervousness in public, fail to prepare and learn the text of the presentation properly, underestimate importance of pronunciation; these factors cause low assessment results.

Peer assessment is a vital part of the project teaching. Students should not only demonstrate understanding the rules and guidelines of creating and assessment criteria but treat other members of the group with tolerance and respect. To assess presentations standard criteria are applied:

content: relevance of the content to the task;

language: fluency, accuracy;

structure: coherence, cohesion, design;

communicative skills: material delivery, hesitation time, answering questions, communication with the audience;

visuals: number of slides, quality of visuals, correctness of the text use on the slides, correctness of the corporate style and other elements of design.

Inasmuch as the project teaching proposes regular evaluation students have to assess their group-mates as well as themselves. One of the serious assessment skills is self-evaluation of the results achieved by the students themselves. Language progress should be evaluated properly, i.e. students should be able to answer clearly the question: was there any progress subsequent to completing the project?

An on-line resource englishprofile.com offers a very interesting service which might be used in evaluation. As a rule students hardly ever critically consider the level of the language they use and sometimes fail to understand the criteria of assessment. Englishprofile.com gives clear examples of different language levels and demonstrates how this level might be improved. For example, students normally express meaning “important” in English with the same word “important” and hardly ever use “critical” or other synonym. Englishprofile.com marks the word “important” as a key vocabulary of basic level – A1 – B1, according to the particular meaning, but the word “critical” being checked gives B2.

Obviously, we are not so naïve to use this complicated resource only for such a basic routine, students are informed that the level of the language is measured by various means and speaking is assessed applying a set of criteria from pronunciation to complexity and efficiency of sentence structure. Nevertheless, students may benefit from using this tool on starting stages of a long and difficult process of language improvement and even such “mechanical” means of language evaluation matter since they help relieve the monotony of basic language.

To summarise, the project in English as being used in our practice is a multimedia educational product; while making the project students improve academic and special study skills they already have and gain new ones, they learn how to benefit from implementing e-learning tools and information technologies; moreover, they gain independence and self-confidence. Collaboration teaches students – members of study groups to be tolerant and respectful, at the same time it gives an insight into significance of peer assessment and regular progress evaluation. The project teaching of English gives students valuable experience in complex task solving as to complete the project a deliberate self-motivated learning activity, goal-setting and collaboration are necessary.

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INTERNET RESOURCES FOR BUILDING A PERSONAL LEARNING NETWORK AND TEACHING ENGLISH. BASED ON THE EXPERIENCE OF PROVIDING TRAINING ON FURTHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

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The aim of this paper is to provide a review of internet resources for teachers of the English language and to help them navigate through them with the purpose of building a personal learning network and using these resources in their teaching work.

Keywords: multimedia, personal learning network, personal development, classroom environment

Multimedia – curse or blessing?

A customer called the Canon help desk with a problem with her printer.

Technical support: Are you running it under Windows?

Customer: 'No, my desk is next to the door, but that is a good point. The man sitting in the cubicle next to me is under a window, and his printer is working fine.'

The level of computer literacy could be defined as high as how funny these kinds of jokes seem to be for a person. However in spite of the fact that computers have become an inseparable part of our everyday and professional life, the modern volume of information exceeds our ability to navigate through it skillfully enough.

The methods of teaching in general and teaching languages in particular have changed greatly. It is important to create a linguistic environment with all possible means available for a modern teacher. We can't escape from IT penetration into teaching processes. The teacher as well as his student lives in the information society, and it is important for him not only to master the methods of obtaining, processing and storing information, but above all he must learn to use information and information technologies to sustain and upgrade his professional potential and improve the quality of the teaching process.

It is especially important for the teacher of the English language to know about and use the opportunities of the Internet for his professional development, because such a teacher