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PROFESSIONALLY ORIENTED EXTENSIVE READING AS A TYPE OF IT STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT WORK

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ABSTRACT

The present work aims to analyse and describe ways of integrating extensive reading into the high educational process. The article proves the necessity of providing the independent work of students who study Information Technologies in tertiary education as it is a vital and motivating way for students to accumulate professional information, acquire new knowledge, gain valuable experience, and upgrade 21st-century skills. To meet the demands of the global labour market, IT students need to understand documentation and scientific literature. They should be ready to participate in conferences, webinars, masterclasses or meetings, to collaborate and communicate in a team via speaking English as it is the most widespread language in the professional environment. Since IT students are fascinated by their speciality, we suggest reading professional literature as one of the ways of obtaining information and increasing the level of professional competence. The article shows the advantages of extensive reading of professional literature and offers examples of websites with level and content-appropriate texts. The authors confirm the positive and beneficial results of extensive reading as part of IT students` independent work.

Introduction.

Nowadays higher education constantly turns to the latest approaches in the organization and preparation of classes in foreign languages for specific purposes. Due to the informatization of all layers of social life and educational space, in particular, opportunities for improving the organization and control of independent work of students are opening up.

In pedagogy, the students' independent work is traditionally defined as an educational and cognitive activity performed by a learner under the indirect management of a teacher. The successful organization of such work makes possible the development of active and creative learning, stimulates students' desire to accumulate information, gain new knowledge, boost experience, and improve various types of skills.

The specialists' ability to achieve a certain qualification level adequate to their needs is determined by individual involvement in the independent process of mastering new skills, acquiring significant competencies, and the presence of an internal need for self-education becomes a condition for the realization of their potential following the modern requirements of the professional community.

Modern society needs specialists who have high-quality knowledge in their profession, and who are eager to upgrade their skills independently as they guarantee their successful professional development. Their formation largely depends on how quickly the specialists can receive professionally oriented information.

One of the essential aspects of IT education for professional English language students is orientated to motivate productive activities. In today's conditions, such as COVID and war, priorities are given to mastering ways of independent learning of language and culture, which is due to the impossibility of face-to-face study, a shortage of hours and an intensive program, and the material must be learned without loss of quality.

Currently, more and more attention is paid to the issue of learning a foreign language, for instance, English, as it is a language of professional interaction. The ability to speak, read and write in English can be defined as crucial for IT specialists as they should always be aware of recent news in the tech for some reasons:

- English is the de facto language of most documentation (instructions, foreign projects) and developer interactions (Lazorenko, Krasnenko, 2019);
- professional literature, scientific articles are written in English, and often by the time they have been translated, the information has already become outdated, and IT professionals should always follow the latest trends and concepts;
- scientific conferences, online reports, master classes, and webinars are mainly conducted in English;
- communication with international partners, customers, and clients is in English as well (leading companies are based in the USA: Google, Microsoft, ORACLE, Apple, etc.);
- to pass the certification in the sphere of information technology and to get certificates from such companies as CISCO, and Microsoft is possible only if you are fluent in English

With the shift to a communicative approach in teaching English as a foreign language, the focus has been made more on Speaking and Listening skills and Reading and Writing received minimal attention. Nevertheless, reading in ESP courses is more than an essential skill as articles, blogs, messenger channels etc. are powerful sources of new information. It is crucial in the tech field as IT is constantly developing. On top of that, the amount of information that IT professionals should process is increasing every day. Hence, one of the main tasks of teachers nowadays is to provide students with the necessary skills to work with different types of texts according to their purposes.

In our opinion, one of the essential types of independent work is extensive reading as it is an integral part of students' language training. It allows students to familiarise themselves with the lexical, grammatical and stylistic peculiarities of English. Moreover, reading original IT literature is perceived as the principal source of obtaining the latest information, which contributes to upgrading the professional level.

The purpose of the scientific paper is to analyse the theoretical experience of famous scientists teaching professional English, to emphasise the importance and advantages of professionally oriented extensive reading according to our teaching practice, and to provide websites with authentic scientific texts for IT students according to their proficiency level.

Presenting the main material.

Reading is an area of ESP that continues to attract attention in the realms of pedagogy and research, despite perceptions that it is not as challenging to acquire or use as other skills (Paltridge, 2012). Scientists differentiate several types of reading, among them, are intensive and extensive, which are in the sphere of our scientific interest. Intensive reading is used to teach or practice specific

reading strategies or skills. It is commonly used in every ESL class to work on grammar structures, to enrich students' vocabulary range, etc. Extensive reading involves reading large quantities of material, directly and fluently. It may include reading simply for pleasure or reading technical, scientific or professional material because there is an element of enjoyment. The text should be relatively easy and level-appropriate, otherwise searching for unknown words frequently, students may lose concentration and the overall idea or might lose interest.

Extensive reading is stated to improve reading fluency (Huffman, 2014; McLean&Rouault, 2017; Nakanishi, 2015), vocabulary acquisition (Suk, 2016; Webb&Chang, 2015) and better writing skills (Mermelstein, 2015; Park, 2016). In addition, students learn to work with different styles, genres and, what is more important, they enjoy reading.

What students should read is one more issue for ESP teachers. "Textbooks have long been a topic of interest, particularly since this is the genre most commonly faced by students" (Myers, 1992). Another scholar Love (1993) supports this point of view claiming that "the introductory textbooks within a particular academic discipline will exhibit both a schematic structure and a set of lexico-grammatic patterns which reflect and, to a certain extend, construct the epistemology of the discipline". Hyland (1999) stated that "reading textbooks does not introduce students to the full range of conventions within which the socio-cultural system of the discipline is encoded". Pedagogically speaking, said Myers (1992), the solution is this: "If we, as teachers, keep several genres in mind, instead of focusing on textbooks as the genre that students first encounter, we may be able to help students respond more easily, and more critically, to the texts, they encounter later in their careers."

An essential point is the authenticity of selected reading materials. It should correspond to the students' proficiency level not only in a foreign language, but also in the speciality being studied. For instance, the text materials for first-year students should be significantly different from the texts of senior students. A systematic approach to the selection of texts for reading, thus, will not only increase the level of mastery of a foreign language and lead to the mastery of independent reading skills but will also strengthen professional orientation.

We support Myers' ideas and for our program, we have chosen the articles to suggest to our IT students. Having analysed a considerable amount of sources, we have made a list of sites where students can find various articles for their extensive reading.

- https://www.sciencedaily.com/

This website is best known for showcasing the latest top science news stories in the physical sciences and technology from the world's leading universities and research organizations.

- https://www.techopedia.com/

Techopedia is a source for not only IT enthusiasts, but also for IT professionals. It provides insights and gives inspiration. Its aim is to help IT admirers to understand technology better. Students can find various articles about artificial intelligence, cloud computing, data management, networking, and cybersecurity.

- http://www.usingenglish.com/comprehension/

Selection of texts by levels: Beginner, Intermediate, Advanced. After reading, students can complete the tasks on the website to check their understanding and see the answers. Many texts are based on tasks for the most popular exams - Cambridge ESOL, TOEFL, IELTS, etc.

- http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/

There are currently 3,237 news-based lessons on the site, and this number is constantly growing. Teachers can choose news marked "easier" or "harder" - depending on their students' level. Each adapted text is accompanied by an audio recording and exercises. All tasks are designed so that the student constantly refers to the original text. As a result of this work, the student will automatically learn ready-made lexical and grammatical structures. In addition, the author provides links to news sources for more experienced readers.

- http://www.imsdb.com/

This resource provides the scripts of many Hollywood films. Students can combine reading with watching, print out the text and highlight new words and expressions, as well as unfamiliar grammatical constructions that they would like to discuss with the teacher.

- http://www.esldesk.com/reading/esl-reader

ESL Reader is a very useful tool for any reader. You can copy a fragment of any text and paste it into the window of this program. It will turn each word into a clickable link - and this will provide the opportunity to see the word's meaning in any dictionary (you can choose them from the list).

Extensive reading can be as well used as a springboard for the development of soft skills like creativity, critical thinking, and problem-solving which are so crucial nowadays with the immense scope of information that students deal with every day.

Alma Flor Ada and F. Isabel Campoy (2017) in their paper describe four phases which may be used as a follow-up or final part of the extensive reading:

1. Descriptive phase: the initial stage where students learn what the text says. Appropriate questions might be: What happened? Where, when, and how did it happen? Who did it? Why? i.e. the usual reading comprehension questions

2. Personal Interpretive Phase: Once the information has been presented, students are encouraged to weigh it against their own experiences, feelings, and emotions. It helps to understand that true learning occurs only when the information received is analyzed. Questions appropriate to this second phase might be: Do you know of (or have you seen, felt, experienced) something like this? Have you ever (done, felt, thought, wanted) something similar? How is what you saw (did) different from what happened in the story? What would you have done (said, thought)? How did you feel after reading that? Did you like it? Dislike it? Did it worry you? Made you happy?

3. Critical Phase: Once the students have compared and contrasted what is presented in the reading with their personal experiences, they are ready to move on to critical analysis, to the level of generalised reflection. The questions asked at this level: Is what happened valid? Always? Is it always necessary? Does it benefit everyone alike? Does everyone accept it? Are there any alternatives? What do they depend on? Would people of different cultures (class, sex) have acted differently? How? Why?

4. Creative phase: The dialogue at this phase aims to help the students discover aspects of their lives that they can improve and encourage them to make decisions with that purpose in mind.

This approach can be applied for an extensive reading technique whether you teach a general course or for specific purposes, just adapting questions to the reading material.

Another group of researchers (Nurul Puspita, Umar Alfaruq A. Hasyim, Suhono) described the implementation of a book club discussion of an extensive reading program in writing class. The key element of this program is a reading log, which consists of the title, vocabulary, summary, and recommendation. It was stated that book club not only improved writing skills but also arose interest in the subject, and improved creativity and imagination.

Ultimately, relying on the experience of researchers and scientists, we have implemented a project-based activity, which comprises extensive reading, follow-up discussion and summary writing.

Conclusions.

To provide students with necessary XXI century skills (i.e. soft skills) and to enable them successfully to compete in the international labour market, teachers need to implement independent work as it increases the role of students and develops learner autonomy. The quality of students' independent work is affected by information and communication technologies, the teacher's psychological and pedagogical readiness to create the necessary conditions for productive performance, the implementation of mentoring and counselling functions, and students' self-organization skills. The constantly increasing demand for high-level English competencies requires students to enhance their proficiency and acquire knowledge when reading professionally oriented texts. We encourage our IT students to read extensively, as it develops general knowledge, enhances general language competence, consolidates vocabulary growth, and improves writing. As practice shows, the educational opportunities of independent reading can be fully realised, only if the students are interested in the proposed text and the problems raised in the article correspond to their professional interests. Taking into account the fact that selected texts should ensure informativeness, expressiveness of the main idea, its purpose, and the goal of professionally meaningful reading, we suggest a list of websites where IT students can find various articles for their extensive reading. In our teaching practice, we implement a project-based activity which comprises extensive reading, follow-up discussion and summary writing.

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