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MONITORING OF STUDENTS' PROGRESS UNDER DISTANCE LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES: ADVANTAGES AND DRAWBACKS

Monitoring of students' progress in studying foreign languages under distance learning is characterized by some specificity. To compose tasks for the monitoring, teachers use computer-aided and information technologies, including Internet resources with the authentic and actual information. It arouses a great students' interest and motivates them to better learning a foreign language. Under distance learning, students are free to use all available resources that contributes to development of their skills of searching information, not just recollecting it, as well as reduces the students' psychological burden, on one hand. On the other hand, access to additional sources may be the reason of less substantial attitude to learning. Therefore, the tasks of monitoring the progress in studying a foreign language under distance learning should be developed for both assessment of knowledge and for interpretation and use of them, as well as should fuel development of the skills of comprehension and critical thinking. The article is devoted to analyzing the ways to improve the quality of monitoring of the students' progress in studying a foreign language under distance learning. The work gives characteristics of advantages and drawbacks of test control, requirements to the tests and their structure. While planning control of students' achievements one should consider whether it complies with the learning goals. In its turn, clearly set goals simplify the choice of monitoring methods. Along with testing, that is the most popular form of control of the acquired knowledge of a foreign language under distance learning, the authors of the research recommend some other methods to check students' progress. Unfortunately, each of the methods of monitoring, used under distance learning, has both positive and negative features. In fact, it is reasonable to use an optimal combination of them. Moreover, it is also important to consider professional focus, educational program, and level of language competence of the students of higher educational establishments while monitoring their progress in studying a foreign language under distance learning.

Key words: *distance learning; quality of the learning progress monitoring; foreign language; testing; informal, formative, summative and formal goal of knowledge assessment; methods of monitoring.*

(статтю подано мовою оригіналу)

These days, the world faces challenges motivating people to get competences in different fields by obtaining information from various sources. Definitely, the Internet is the broadest, the best available and the most complete resource. The world leading Universities, including the Open University of Great Britain, Oxford University, Cambridge University, Universities in the USA and other European countries, have confirmed efficiency of the Internet using by higher education students. The Internet is surely of particular importance for studying foreign languages, namely English. In conditions of rapid globalization, a foreign language teacher feels a permanent necessity to improve competences and skills of working with the Internet resources that positively influence quality of the learning process and development of foreign language competences by higher education students. The advantages of using such resources include geographical independence, stimulation of students' initiative, individual pedagogical approach.

Implementation of the principles of distance learning determines a high importance of such constituents as teacher's professional activities, management of students' learning process, and monitoring of their progress. It sets new challenges for the teacher to create a high quality digital content, complying with the goals and tasks of the course, effective application of the tools for monitoring and assessment of the results of students' learning activities. In practice, all those challenges are taken by teachers spontaneously, by the trial and error method, that does not provide the expected results.

In the last decade, different aspects of improving the quality of monitoring students' progress in studying a foreign language have attracted attention of many foreign and domestic scientists. In particular, test control at higher education establishments was studied by A.D. Zhunusakunova (2016) [3, p. 26-29], Yu.Yu. Kolesnikov (2009) [6], O.N. Maiorov (2001) [8]. Peculiarities of testing in English were outlined by S.A. Beiskhanova, N.O. Svich (2017), R.P. Milrud, I.R. Maksymova, O.V. Matviienko (2005), O.H. Molodykh-Nahaieva (2015), M.I. Miatlieva (2011) [9, p. 160-163], U.R. Saidmuratova (2019), O.D. Tsoi (2011). The analysis of the necessity of assessing the students' basic knowledge in a foreign language to improve effectiveness of the learning process, advantages and drawbacks of some "income" tests, and their general use is made in the works by S.K. Hural, T.O. Podianova (2018), Ya.O. Hlukhykh (2007), M.V. Zolotova (2014) [5, p. 63-66], O.V. Kulahina (2013), O.P. Ponomarenko, N.O. Barmina (2016), S.M. Tatarintseva, N.V. Konopliuk (2017). In spite of a broad and multi-aspect character of the researches, devoted to distance learning, little attention has been paid to such essential aspect as monitoring of students' progress in learning foreign languages under distance learning.

It is worth noting that monitoring of students' progress in studying a foreign language under distance learning has its specificity. To compose tasks for monitoring, teachers are provided with a wide range of opportunities by using computer-aided and information technologies like Internet resources supplying authentic and actual information,

e.g. sport, political news or news of culture, authentic materials (speeches of political leaders, abstracts of TV programs and films, videos, Wikipedia materials, e-libraries, etc.).

Specialists note that such relevant information arouses students' interest and contributes to better motivation to learning a foreign language [1vladimirova].

Under distance learning, a foreign language teacher plans to achieve definite goals of students' knowledge assessment, particularly informal, formative, summative, and formal. The informal goal of assessment suggests checking home tasks, quizzes, non-standard tasks, classroom observations, etc. The formative goal of assessment means the students are able to identify the tasks or to be involved in the learning process. The formative goal is achieved by responsible teaching and helping students to evaluate their progress. The ultimate goal of assessment that is planned by a foreign language teacher is to evaluate the tasks performance, to make general assessment of learning outcomes, to scrupulously observe the group activities, and to prepare reports. The formal goal of assessment, set by a foreign language teacher, can be implemented in the form of a term paper, final tests, standard tasks, corresponding criteria and regulations.

Furthermore, under distance learning, students are free to use all available materials (dictionaries, textbook, online translators and other Internet resources) while performing the tasks. In such a way, the monitoring procedure becomes more authentic since we use all the resources in the real life conditions.

In the monitoring of learning progress, it is important to choose adequate *methods*, i.e. the ways of feedback from a teacher to a student to obtain information on efficiency of the learning process at different stages [3, p. 26]. According to the approved classification, *methods of monitoring* students' knowledge and skills are divided into oral, written, practical, methods of observation, program control and testing, which is currently primarily used referring to the concept of modernization and digitalization of the learning process at higher education establishments. According to O.M. Maiorova, testing is *an instrument* of pedagogical evaluation by applying a qualimetrically balanced system of tasks, standardized procedure of taking them, clearly determined technology and analysis of results [8, p. 78].

In the integral system of learning, the main *functions* of tests are 1) *diagnostic*, focused on the maximum impartial, operative and complete monitoring of acquired knowledge; 2) *training*, focused on development of students' abilities to work independently, to motivate them to a systematic repetition of the mastered knowledge and acquisition of new information; 3) *educative*, related with students' behavior and performed through the consistent and periodical control; 4) *corrective*, that agrees the content, forms and methods of the learning process with the identified level of knowledge and skills; 5) *managerial*; 6) *developing* [9, p. 160].

Testing is definitely the most common method of monitoring under distance learning. Most instruments for monitoring students' learning progress, both on distance learning platforms (e.g. Moodle) and online services (Master-Test, LearningApps, Online Test Pad, ClassMarker, Classroom, Quizizz, Kahoot!, etc.), are made in the form of closed type tests. It is justified, because that type of tests provides a fast, impartial, valid and relevant assessment, primarily of language (vocabulary and grammar) and receptive linguistic skills (listening and reading). However, the effect of using only such type tests is estimated by specialists as negative, because they:

− make an excessive focus on mechanical memorization and reproduction of materials, but not complete understanding of the essence;

− create a false impression about the only available correct answer to each question or task;

− make students passive listeners, who just have to recognize correct answers, but not produce themselves;

− force teachers teach just the materials which are going to be tested (instead of teaching important aspects);

− reduce development of students' skills just to mastering the skills of making tests that significantly impoverishes the learning content [10].

Methods of monitoring students' progress under distance learning should mandatory support the students' wish to studying and prove comprehension for the permanent assessment by the teacher. The most common methods of online assessment are quizzes, fill-in-the-blank cloze activity, matching questions, forum posts, expert estimates and review, results of online interviewing/quiz, exit cards/minute papers, online modules.

One of the advantages of quizzes is that they are short and simple. Questions in digital quizzes can be easily randomized to make each quiz unique for each student.

Fill-in-the-blank cloze activity is a fast and short tool for checking students' answers.

Online modules or platforms of students' progress assessment (for example, ProProfs student assessment software) are powerful instruments for teachers to use different options to compose online tests or exams [12]. They provide convenient functions for a foreign language teacher to automate different methods of assessment, following the process of his/her students' learning, and to receive preliminary reports to find out gaps in their knowledge. The software makes assessment of students' knowledge and the grades can be sent to them wherever they are geographically located.

Exit cards are used to monitor the studied materials in the form of question-answer tasks, which students should make during the last 5 or 10 minutes of a class. Exit cards can be quickly checked because they include just few sentences, but they inform the foreign language teacher on the degree of students' success in mastering the material. Digital exit cards can be sent to the teacher by e-mail or by using the internal system of message exchange in the general system of learning.

In the works of modern scientists [7], monitoring is divided into corrective, which is used for maximum implementation of the training and educative functions, and reporting, which exercises the function of control.

Such vision of monitoring is based on the statement that monitoring procedures should not just report about the level of acquired knowledge and mastered skills by students (reporting monitoring), but also focus on implementation of the training and educative functions, i.e. along with tasks performing, students continue their learning and development. The mentioned requirements can be met under distance learning of foreign languages by applying business games and preparing projects.

The greatest advantage of using business games as a method of progress monitoring, but for grading the level of developed language and linguistic skills, is the opportunity of the fullest implementation of the principle of professional focus. That aspect of business games enables evaluating the developed professional competences of students, their mastered professional skills, the learned ability to use different methods and tools to solve set problems, to implement the heuristic (creative) approach to problem solving, developed professional thinking, culture of professional behavior and communication, etc. [4]. Drawbacks of that method are revealed in its low reliability and therefore, the time-consuming and scrupulous development of the assessing criteria, particularly global and analytical scales.

Another drawback of business games is that they need much time to be prepared, and require teacher's specific qualification and experience to get successful outcome from the application of them [11; 4].

Considering the shifted focus from classroom to individual activity of students under distance learning, a particular attention should be paid to monitoring those activities by using training projects. In the modern didactics, the method of projects is defined as "organization of the learning process, which secures acquisition of knowledge and skills while planning and making practical tasks, i.e. projects" [2]. Implementation of projects is one of the most effective methods of corrective monitoring, as it both reveals and assesses the level of students' learning progress, and stimulates formation of students' professional competences, activation of their comprehensive activity, intellectual development, provides the opportunity for students' creativity, i.e. exercising the functions of education, development and self-improvement.

Under distance learning, a foreign language teacher is not able to see the students' reaction, their faces, comments and emotions when they get and make tasks. The specific feature of online learning is that the teacher cannot clearly interpret the students' response. Students are creators of their personal experience. The key aspect is that the teacher receives students' remarks and can introduce some changes into the learning process. To achieve expected results, the teacher should keep in touch with the students and get regular feedback from them. Therefore, it is reasonable to add some questions to each task to check whether the students receive what they need and expect to. Among the examples of the feedback method, the researchers distinguish questionnaire, e-mail questions, message exchange, webinars, collection of data from platforms, stand-up or live sessions, etc. The teacher should have an actual vision of online learning and understand the ways of possible improvement referring to the students' responses. In fact, it will influence the final assessment, which is used to monitor the students' progress on the way to achieving the set goals of learning. Final assessment is often used to evaluate efficiency of students' work basing on a set standard or expected results. For instance, standardized tests, which are used almost by each teacher of foreign languages, are the total grades.

To sum up, the effective use of online instruments in the process of learning foreign languages requires practical skills and much patience both from a teacher and a student. Development of information and communication competences by means of available Internet resources positively influences not only the foreign language learning, but also the general quality of students' training at higher education establishments. A clear vision of the goal and relevance of online learning contributes to development of the strategies of teaching foreign languages under distance learning. The analysis of the forms and methods of monitoring the students' progress in learning a foreign language under distance learning confirms that each of them has both its pros and cons. The research proves the necessity of their optimal combination. While planning and implementing monitoring, teachers should also consider specificity of distance learning, particularly use of computer-aided and information technologies to secure the authentic content of the monitoring tasks, as well as the factor of students' unlimited access to additional materials in the process of tasks performance. A particular attention should be paid to setting the goals of training, which should comply with all didactic requirements and provide the opportunity for assessing the students' knowledge, interpretation of the results, as well as should contribute to development of students' skills of comprehension of critical thinking.

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Добровольська С. Р., Панчишин С. Б., Опир М. Б. Контроль навчальних досягнень з іноземної мови в умовах дистанційного навчання: переваги та недоліки

Контроль навчальних досягнень з іноземної мови в умовах дистанційного навчання має свою специфіку. Для створення контрольних завдань викладачі використовують комп'ютерні та інформаційні технології, які дають можливість використовувати ресурси Інтернету, що містять автентичну й актуальну інформацію. Це значною мірою зацікавлює студентів і мотивує їх до вивчення іноземної мови. З одного боку, в процесі виконання контрольних завдань у дистанційному навчанні студенти мають необмежений доступ до довідкових матеріалів, що сприяє розвитку здатності використовувати знання, замість того, а не лише пригадувати їх, та зменшує психологічне напруження в студентів під час виконання контрольних завдань. З іншого боку, доступ до довідкових матеріалів може сприяти поверховому засвоєнню знань. Тому контрольні завдання з іноземної мови в умовах дистанційного навчання повинні бути розроблені для оцінки як знань, так і їх інтерпретації та застосування, а також сприяти розвитку навичок розуміння і навичок критичного мислення. У статті автори досліджують шляхи підвищення якості контролю знань студентів з іноземної мови за допомогою дистанційних засобів в умовах дистанційного навчання. Охарактеризовано переваги і недоліки тестового контролю, вимоги до тестів та їхню структуру. Плануючи контроль навчальних досягнень студентів необхідно зважати на відповідність змісту контролю навчальним цілям. Чітко сформульовані цілі, в свою чергу, полегшують вибір методів контролю. Поряд з тестування, що в умовах дистанційного навчання найчастіше використовується для контролю навчальних досягнень з іноземної мови, автори радять використовувати і інші методи перевірки навчальних досягнень. На жаль, жоден із методів контролю, що застосовується в дистанційному навчанні, не позбавлений як переваг, так і недоліків. На практиці їх доцільно оптимально поєднувати. А також важливо враховувати професійну спрямованість, освітні програми і рівень мовної підготовки студентів того чи іншого ЗВО проводячи контроль навчальних досягнень з іноземної мови в умовах дистанційного навчання.

Ключові слова: *дистанційне навчання; якість контролю знань; іноземна мова; тестування; неформальна, формувальна, підсумкова і формальна мета оцінювання знань; методи контролю.*