

Independent work of the first year students of foreign departments of Ukrainian universities with the aim of forming their grammatical skills while learning the course “Practice of oral and written speech” in the conditions of blended learning

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Abstract. The article deals with the problem of students' independent work with the aim of forming their grammar skills while learning the course "The practice of oral and written language" in the conditions of blended learning. The concepts of "independent foreign language students' activity", "independent foreign language students' work", "blended learning" are investigated. The authors of the article offer grammar exercises for students' independent work.

Keywords: *independent foreign language students' activity, independent foreign language students' work, blended learning, distance learning, grammatical skills.*

The statement of the problem. On the contemporary stage of accelerated social-economic development of the society, which is characterized by the gradual and steady integration of Ukrainian into European political, economic and cultural structures, it is getting exceptionally important to increase an educational level of training high-qualified specialists for all the branches of activity, enriching intellectual and creative potential. The important condition for solving this task is the necessity of giving the English language knowledge to specialists.

The growing gap between the volume of knowledge aimed at learning and the ability of mastering it can be overcome through the development of students' mental abilities, forming in them the capability to individually regulate the process of mastering new knowledge and to increase the effectiveness of learning.

Individuality in the process of students' activity is stipulated by the structure of curricula of Ukrainian higher educational establishments in which a significant part of academic hours is given to students' individual activity. The limitation of academic in-class hours and compulsory conditions of intensiveness of exercises for mastering the English language causes the necessity to teach students to organize their individual work.

The analysis of the latest researches and publications. The problems of organizing an individual foreign-language activity in higher educational establishments was researched by a great number of scholars (N.Balovsiak, G.Burdeniuk, T.Heorhieva, I.Giniatulin, L.Holovko, N.Kachalov, R.Nizamov, P.Pidkasystyi, L.Pukhovska, Yu.Sokolovskyi, I.Khomiuk, S.Shatilov, V.Hrypun, T.Hutchinson, E.King, K.Mc.Collum, T.Terrel and others).

In their researches the scholars state that due to contemporary requirements to graduates of higher educational establishments the training of highly-qualified specialists is impossible without organizing individual work in English, that is an integral part of individual foreign-language activity of future specialists. Researchers T.Heorhieva and L.Pukhovska indicate that in the system of higher education of Western Europe and the USA students' individual work takes the main place. Traditional forms of study (lectures, practical classes, seminars) only orientate students to their individual work which is orga-

nized and directed by an educator [9, p.59].

Let's find out how the term "students' individual foreign-language activity" is explained in contemporary methodical and educational literature.

"Students' individual foreign-language activity" is a complicated system of the interaction of an educator, a student and a foreign language, the main part of which is individual work in a foreign language, with the help of which the student learns to obtain knowledge in a foreign language, he forms the skills and knowledge in all types of speech activity, but, what is most important, he acquires such an important quality as individuality. Owing to individuality the student is capable to set a goal, make a clear distinction between cognitive tasks and choose the means of their usage, do self-control over the correctness of the set task, introduce corrections into his individual work and correct its drawbacks, analyze the general result of his work, compare the results with those defined earlier, forecast next steps in his further self-educational activity [11, p.35].

The offered explanation of the term "students' individual foreign-language activity" points to the fact that a student's individual work in a foreign language is an essential part of it.

Let's review how the term "Students' individual foreign-language activity" is explained in contemporary scientific literature.

Scholars consider students' individual foreign-language activity as an individual form of work, the basis of which is assignments with different levels of complexity which students do in the conditions of a laboratory, during class or out-of-class hours with the purpose of acquiring knowledge in phonetics, grammar, vocabulary and forming skills in the basic types of speech activity: reading, writing, listening comprehension, speaking without anyone's help and direct supervision from their educator, which presupposes the presence of inner motivation, knowledge in the methods of educational work and maximum activity of the student during which such quality as individuality in acquiring knowledge in foreign languages is formed [11, p.45].

Segmentation of the parts of the general problem which were not solved earlier.

The contemporary Ukrainian society is undergoing es-

sential changes connected with reconsideration of a certain number of scientific, political and social issues. They are taking place in all the spheres of people's life, affect all the social institutions, education in particular. In this regard changes in the system of education are taking place and they cause the appearance and development of different models of distance learning.

One of the important reasons for the development of different models of distance learning in the system of higher education in Ukraine has become the reduction of in-class hours and setting of academic material for students' individual work. However, the presence of such negative factors of distance learning as the absence of eye-to-eye communication of a students and an educator, weak level of students' self-discipline, the absence of good technical facilities for constant access to sources of information, lack of practical classes and the absence of constant control point to the expediency of transition to blended learning [1; 2; 3].

Under blended learning one must understand the combination of traditional methods of learning with interactive which consists of three stages: distance learning of theoretical material, mastering practical aspects in the form of day classes, the final stage – taking an exam or doing graduation thesis [7, p.3].

The model of blended learning contains the elements of basic European educational models: distance learning, face-to-face learning, online learning [7; 8].

The purpose of the article. The main purpose of this work is to show gradual formation of grammatical skills of the 1st-year students of Foreign Philology Departments of higher educational establishments of Ukraine during their individual work in the process of studying the subject "Practice of oral and written speech".

The statement of the basic material. The analysis of curricula in "Practice of oral and written speech" (of subject area 01 Education, field of study 014 Secondary education (the English language and literature) and subject area 0203 the Humanities, field of study 6.020303 Philology* Language and literature (English) of the 1st year of study) show that the correlation of in-class learning and individual work is 30% : 70 %.

Thus, there are 124 hours for in-class learning and 206 hours for individual work on "Practice of oral and written speech" in the 1st semester (01 Education, field of study 014 Secondary education (the English language and literature)). There are 134 hours for in-class learning and 286 for individual work in the 2nd semester.

The curriculum on "Practice of oral and written speech" (subject area 0203 the Humanities, field of study 6.020303 Philology* Language and literature (English)) defines that there are 140 hours for in-class learning and 220 for individual work. There are 134 hours for in-class learning and 286 for individual work in the 2nd semester.

According to the curriculum on "Practice of oral and written speech" for the 1st-year students of both specialties there are to be studied certain topics in grammar which give students the initial solid knowledge in English. These are the following topics: "The Pronoun. Sentences with an introductory "it"", "The Article", "Present tenses", "Past tenses", "Future tenses", "Passive voice", "Sequence of Tenses. Indirect speech".

Experience and practice show that the most difficult

topics for students are "The Article" та "Sequence of Tenses. Indirect speech".

The analysis of curricula in "Practical grammar of the English language" for the 1st-year students of both specialties and experience show that the number of hours is not enough for acquiring solid knowledge in grammar by students. This, in the 1st semester there are 44 hours for practical in-class learning and 46 for students' individual work. In the 2nd semester the number of in-class hours is twice increased and it is 96 hours, and 114 hours for individual work.

Thus, it is a crucially important task which educators face to organize students' individual work on a maximum effective level with the purpose of acquiring solid knowledge in grammar and their active practicing not only on the classes of "Practical grammar of the English language", but also while studying the academic course "Practice of oral and written speech".

With this purpose we find it essential to offer for students' individual work assignments in grammar that after explanation of the material in classes will be posted on the "Moodle" platform. A teacher informs his students which tasks they are to do. Checking up of the fulfilled assignments can be realized in the following ways: in class, to be e-mailed to the teacher, to be checked up in writing by the teacher, to be orally asked by the teacher while skype-connection. According grades for individual work are counted into the current credit.

We believe it is reasonable to offer the following exercises on "The Article":

1. Fill in the blanks with the appropriate article where necessary:

1. He lives in ___ south of ___ Australia. 2. In his novels Jack London, ___ famous American writer, described ___ life of ___ poor. 3. It seemed to him that nothing would break such ___ peaceful silence. Suddenly there was ___ scream, then ___ second and ___ third. 4. Can you play ___ guitar? 5. He came in one morning when we were having ___ dinner on ___ terrace of ___ hotel and introduced himself. 6. ___ world tour costs ___ lot of money. 7. Did he fail you? What ___ surprise! 8. I don't believe you. I think you're telling ___ lie. 9. Did you have ___ lovely time in ___ Hague? 10. It was ___ early evening but I was feeling sleepy so I decided to have ___ nap. 11. He made ___ gross mistake. ___ economists can't make such ___ mistakes. 12. Have ___ look at the sky. It looks like ___ rain, 13. She'll have ___ swim and return in ___ quarter of ___ hour. 14. I'll have to convince him that I'm telling ___ truth. 15. He wasn't used to driving on ___ left [2; 5; 10; 12; 13].

2. Translate the following sentences from Ukrainian into English paying special attention to the use of articles:

1. Будьте ласкаві, передайте мені сіль, будь ласка. 2. Вечір був вологим (damp) і прохолодним. 3. Був холодний і вітряний (windy) день. 4. Вино занадто солодке. 5. Я люблю сухе вино. 6. Вона знайшла таку хорошу роботу. 7. Погода погана. Ніч була дуже холодною. Я не хочу гуляти в таку холодну погоду. 8. Людина приручила (domesticate) собаку багато років назад. 9. Це несподівана новина. 10. Він володіє обширними знаннями в області медицини. 11. Кіпр і Мальта відомі туристичні центри. 12. Вона прожила

тяжке життя. 13. Нафту використовують для виробництва (production) бензину. 14. Шотландія – гірська (mountainous) частина Великобританії. Найвища гора — пік Бен-Невіс. 15. Де вони зупинилися? — У готелі «Континенталь». Це на Хай-стріт [5; 10; 12; 13].

After explaining the topic “Sequence of Tenses. Indirect speech” in class students are offered to practice the material by doing the following exercises individually:

1. Convert these statements into indirect speech:

1. Daniel said, “I met some friends of mine in the cinema last night.” 2. A man stopped me in the street and asked “Do you speak English?”. 3. The student said to his friend, “I’ve already read half of the book.” 4. She said to us, “I will have marked your tests by the next lesson.” 5. Christine wrote, “Your letter came too late. I have already promised to go to my uncle where I shall be staying for a month.” 6. Glenn said to us, “I can’t find his telephone number.” 7. “There are two topics which I want to examine today,” said the lecturer. 8. We said, “Sorry. But we didn’t see you crossing the road.” 9. Will said to me with sarcasm, “You are giving me advice?” 10. The newspaper headline was, “Diana in fatal car crash.” [2; 5; 10; 12; 13].

2. Change the following into indirect speech, using the rules of the sequence of tenses:

1. “I have something to tell you,” I said to her. 2. “I met her for the first time on a warm sunny morning last spring,” he said. 3. “I am going to call again tomorrow, mother,” she said. 4. “I’ve been to Turkey twice, but so far I haven’t had time to visit Istanbul,” said Robert. 5. “It will be very difficult to persuade her to take care of herself, doctor,” I replied. 6. “The president is to come to Madrid the day after tomorrow,” said the BBC announcer. 7. “We have a lift but very often it doesn’t work,” they said. 8. “We have bought a new flat. But we don’t like it so much as our last one,” said my cousin. 9. “I have left a message for him, but he hasn’t phoned yet,” she said. 10. “I’ve no idea who has done it but I’ll find out,” said Peggy [2; 5; 10; 12].

3. Translate the following sentences from Ukrainian into English:

1. Ми спитали його, де він купив словник. 2. Він спитав мене, чи я читала Шекспіра в оригіналі або у перекладі. 3. Вона спитала мене, де я живу. 4. Я спитала сестру, чому вона не хоче піти зі мною до театру. 5. Я спитала, чи часто він ходить до філармонії. 6. Він спитав мене, чи я коли-небудь бачила його сестру. 7. Він спитав, де я працюю. 8. Вона спитала, чому я відкинула цю пропозицію. 9. Вона спитала, коли прихो-

дила Ніна. 10. Він спитав, чи люблю я драму. 11. Вона заявила, що не хоче йти з нами. 12. Вона нас завіяряла, що не говорила з вчителькою про це. 13. Вона заперечувала, що говорила з ним раніше. 14. Вона нагадала мені, що я обіцяла зателефонувати Олені. 15. Вона визнала, що помилилась [2; 5; 10].

4. Change commands, requests, recommendations into indirect speech.

1. “Open the safe!” the raiders ordered the bank clerk. 2. “Please do as I say,” he begged me. 3. “Help your mother, Peter,” Mr. Pitt said. 4. “Don’t make too much noise, children,” he said. 5. “Do whatever you like,” she said to us. 6. “Don’t miss your train,” she warned them. 7. “Read the document before you sign it,” the lawyer said to his client. 8. “Fill in the blank again,” he said. 9. “Buy a new car,” I advised him. 10. “Don’t drive too fast,” she begged him. 11. “Don’t put your bicycle near my window,” said the shopkeeper to me. 12. “Come to the cinema with me,” he asked her. 13. “Cook it in butter,” I advised her. 14. “Send for the fire brigade,” the manager said to the porter. 15. “Please pay at the desk,” said the shop assistant to her [10; 12].

Conclusions and proposals. One of the contemporary means of realizing the process of study on the basis of informational-communication technologies is distance learning. The usage of distant forms and methods of education contributes to individualization of the process of forming future specialists, encourages their individual work, forms informational culture, prepares them to be able to obtaining innovative means of acquiring and using information. In its turn, blended learning is a relatively new approach in the higher education of Ukraine. It provides flexibility in relation to traditional education, as well as it gives the possibility to educational establishments to offer learning in different conditions of delivering academic material.

Due to decreasing in-class hours for studying the course “Practical grammar of the English language”, there arises the necessity of organizing students’ individual work in such a way that grammar material is thoroughly worked on in classes of “Practical course of oral and written speech”. Assignments for students are posted by a teacher on the “Moodle” platform. While doing the assignments students not only acquire practical knowledge in grammar of the English language, but also the skills to individually get and use knowledge necessary for their future professional activity.

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