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**THE ROLE OF ELECTRONIC TEXTBOOK IN SELF-STUDY OF  
NON-LANGUAGE STUDENTS**

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*Abstract*

The article considers the self-study organization of non-linguistic students. The authors are guided by the urgent need to train University graduates who speak one or even several foreign languages in the spheres of professional and everyday communication, the possibility of activating the process of teaching a foreign language with the upcoming era of new information and communication technologies. We give particular consideration to the notion of self-study. The authors propose the requirements for efficient self-organization in teaching English at the current stage. We made an attempt to demonstrate and prove that an electronic textbook is a means of enhancing the foreign language acquisition. From one side, its introduction in the learning process allows to manage time in the most productive way both for a teacher and a student, and on the other side, it makes the process of language learning accessible and fascinating. We also examine the conceptual provisions of blended learning, which focuses on the formation of communicative competence among students in its two components: general communicative competence as a part of the student's social skills and professional communicative competence as a part of his professional skills. In conclusion we analyze and emphasize the importance of using an authentic text as a unit of communication in which features of a foreign language community are presented.

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**Keywords:** Blended learning, electronic textbook, language for specific purposes, self-study.



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## **1. Introduction**

The introduction of new state educational standards of higher professional education necessitates fundamental changes in the methods and approaches, which, among other things, involves the active acquisition of knowledge and updating the content of teaching with ample use of new information technologies. Such changes we can observe in the educational system development throughout the world. The foreign language today is an integral part of the curriculum at university and aims at developing communicative competence of students in two of its components: general communicative competence as part of a student's social competence and professional communicative competence as part of his professional competence.

### **1.1. The peculiarity of the discipline**

The main practical goal of the course "Foreign Language" at a non-linguistic university is to teach the practical use of colloquial and scientific discourse so that the students could use the second language in daily routine and professional communication. At the present stage of the educational process, there is an urgent need for training university graduates who speak one or even several foreign languages both in the professional sphere and in the framework of everyday communication (Chernyshkova, 2018).

With the implementation of new information and communication technologies, it became possible to intensify the process of teaching a foreign language: both the introduction of new lexical and grammatical material, and the control of students' self-study through the use of electronic didactic material technologies. The effectiveness of interaction in the educational sphere with the use of computer technologies is determined by the student's readiness for classroom and extracurricular self-study, as well as further readiness for the student's professional activity as a future specialist through self-control, self-assessment, self-regulation and self-organization (Odinokaya et al., 2018).

### **1.2. The main definition**

While considering the theme we came across the variety of self-study definitions as a special type of educational activity. Issues related to self-organization in educational and cognitive activities are considered in the works of Almazova et al. (2016), Burenko et al. (2019), Melnik et al. (2019) etc. The most complete and meaningful understanding of students' self-study activities is disclosed in the works of many researchers, in particular, Dummel and Stahl (2018), Stamp (2013), Ye (2017), Leigh and Herbert (2018), Wan and Niu (2018), Munro et al. (2017), Cranton and Carusetta (2004), Rodgers (2001) etc.

In our research work, we adhered to the following understanding of the definition of self-study, namely, the implementation of various tasks of an educational, production, research and self-educational nature, which serve as a method of acquiring the system of professional knowledge. It is a way of cognitive and professional activity which forms the skills and abilities of professional facility and creative activity.

## 2. Problem Statement

Nowadays we can observe a decrease in the significance of formalized knowledge, consequently, the ability to effective self-study becomes more important. In the conditions of uncertain and rapidly changing social and professional environments the society demands that the subjects of the educational process should be socialized. Greater responsibility should be imposed on the student himself and his activity in mastering the skills and knowledge.

Many specialists who teach a second language to non-linguistic major students note various problems induced by the discrepancy between the posed goals and the existing conditions both subjectively and objectively. Among the reasons we can indicate here the equipment of the classrooms, the level of training of students, the presence of the necessary modern narrowly targeted training materials, the competence of teachers in a particular area of professional communication, technical security of the educational process and of course the amount of time allocated to classroom studies. Failures in using IT for teaching foreign languages can, in our opinion, be caused by a number of factors: the emergence of a large number of electronic educational resources created spontaneously to replace traditional textbooks. Very often they do not correspond to methodological requirements for electronic educational materials, thus not bringing a tangible effect.

## 3. Research Questions

We argue that in order to ensure the effective development and formation of communicative competence in ESL at modern university learning environments among students of a non-linguistic specialities the instructors should competently organize student's self-study with the help of the high-quality electronic textbook employing blended learning approach.

According to definition given by Bondarev and Bakulev (2011), an electronic textbook is “an interactive learning tool that includes textual, audiovisual and graphic professionally significant information and is characterized by clarity and consistency of presentation, consolidation of lexical and grammatical material and its communicative implementation in the process of class work and students' self-study of a foreign language under the guidance of a teacher” (p.78).

### 3.1. The necessary conditions

At the modern stage there are several conditions, vital for the successful organization of self-study in teaching English, namely:

- stimulus for obtaining knowledge;
- availability of teaching and reference materials;
- student's desire and readiness for self-study;
- teacher's advisory assistance;
- the system of a regular quality control of the results of self-study

Depending on the tasks and goals for the effective use of electronic text books in the educational process, a combination of techniques and teaching methods aimed at implementing the tasks is required.

### 3.2. The importance of an e-book

Today, around the world, there is a constant increase in the importance of electronic educational resources implemented on the basis of computer technologies. We believe that in order to fulfil the conditions formulated above, the use of electronic textbooks is becoming the most popular and effective form of enhancing the foreign language study, since, on the one hand, it maximally productively manages the time of the teacher and individual student, and, on the other hand, makes the process of learning a language fascinating and accessible. In the process of writing of this article, the whole world, and in particular our country, faced the threat of a pandemic. In these conditions, the activity of the teacher has gained special significance. His professional competence began to be determined by his readiness to effectively solve professional tasks in a changing information and educational environment. More than ever, there is a need to use an electronic textbook, which in these conditions has passed additional testing and has become the basis of modern distance education. By implementing the educational process based on our textbook in the Moodle system, we were able to provide the students with an additional opportunity to use various types of visibility (hyperlinks to presentations of grammar rules, country studies films), which was an additional motivating factor for students. These factors really shifted learning process from passive to active, making students more independent and deliberate in knowledge acquisition and professional skills development. This proved once again that an e-book is a convenient, practical, and economical way to activate self-study.

## 4. Purpose of the Study

Considering the foregoing, we will attempt to illustrate the process on the material of the electronic textbook: *English for historians*.

This text-book was compiled in accordance with the foreign languages curriculum for non-linguistic universities, and the main provisions of the program are implemented taking in account the peculiarity of the students' professional training majoring in the fields of "History", "History and Social Studies". It comprises modern authentic professionally-oriented materials, processed and adapted for students of a non-linguistic university.

As we have already noted above, the main goal of the course " Foreign Language" is to master the skill and develop the ability to use a foreign language to solve communication problems, both in a certain professional sphere, and in various domestic and business spheres of activity, raising the level of educational autonomy, the ability to self-education. The set goal suggests the solution of the following tasks:

- the development of students cognitive and research skills;
- the development of informational culture as compared with the student's own culture;
- the acquisition of lexical and grammatical minimum, necessary for working with foreign language texts in the process of professional activity;
- the knowledge of the stylistic features of different genres of oral and written professional discourse;
- the development of the ability to read and translate professionally-oriented English texts; mastering the skills of professional communication in English.

## **5. Research Methods**

Depending on the tasks and goals for the effective use of electronic text books in the educational process, a combination of techniques and teaching methods aimed at implementing the tasks is required.

### **5.1. The research methodology**

The methodology for developing our electronic book “English for historians” includes:

- a certain selection of educational material and tests, the development of universal didactic models in accordance with the program and curriculum of the direction;
- distribution of training material and tests on the modules of the book;
- interface design;
- approbation of sections of the electronic textbook in the organization of self-study; the adjustment of the textbook materials and determination of its didactic capabilities.

### **5.2. Implementation**

The principle of creating an electronic textbook “English for historians” is based on the development of universal didactic models. Such approaches as personality - and activity-oriented should underlie the introduction of these models in teaching a foreign language in the education systems of the developed countries.

The electronic didactic material of the e-book, in addition to Microsoft Word documents (instructions for assignments, texts for additional reading, essays, summaries, tables) contains a system of computer tasks using CD ROOM, numerous hyperlinks to Internet presentations of grammatical material of the studied content, control materials fepo i-exam. We believe that it is advisable to include program modules in electronic didactic material that provide feedback to students (in our university it is the platform Moodle).

## **6. Findings**

The development of the disciplines adjacent to the methodology, the emergence of information technologies have brought to life the development of the concept of blended learning. This approach combines different types of educational events, including teaching in the classroom and guided self-study based on electronic teaching materials.

### **6.1. The structure of an e-book**

For According to the recommendations of the methodologists for the effective acquisition of the material an electronic textbook, should consist of three blocks: informational, training, and controlling.

In general, the information block presents topical vocabulary. It's main function is to explain and give examples of key words natural use. The material in an e-book should be presented in a concise form (Fakhrudinova et al., 2014). According to recommendations of lexical approach, it is advisable to group words in chunks to facilitate memorization. The perception of information from the monitor screen has its peculiarities: it decreases dramatically if given in a long list. Control questions presented at the end of each section of the information block allow the learner to get a feedback. Occasionally the information

block may include a demo text illustrating the actual use of words, a dictionary containing detailed information about the keywords of the topic, useful collocations for productive development. For example, if we are talking about activating the self-study of students-historians (Pre-intermediate, Intermediate level), then “The Tale of King Arthur” is a great topic for this purpose, where the progress of work can be structured as follows:

- studying a glossary of words that are most often found in a text or video (helpful words & notes);
- the reading and translation of the text proposed in the electronic textbook *The Legend of King Arthur*.

## **6.2. The main blocks of an e-book**

The training and controlling blocks of electronic textbooks for second language learning generally contain a series of assignments. Their main goal is to work out topical vocabulary, to check it and to correct the errors (Gutareva, 2013). We emphasize the role of the training block, because in order to consolidate and revise the acquired knowledge and to develop new skills, we need logically arranged exercises connected with the previous block and eliciting deliberate drilling. It is highly recommended that this module should suggest simple and functional feedback. The hint and footnote system would be very helpful, so that the student can refer or go to any section of the training material. In the preparation of tasks of this block, we should use various response design systems. All exercises should be aimed at achieving a specific goal (working out grammatical material, mastering vocabulary, stating pronunciation, etc.), be carried out in various ways and organizational forms (various forms of exercises stimulate different cognitive and creative processes of students, thus motivating them in the process of studying). There should be close relation between the tasks, while observing the basic teaching principles from simple to more difficult, from passive forms to active:

- to complete the story with the extracted phrases, answering the questions, rearranging the sentences in logical order, transforming the sentences using the synonymic expressions from the text and correcting the false information;
- watching a movie in English with English subtitles (watch movies with English subtitles). We believe that English subtitles are necessary at the first stages of language learning, and as the students improve the perception of foreign speech by ear, we recommend taking away this feature (watching a movie is available by clicking the link on the internet);
- writing an essay on well-developed material.

We can either integrate the testing system into the shell of electronic textbook or use it as an independent self-study element. In any case it is vital to provide the control unit with an evaluation description and the answer keys. Having done the test the student should be provided with the correct results of his testing.

Thus, the information and communication technologies use allows for the successful mastery of a foreign language due to a more complete use of intensive learning resources as such. At the first stage of training, presentation of the audiovisual film material in the form of printed text, i.e. use of the visual

range. In speech exercises, there is a planned, dosed and at the same time abundant use of vocabulary and grammar with their immediate implementation. Then the student proceeds to watching the video material.

The main stages of work on a film existing in the foreign languages teaching methodology:

- 1) the first (preview stage) includes preparatory exercises: the elimination of grammatical, lexical and phonetic difficulties;
- 2) the second (viewing stage) is the watching of the film. It should be watched two times: the first time for understanding the general content, the second time is needed to recognize a detailed description of what was seen;
- 3) the third (post-view stage) has tasks for the oral speech skills development. We should take into account the level of students' language training. These tasks may be: the main content summary, or a detailed retelling.

There can be many algorithms for working with a movie. For self-study we recommend the following: the first viewing (students do not pay attention to unfamiliar words); secondary viewing (students fix on unfamiliar phrases, words; write them out, taking into account the context).

For a better memorization of new words and expressions, we practiced making a small fictional story (a story about yourself) with words from the film. And the more implausible and interesting the message was, the better the new vocabulary was acquired. And at the consolidating stage of work with the proposed material we moved to the development of writing skills: writing an essay, based on the model writing given in a textbook.

## **7. Conclusion**

Based on our own professional experience, we can conclude that for the actualization of self-study, the use of electronic textbooks has a number of undeniable advantages. First of all, 100% student coverage. With the modern development of electronic and IT devices, students have the opportunity to use an electronic textbook downloaded to any storage medium, and consequently not tied to a specific workplace.

Nowadays, the students should be able to update assimilated information, that is, to use accordingly additions, extensions, replacements. It is very important for the discipline "Foreign language". We live in the age of globalization, a lot of new concepts enter our lives, so the language is constantly changing. It is enriching with new realities. The electronic textbook updating possibility brings students closer to the real language reality and improves the foreign language teaching quality.

The electronic training manual makes it possible to complete all kinds of tasks (lexical / grammar exercises, tests) in an electronic version, if necessary with subsequent correction. An electronic textbook with audio and video material helps motivate students, thereby increasing the effectiveness of the learning process.

Thus, the self-study is a pre-planned process, the actualization of which depends on the ability of the teacher to organize and control it in proper time at each stage of the study of the discipline. In this regard, each teacher must constantly learn and improve new teaching methods. Blended learning

approach with the help of the electronic text-book is designed to unite the advantages of electronic and full-time education, fruitfully combining distance learning, full-time classes and self-study. In our opinion the effectiveness of such training is achieved, only with a rational combination of methods for delivering educational material, constant updating of educational material, the use of technologies that facilitate the assimilation of information.

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