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Self-directed learning through creative activity of students

Natalia A. Kovalenko *, Anna Yu. Smirnova

National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, Lenin Avenue, 30, Tomsk, 634050, Russia

Abstract

Teaching a foreign language is associated with the development of thinking, emotions and other areas of the personality. The importance and the need to include motivational and emotional spheres of the individual student in the study of a foreign language are stressed in the article. Self-directed learning means various types of individual and group activity of students that they have undertaken in the classroom and extracurricular activities at home without the direct participation of the teacher. The authors discuss the problem of independent work skills development of students learning a foreign language, assert that the effect of independent work is possible only when it is implemented in the educational process as a whole system that runs through all stages of foreign language teaching, and pay special attention to the tasks that students develop themselves.

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Article

A foreign language as the means of communication and knowledge of the world has a special place in the system of modern education because of its social, cognitive and developmental functions. Teaching a foreign language is associated with the development of thinking, emotions and other areas of the personality. The importance and the need to include motivational and emotional spheres of the individual student in the study of a foreign language are stressed in the methodological literature on teaching foreign languages. Language learning in artificial conditions, i.e. outside the area where it is spoken, requires the creation of imaginary situations that could stimulate a dialogue in the target language, and is associated with the development of imagination. The process of learning a foreign language contributes to the formation of creative independence, because within this subject there is the ability to use creative activities and exercises that require students to self-study and teach them to use the language material to express their thoughts.

The striving to acquire knowledge independently and creatively, to perform tasks requiring manifestation of a critical mind, imagination, fantasy, dreams are indispensable conditions for the occurrence of deep interest to the

* Natalia A. Kovalenko. Tel.: +7-923-403-5122

E-mail address: natalie@tpu.ru

academic subjects. Self-directed learning is regarded as a specific form of educational activity of student, characterized by all its features.

Self-directed learning means various types of individual and group activity of students that they have undertaken in the classroom and extracurricular activities at home without the direct participation of the teacher (Vitin, 2012).

Independent work is an obligatory part of the curriculum and an essential part of the learning process, the result of which is the development of subject knowledge and skills considered as an integral characteristic of readiness to meet the challenges.

Self-directed learning should be focused on students mastering techniques of cognitive activity. At the same time independent work, its planning, organizational forms and methods, as well as the impact tracking system is not fully explored in the pedagogical theory in the context of the modernization of education. The problem of the organization of independent work in the study of a foreign language is particularly significant. The effect of the independent work can be obtained only when it is organized and implemented in the educational process as a holistic system that runs through all stages of learning.

Creative activity, that we consider, gives students opportunities to exhibit their own individuality. Direct, active participation of students in these activities, at an accessible level of complexity opens great prospects for the integrated development and formation of the creative potential of the individual (Gall'skoya, 2011).

Creative level of independent work is associated with the formation of skills and abilities to search for solving more complex communication tasks.

Practice has shown that positive changes in society cannot be achieved within the framework of the traditional model of education. To achieve the objectives of education put forward at this stage, it is necessary to change the fundamentals of learning, the development of effective educational technology.

Here are some examples of individual creative work in the process of learning a foreign language.

Example 1.

To revise the vocabulary on a topic at the beginning of the lesson it is offered to the students to prepare Teacher's tasks.

One of the most simple tasks of this type are «Jumbled letters» (it is necessary to make words on the topic using the given letters). For example, on the topic «Work and Jobs» students offered the following words:

- a) *e,o,s,u,r,n,g (surgeon)*
- b) *g,r,t,e,i,h,f,i,f,r,e (firefighter)*
- c) *a,n,n,y,n (nanny)*
- d) *o,c,e,t,s,o,n,i,m (economist)*
- e) *u,p,m,l,e,b,r (plumber)*
- f) *a,w,r,e,i,t (waiter)*

Example 2.

Another type of tasks to revise vocabulary are «Definitions». Students prepare their own definitions at home, and then read them to their group mates in a lesson, who try to guess the word. On the topic of «Professions» 2nd year students offered the following definitions:

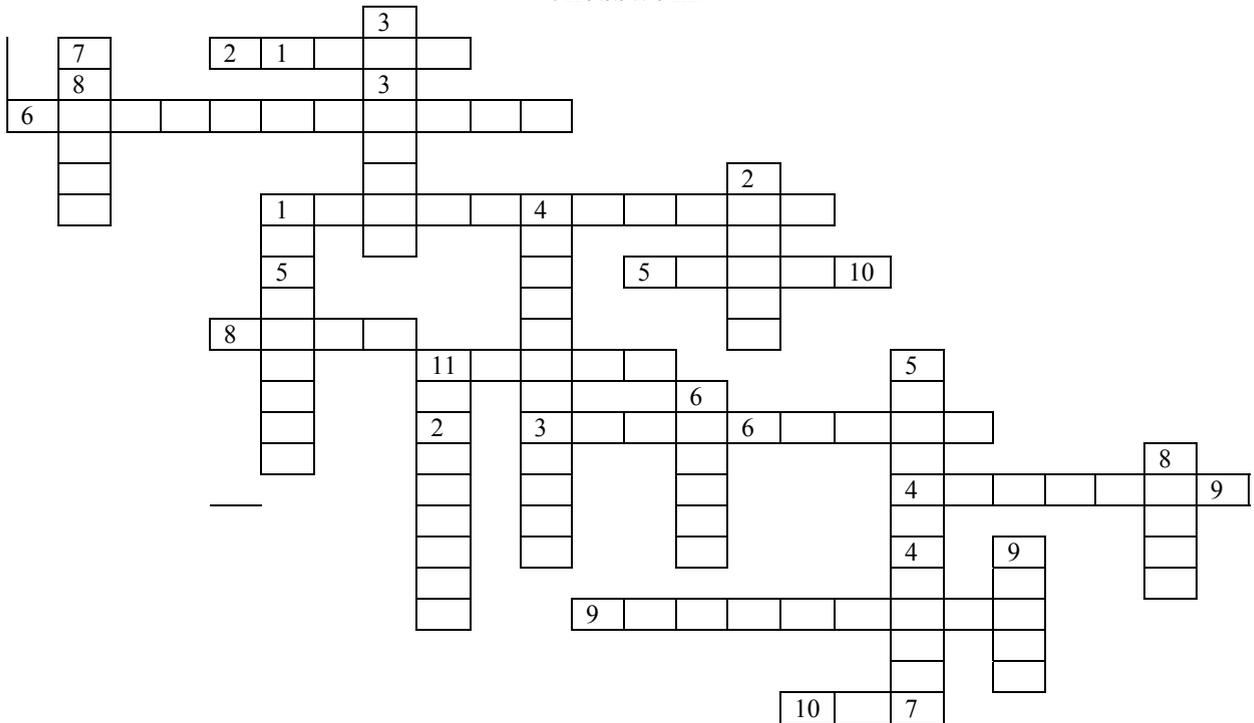
- a) *A person whose profession is to attend and treat sick people. (doctor)*
- b) *Someone who serves in the military forces of a country. (soldier)*
- c) *A person who finds out and writes about new events for radio and television. (journalist)*
- d) *A person whose job is making and selling medicines. (pharmacist)*
- e) *A person who cuts, washes and styles people's hair. (hairdresser)*
- f) *A person whose job is to help people with the law or talk for them in court. (lawyer)*
- g) *A person trained to look after sick animals. (veterinarian)*
- h) *A person who does work to improve bad social conditions and help people in need. (social worker)*
- i) *A person who welcomes or deals with people arriving at a hotel, at a place of business, visiting a doctor. (receptionist)*
- j) *A person whose job is reading the news on the radio and television. (announcer)*

- k) A person who owns a travel agency or works there and whose business is to arrange travels. (travel agent)
- l) A person whose job is mending or pulling out bad teeth. (dentist)
- m) A person whose job is making bread or cakes to sell. (baker)
- n) A person who teaches as a profession. (teacher)

Example 3.

To remember the vocabulary on the topic «Work and Jobs» as an independent creative task one of the 2nd year students made a crossword puzzle.

CROSSWORD



KEY WORD:

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
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DOWN

- 1. This person works at home (cooks meals, cleans rooms). (housewife)
- 2. This person works as a cashier in a bank. (teller)
- 3. This person repairs cars. (mechanic)
- 4. This person deals with enquiries and reservations. (receptionist)
- 5. Situation when people have no work. (unemployment)
- 6. It is money for work, which is given every month. (salary)
- 7. This person works on a ship. (sailor)
- 8. It is money for work, which is given every week. (wages)
- 9. This person works in a mine. (miner)
- 11. This person designs buildings and houses. (designer)

ACROSS

- 1. This person works with hair. (hairdresser)

2. This person makes bread, cakes, etc. (baker)
3. Orderly, works according to the plan. (organized)
4. This person brings letters to people. (postman)
5. This person drives a plane. (pilot)
6. This person extinguishes fire. (firefighter)
8. Clean and tidy, not dirty. (neat)
9. This person catches fish. (fisherman)
10. This person treats animals. (vet)
11. This person acts in films. (actor)

Keyword: occupation

Example 4.

During the study of the topic «Education» 2 year students were asked to prepare lessons on various subjects and act as teachers. Below is a summary of the physical culture lesson plan, prepared and carried out by pre-intermediate level students. Spelling and punctuation are fully remained.

«Dear children!

I'm your new teacher of physical training. My name is Vladimir, my surname is Belov. And this is my assistant Mark.

The plan for our lesson:

- 1) history of basketball
- 2) history of hockey
- 3) physical minute
- 4) asking questions
- 5) giving marks

To begin with, I'll tell you about sports, namely about basketball. Then my assistant will tell you about hockey. Well, basketball is a sports team game with a ball. The basketball players throw the ball into the basket which is at the height of 3.05 metres. Basketball comes from the USA. It appeared in the programme of Olympic Games firstly in 1936. The team consists of 5 players. It is a very interesting and hard game! I like this game!!!

Please, Mark.....

The term itself - "hockey" was formed from the English «hockey», either from the Old French «hoquet», meaning "shepherd's crook with a hook."

Modern hockey as a sports game originated in Canada. The climate and the nature of Canada create good conditions for this game. The first description of hockey (although, as you know, on the grass) refers to 1330 was described hockey, in its primitive form, in the ancient Italian manuscript. But two centuries later, hockey, and it was on the ice, appeared in the Netherlands.

And now I'd like to tell you some interesting facts about hockey.

- * The first puck for playing hockey had a square shape.
- * Ice hockey players are superstitious people. For example, they believe that changing lace of the skates after each period brings them good luck.
- * Hockey Puck is made of vulcanized rubber and weighs 200 g.
- * On the 18th of May 2008 for the first time in 15 years Russia won the world hockey championship.

Let's turn to gymnastics.

Have worked, children

And now we all on gymnastics!

We now all will rise,

We will have a rest on a halt

Turn left, turn right,

Bend, rise.

*Hands up and hands sideways
 And on place jump and jump.
 And now we run skipping,
 Good of you, children!
 We slow down the step.
 And on place stop this way!
 And now we will sit down together
 And continue our work!*

And now I'd like to ask you some questions:

- 1) *At what height is the basket in basketball?*
- 2) *What interesting facts about hockey do you remember?*
- 3) *What is my assistant's name?*
- 4) *How many people play basketball in one team?*
- 5) *Did you like our lesson? »*

The use of games in teaching a foreign language gives opportunities to build and develop the skills of independent creative activity (Konisheva, 2008). Game activates the desire of students to contact with each other, creating conditions of equality in the speech partnership, breaks down traditional barriers between a teacher and a student (Rabunskiy, 2010). The game gives you the opportunity to overcome the barrier of timid uncertainty, because everyone gets a role and should be an active partner in communication. In the games, students master the elements of communication such as the ability to start a conversation, to support it, to interrupt the interlocutor, to agree with his or her opinion or deny it, the ability to specifically listen to the interlocutor, to ask clarifying questions, and so on. Language games help to learn various aspects of the language and are divided into phonetic, lexical, grammatical and stylistic.

The main purpose of phonetic games is setting (correction) of pronunciation, training in the pronunciation of sounds in the words and phrases, working out the intonation. They are used on a regular basis, mostly at the initial stage of learning a foreign language as illustrations and exercises for practicing the most difficult pronunciation of sounds, intonation. As we move forward phonetic games are implemented at the level of words, sentences, tongue twisters, poems, songs.

As practice shows, the use of tongue twisters in the process of learning a foreign language has not only positive effect on the pronunciation, but also helps to expand vocabulary of students. Tongue twisters can also serve as a brief introduction to some lexical subject, or to be an example to any grammatical rule. Here are some examples of commonly used tongue twisters in class on general English language with 1-year students.

1. *Each Easter Eddie eats eighty Easter eggs.*
2. *The batter with the butter is the batter that is better.*
3. *There is a sandwich on the sand which was sent by a sane witch.*
4. *If two witches would watch two watches, which witch would watch which watch?*
5. *What noise annoys an oyster most? A noisy noise annoys an oyster most.*

Lexical games are focused on learning lexical material and are intended to help the learners to acquire and expand vocabulary, to illustrate the work and the use of words in everyday situations.

Grammar games are designed to provide students the ability to apply the knowledge of grammar practically and strengthen their mental activity aimed at the use of grammatical constructions in natural communicative situations.

Stylistic games are aimed to teach students to distinguish between formal and informal styles of communication, as well as to use each of them in different situations.

For all the variety of subjects in games lies essentially the same content - human activities and attitudes of people in the society. An essential feature of the psychological role-playing game is its non-utilitarian nature of the process of determining the attractiveness of the game. Participation in it is accompanied by diverse and strong emotions associated with the breakdown of their own forces, self-affirmation. Role-playing game is based on interpersonal relationships, which are realized in the process of communication (Unt, 2011).

Here is an example of a role-playing game, which was carried out with students of 1st year (pre-intermediate level) after studying the topic «Personal Identification».

Man Overboard!

You have just escaped from your sinking ship and are afloat in a lifeboat. Unfortunately, there are too many of you and the lifeboat is also sinking. Two people must be sacrificed. The two chosen will have to jump overboard.

Play in groups of six to ten. You will each be given a role-card. Spend a few minutes thinking about what you will say and then tell the others in the group who you are and why you should stay in the lifeboat. Be imaginative and give lots of reasons. After each person has spoken, you can ask each other questions.

When you have done this, you must each write on a piece of paper the two people you think should jump overboard. Then find out who must be sacrificed.

a) You are one of the sailors from the ship. Only you know how to navigate safely to dryland.

b) You are a doctor. Some of the people in the lifeboat are already sick and it is possible the lifeboat will only reach the deserted island.

c) You are an ex-soldier and survival expert. It is possible that the lifeboat will only reach the deserted island.

d) You are a multi-millionaire. If you survive, you will share your wealth with the other survivors.

e) You are a young child. You don't take up much space in the lifeboat. All the other people in the boat have lived full lives – yours hasn't even started.

f) You are the President of the United States of America. If you die, Americans will think you were assassinated by an enemy government and your country will possibly declare war.

g) You are a world-famous pop star. You give pleasure to millions of people. If you die, it would deprive people throughout the world of the pleasure you give them.

h) You are a scientist. You have discovered a cure for cancer. Only you know the formula of the medicine.

i) You are an amateur sailor. You have no confidence in the crew members in your lifeboat. You believe the crew of the ship was responsible for it sinking.

Using this role-playing game in the classroom allows you to create and develop the students' skills and the ability to find the necessary information, transform it, to produce plans on the basis of it and decisions in non-stereotypical situations. The game helps to ensure mutual communication of all participants and motivating speaking activity.

Specificity of a foreign language is that on the one hand, the mastery of a foreign language speaking activity is a very difficult mental process that requires the students to mobilize their attention, memory, determination, will, and on the other hand, the process of mastering a foreign language stimulates further knowledge of the world and spiritual values of the peoples of other countries, their psychology and lifestyle. No object requires a constant, systematic work of learners, as a foreign language, the mastery of which requires not only knowledge but skills.

Thus, we can conclude that the independent creative activity of students plays an important role in learning a foreign language, and the task of the teacher becomes exactly the skills required to implement the ideas of the students.

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