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Abstract

The development of information and communication technologies and the status of English as the language of international communication, the professional mastery of which provides opportunities for effective activity and successful communication at the international level, have greatly influenced the use of innovative information technologies and the organization of the educational process of mastering English as a foreign language. With the use of software, students master all aspects of the language: phonetic, grammatical, lexical, and communicative, which allows them to more effectively and quickly learn the language material and acquire speech skills and abilities. The article presents an analysis of the research on various aspects of using software in learning English. According to an expert survey, positive aspects, principles, and opportunities of using software in learning English, as well as recommendations for their selection, are identified.

Keywords

Foreign language – English – Educational software – Multimedia technology – Online courses

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Introduction

Learning a foreign language becomes a requirement of time, which predetermines the necessity to improve the methods of teaching a foreign language¹. The use of ICT has become the norm for most universities worldwide². The policy of education systems in language learning focuses not only on encouraging young people to learn as many languages as possible but also on developing skills that enable them to be mobile, informed, and communicative. Thus, the use of multimedia in language teaching is certainly relevant³.

The process of teaching a foreign language is based on communication, which is the goal of learning, as well as the main means and the condition for achieving it. Communication in a foreign language permeates the whole learning process. It is difficult to imagine the modern model of learning without the use of the latest learning technologies, commonly used and multimedia⁴. The analysis of scientific literature and scientific works devoted to the problems of using multimedia technologies in foreign language teaching showed that these problems are very topical in all countries, including English-speaking⁵. However, the study of the problems of the English training of higher education institutions students confirms the fact that the English training of students of non-linguistic higher education institutions does not meet the modern requirements⁶. The contemporary learning environment is called computer-oriented because this concept covers any aspect of the use of computers in learning⁷. There is a direction in computer-assisted language learning (CALL)⁸, which is "defined as an approach to language teaching where a computer is an auxiliary tool for presenting and evaluating materials"⁹.

¹ L. P. Muhammad; S. G. Persiyanova; B. I. Karadzhev y V. N. Levina, "Teaching foreign students to develop a monologic discourse based on cataphoric means", *Amazonia investiga*, num 8 Vol: 23 (2019): 17-26 y S. Y. Zalutskaya, "Technologies of managing students' creative activities: differentiated instruction", *Espacios*, Vol: 40 num 17 (2019).

² L. L. Alekseeva y D. I. Belov, "Painting teaching and artistic development of schoolchildren", *Espacios*, Vol: 39 num 21 (2018).

³ A. N. Al-Kaisi; A. L. Arkhangelskaya; M. A. Bragina; B. A. Bulgarova y O. I. Rudenko-Morgun, "Teaching the Russian Language in Polyconfectional Classes with the Use of Integrating Tools", *European Journal of Science and Theology*, Vol: 14 num 1 (2018): 47-61 y M. S. Logachev y G. S. Zhukova, "Problems of Professional Education in Russia: Quality Monitoring of Educational Programs", *Revista Inclusiones*, num 7 (2012): 263-274.

⁴ B. B. Andresen, *Multimedia v obrazovanii. Informatsionnye tekhnologii v obrazovanii: spetsializirovannyi uchebnyi kurs. 3-e izd., ispr. i dop* (Moscow: Drofa, 2007).

⁵ R. Blake, "The use of technology for second language distance learning", *The Modern Language Journal*, num 93s1 (2009): 822-835; J. Bown, "Locus of learning and affective strategy use: Two factors affecting success in self-instructed language learning", *Foreign Language Annals*, num 394 (2006): 640-659; C. Chapelle, "The spread of computer assisted language learning", *Language Teaching*, num 431 (2010): 66-74 y L. L. Alekseeva y D. I. Belov, "Painting teaching and artistic development of schoolchildren", *Espacios*, Vol: 39 num 21 (2018). Available at: <http://www.revistaespacios.com/a18v39n21/18392102.html>

⁶ E. I. Vorobeva, *Informatizatsiya inoyazychnogo obrazovaniya: osnovnye napravleniya i perspektivy: monografiya* (Arkhangelsk: Pomorskii universitet, 2011).

⁷ O. N. Vertinskaya, *Informatsionno-kommunikatsionnye tekhnologii i obshchestvo: monografiya* (Moscow, 2007).

⁸ S. Bingham y E. Larson, "Using CALL As The Major Element Of Study For A University English Class In Japan", *The JALT CALL Journal*, Vol: 2 num 3 (2006): 39-52.

⁹ J. Jones, "CALL and the responsibilities of teachers and administrators", *ELT Journal*, num 554 (2001): 360-367.

Software learning tools (SLT) represent one of the aspects of applying multimedia technology in a computer-based learning environment. Here, researchers include software and methodological complexes, e-learning courses and electronic aids, electronic atlases, knowledge bases and encyclopedias, training software complexes, etc., which are all means of direct use in the learning process¹⁰.

Experts believe that SLT should match the system of psychological, didactic, and methodological requirements¹¹. Thus, for example, during generalization lessons or lessons on covered materials, didactic capabilities are integrated, as well as methodological options for the use of SLT for different didactic purposes. It can be new educational information, material for performing independent work or checking students' knowledge, or illustration to already known material¹².

Scholars propose different approaches to SLT classification. E. Tezci names five types of SLT: 1) training; 2) tutoring; 3) problem training; 4) imitation modeling; 5) game¹³. F. Hamidi et al. distinguish the following types of SLT: 1) educational; 2) training programs; 3) simulation and modeling; 4) diagnostic and control; 5) instrumental; 6) integrated¹⁴.

The qualitative level of SLT in different subjects, their technical excellence, content quality, and pedagogical value are essential¹⁵.

In A.P. Ranneva's opinion, the efficiency of SLT implementation depends primarily on student feedback. No less important in the process of creating these software products is the account of psychological, pedagogical, and aesthetic requirements¹⁶. N. Stella describes such distinctive features of the pedagogical process involving SLT as individualization of the educational process, actualization of students' project (creative) work, reduction of the role of the teacher as a source of knowledge and increase of their role as an educator and mentor¹⁷. Besides the function of information transmission, SLT is used as a means of creating interactivity to provide learning with a natural flow, as an unlimited source of authentic materials, etc.¹⁸.

¹⁰ G. Conole; M. Dyke; M. Oliver y J. Seale "Mapping pedagogy and tools for effective learning design", *Computers and Education*, Vol: 431 num 2 (2004): 17-33 y S. Ghavifekr, "W.A.W. Rosdy. Teaching and learning with technology: Effectiveness of ICT integration in schools", *International Journal of Research in Education and Science IJRES*, num 12 (2015): 175-191.

¹¹ V. A. Krasilnikova, *Ispolzovanie informatsionnykh i kommunikatsionnykh tekhnologii v obrazovanii: uchebnoe posobie* (Moscow: Direkt-Media, 2013).

¹² A. V. Zubov y I. I. Zubova, *Metodika primeneniya informatsionnykh tekhnologii v obuchenii inostrannym yazykam: ucheb. posobie* (Moscow, 2009): 144.

¹³ E. Tezci, "Factors that influence preservice teachers' ICT usage in education", *European Journal of Teacher Education*, num 34 (2011): 483-499.

¹⁴ F. Hamidi; M. Meshkat; M. Rezaee y M. Jafari, "Information technology in education", *Procedia Computer Science*, num 3 (2011): 369-373.

¹⁵ M. Warschauer, "Invited commentary: New tools for teaching writing", *Language, Learning & Technology*, num 141 (2010): 3-8.

¹⁶ A. P. Ranneva y I. G. Panina, "Elektronnoe obuchenie v vysshem gumanitarnom obrazovanii", *European Social Science Journal*, Vol: 2 num 2 (2017): 118-125.

¹⁷ N. Stella y B. K. Madhu, "Impact of ICT on the Teaching and Learning Process", *Journal of Mobile Computing & Application*, Vol: 3 num 2 (2016): 01-07.

¹⁸ H. K. Sharma, "Role of ICT in Improving the Excellence of Education", *International Journal on Computer Science and Engineering IJCSE*, num 78 (2015): 78-81.

Researchers set the following requirements for SLT as a means of teaching: 1) the necessity to meet the same didactic requirements as the traditional teaching aids (scientific accuracy, systematic nature, consistency, etc.); 2) correspondence to the curriculum of the discipline at the university; 3) the function of diversity of forms and methods of teaching, creating conditions for increasing the thinking activity of a student; 4) clearness of the program for teachers and students and unambiguous perception of the information displayed on the monitor¹⁹.

Modern SLT require new approaches to education. It is not a traditional system plus a computer, it is a completely different learning process, which should provide the development of communicative, creative, and professional knowledge, as well as the necessity of self-improvement and constant self-education. Each SLT differs in its originality, but they are universal only with the complex implementation of new information technologies of learning. Considering their characteristics, didactic capabilities, and psychological justification of their use in foreign language learning, one can talk about improving the efficiency and quality of the learning process²⁰.

In general, according to researchers, the introduction of SLT in the educational process is characterized by a gradual increase in pace, changes in the quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the means, increase in the volume of information flows, changes in teaching technologies, transformation of relationships in the systems "teacher – student", "teacher – group of students", "student – group of students"²¹.

Despite a number of studies on the issues of SLT use in the educational space, the problems of SLT use in the study of English in higher education institutions have not been sufficiently explored.

The objective of this article is to reveal the holistic nature of the use of SLT in foreign language (English) classes in combination with the theoretical knowledge and practical implementation.

The hypothesis of the research: The use of SLT in learning English along with traditional methods of teaching allows providing more information capacity of the language material, increasing cognitive activity of students and their motivation through the emotional presentation of learning information and a high degree of visibility of educational material.

The results of the study demonstrate that the objective of the study has been achieved.

¹⁹ S. C. Young, "Integrating ICT into second language education in a vocational high school. Journal of Computers Assisted Learning, num 19 (2003): 447-461 y K. A. Bingimlas, "Barriers to the successful integration of ICT in teaching and learning environments: A review of literature", Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science and Technology Education, num 53 (2009): 235-245.

²⁰ H. Ulitsky, Language learner strategies with technology", Journal of Educational Computing Research, num 223 (2000): 285–322 y S. E. Springer, "Review Of The Teaching And Researching Computer Assisted Language Learning", Language Learning & Technology, Vol: 16 num 1 (2012): 39-42.

²¹ A. Kagaoan; G. Muya; C. Tibayan y N. Tenorio, "The Effect Of The Dynamic Education Intervention Program In The Fundamentals Of English Course", LPL Research Journal, Vol: 2 num 1 (2012): 1-14.

Methods

The following methods were used in the study:

- theoretical – analysis of scientific literature devoted to the theoretical aspects of SLT usage in English language learning;

- empirical – an expert survey method used to identify positive aspects, principles, and opportunities of using SLT in English language learning, as well as recommendations for the use of SLT, which are available and free on the Internet.

The online survey involved English teachers from Russian non-linguistic universities (34 people) with more than 12 years of teaching experience as experts.

Results

Considering the issue of using SLT in foreign language teaching, the experts highlighted the following positive aspects of their implementation (Table 1).

No	Positive aspects	%*
1	motivates learning, perhaps even more than audio and video materials	91%
2	allows for an individualized approach	85%
3	encourages students to develop their independence and stimulates the use of information that directly affects students' personal or professional life	82%
4	raises awareness of other languages and cultures	79%
5	strengthens linguistic competences due to the availability of different types of texts	76%
6	provides modern material that meets the interests and needs of students	71%
7	offers authentic and up-to-date material	68%

Note: based on the expert survey; * – the percentage of expert references

Table 1

Positive aspects of implementing SLT in English language teaching

The experts believed that the use of SLT in English lessons is implemented based on the following main principles (Table 2).

No	Principles of using SLT	%*
1	individualization (the opportunity to work with each student personally, considering their abilities, level of knowledge, skills, and competencies)	82%
2	differentiation (it is possible to select and offer students the necessary types of assignments of a certain complexity and quantity in a sequence that corresponds to their cognitive abilities, level of knowledge, and skills)	79%
3	intensification (the use of various means for presenting educational material and structuring it with wide involvement of interactive types and forms of work)	71%

Note: based on the expert survey; * – the percentage of expert references

Table 2

Principles of using SLT in English lessons

The experts highlighted the following possibilities of SLT implementation in English classes (Table 3).

No	Possibilities	Characteristics	%*
1	new lexical material training	includes the introduction of lexical material; training of new language units; control of vocabulary assimilation level	100%
2	grammar practice	is carried out due to the feedback between practical and theoretical material, as well as visualization of grammatical guides and tables, as well as the presence of explanatory microdialogues, which are aimed at solving and fixing certain grammatical rules and structures	94%
3	listening training	offers the opportunity to listen to a variety of phonograms of different complexity (sometimes in combination with video), with subsequent control of the understanding of what is heard	91%
4	pronunciation practice	consists of listening to an original audio fragment (dialogue, text), with or without text aid, and then reproducing the text with phrases through a microphone, recording, and comparing with the sample	85%

Note: based on the expert survey; * – the percentage of expert references

Table 3

Possibilities of using SLT in English classes

For independent work, according to the language level and individual characteristics of the student, the experts recommended using the following SLT, which are available and free on the Internet (Table 4).

No	Program	Characteristics	%	Rank
1	Language in Use 24/7	is based on Cambridge University Press textbooks. Three levels of the program correspond to the standards of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (levels A1/A2, B1/B2) – Beginner, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate	79%	1
2	QDictionary	uses the technology that allows to translate words and word combinations simply by hovering the mouse cursor. The dictionary database contains more than 50,000 words and phrases with the ability to add new words and make changes to existing ones	76%	2
3	FVords	contains tests, dictionaries to original, parallel texts, prompter mode, search, print, statistics, etc. Five approaches to studying the material: tournament, course, standard, book, and prompter. Course tasks are given in series, tournament tasks – by choice, in case of an error the "return" function is implemented. In the "prompter" mode there is a function of "voicing" the task	71%	3
4	EZ Memo Booster	effective vocabulary replenishment. It is offered to perform a specific amount of tasks with the studied words and phrases, for which the database is being updated	68%	4
5	Exerciser	offers different types of exercises in different variations – changing the form of words or sentences, substitution, finding errors, searching for matches, filling in gaps. Provides verification of fulfillment of tasks	64%	5-6
6	English with Words	allows to train knowledge of words on a certain topic and learn the correct pronunciation and spelling. Vocabulary on a certain topic includes a set of four exercises: listening and writing; translation of learned	64%	5-6

		words; improving the memorization of the word (spelling), when the user has a task to find a word in a set of letters; selection of a pair in the format "English – Russian" of studied words		
7	Live English	simulator of live communication in English – the practice of English in dialogue with artificial intelligence in two ways of communication: in writing, practicing vocabulary and correct spelling, and orally, practicing pronunciation and intonation constructions with the help of a microphone	59%	7
	Lingvomania	allows learning English in an interactive style. One can start at different levels, from Beginner to Advanced. The site includes several activities: learning new words; interacting with friends in English in special online-rooms; foreign quiz – answering questions faster than other users of the application online; learning holistic topics, which include examples of live dialogues with native speakers and exercises on applying grammatical constructions in dialogical texts	53%	8

Note: based on the expert survey; * – the percentage of expert references

Table 4

SLT for independent work in English language learning

Discussion

The analysis of experience with the implementation of SLT in English lessons shows that although teachers' interest in this issue has increased, as can be seen from the increase in the quantity and quality of materials of pedagogical experience with SLT implementation, the level of software used in the learning process is not sufficient. This is confirmed by a research conducted by O.V. Antselevich, according to which, only 22.8% of higher education institutions teachers use SLT partially and only 14% permanently. The main reasons for the low range of SLT use are the lack of elementary knowledge of working with SLT (26.3%), the lack of SLT (15.8%), and the lack of software and methodological materials for computerized learning (21.1%)²².

However, according to the interviewed experts, the implementation of SLT in English language classes is: 1) "an effective auxiliary technical visual and auditory tool"; 2) "an auxiliary tool for students' learning and cognitive activity"; 3) "a tool to boost students' motivation and desire to learn English"; 4) "a quick and effective tool to assess and control the knowledge, skills, and abilities of students"; 5) "a tool to increase interactive and communicative activity". Yet the experts stressed that English learning often involves a language barrier problem – students are shy about speaking out of fear of making a mistake and even in a positive psychological environment, they may feel uncomfortable. The use of SLT creates a less stressful environment. According to one respondent, "each student individually has the opportunity to record their speech, listen to it, and compare to the authentic one. This type of work removes psychological difficulties in speaking and develops speaking skills and phonetic skills. Therefore, it is possible to assert without exaggeration that in English lessons software is rather useful".

²² O. V. Antselevich, "Ispolzovanie informatsionnykh tekhnologii v prepodavanii inostrannykh yazykov v vyssei shkole", *Sovremennaya nauka: aktualnye problemy teorii i praktiki*, num 3 (2017): 36-39.

The Internet provides a great opportunity for learning English. Usually, the easiest way to use the Internet in foreign language learning is to use it as a source of additional materials. Yet the fullest possibilities of the Internet are discovered when using it in a classroom: it can be special training exercises for distance language learning, electronic communication with foreign partners, creative work of entire teams when creating interactive magazines, etc. The Internet gives students access to information, including listening, reading, and writing. Students can work in a real-time communication environment or choose tools that will allow them to create and check a message or log in to a forum and chat with one or more interlocutors.

There are also many websites on the Internet that provide online English language courses (Table 5).

№	Site	Characteristics
1	English for Beginners. Begin English (http://begin-english.ru/)	Provides the opportunity to learn the language from scratch. Here one can find interesting videos with subtitles, online radio (BBC World and others), programs (to increase vocabulary, study irregular verbs, etc.), translations of songs, phrasebook, books for reading and learning the language, which can be downloaded for free. Available lessons are packaged by load levels. After finishing a certain topic, there is an opportunity to test one's knowledge (answers to the tasks are attached). The "Articles" section provides not only detailed grammar explanations but also the use of certain words. The "Words" section contains a list of words with pictures and audio (provides the opportunity to listen to how to pronounce words correctly). It is free and does not require registration.
2	English with pleasure (http://www.delightenglish.ru/)	Allows to learn English on one's own, starting from scratch. Here one can find various audiobooks, video courses, films with subtitles, and books. Lessons are based on the Oxford language learning program. The main focus is on correct pronunciation. The lessons are structured in such a way that the student can not only read the explanation for each of the proposed topics, but also watch the video lesson. The disadvantage is that the tasks are of the same type (translation of sentences, filling the gaps with the words according to the transcription). Lessons are structured into levels (beginner, intermediate). It is offered to learn the spoken language by listening to dialogues (dialogues are acted out by native speakers). There are complex tests to check the knowledge acquired (each test includes three aspects: grammar, reading, and listening). The main disadvantage is the lack of live communication. Explanation of grammar is in Russian (the site is in Russian as well).
3	Learning English (http://www.study-languages-online.com/ru/en/)	It is a complex online course of learning English, designed for both adults and children. For those wishing to learn the language, there is a large resource of different online lessons, ranging from the simplest (for children) to the most difficult for those learning at the advanced levels. Besides, each topic is divided into levels, according to

		<p>which, tasks for the development of lexical, grammar, and phonetic skills, as well as for the development of listening skills are compiled. A lot of listening comprehension exercises are offered. After performing the exercise, one can test oneself and see the result. After that one can go through the exercise again.</p> <p>The site also contains an audio dictionary for listening to lexical units and reproducing their pronunciation, as well as a phrasebook with the most used phrases. The only drawback is the lack of live communication.</p> <p>The online course is free and does not require registration.</p>
4	<p>Online-school of English EnglishDom (https://www.englishdom.com)</p>	<p>The training material is divided into blocks, topics, subtopics, and corresponding exercises. In addition, the program is structured into four levels: Beginner, Elementary, Pre-Intermediate, Intermediate. The material is divided into blocks of grammar, vocabulary, and spoken English. Each lesson includes a training video with explanations of the topic. Moving to the next lesson is possible provided that the full study and completion of the previous one.</p> <p>It is possible to learn individually on Skype and in groups on Skype, as well as interactively (right on the site) at a convenient for learning time.</p> <p>Requires registration.</p>
5	<p>English lessons (http://english-for-free.com)</p>	<p>The material is divided into 50 lessons of spoken English and there is an opportunity to develop listening skills. Provides access to British radio broadcasting.</p> <p>The drawback of the course is the same form of assignment for each lesson – sentences in English and their translation. There are no other forms of work. However, the advantage is that when selecting a foreign word, an audio playback of that lexical unit is given. These tasks do not involve a detailed study of grammar and a significant amount of vocabulary or development of writing skills. The resource is fully aimed at studying elementary colloquial language necessary for simple communication.</p> <p>The service is free and does not require registration.</p>

Table 5
Characteristics of online courses for learning English

Nowadays, mastery of information technologies is becoming one of the same qualities as the ability to read and write. The introduction of new forms of teaching raises the educational process to a new level. The use of ICT in foreign language learning improves the efficiency of building all aspects of foreign language communicative competence.

It is impossible to solve the problems of studying foreign languages at a university without software. The main and decisive advantage of software over all other means of learning is the possibility of creating an educational language environment similar in authenticity and intensity of language communication to real communication, which could not be achieved by those means of learning that were previously used. The next important point in favor of using software in the study of this discipline in higher education can be considered a constructively conditioned individualized nature of learning, which is especially important in the presence of students with a different initial level of language skills, degrees of motivation and formed skills, and psychophysiological characteristics.

SLT allow to create conditions of educational activity and implement them in various training exercises of situational character that promote more rational activity of the teacher at a certain stage of the educational process and prove to be an effective and efficient way of intensification of the educational process. They enrich the learning process because they have significant linguistic and didactic potential, compensate the absence of a natural foreign-language environment, and, at the same time, allow avoiding negative psychological states inherent in situations of direct intercultural communication. SLT are used both in classroom and independent work.

Conclusions

The results of the study confirmed the hypothesis that the use of software in learning English along with traditional methods of teaching allows to provide more information intensity of language material, increase the cognitive activity of students, and strengthen motivation through the emotional presentation of learning information and a high degree of visibility of educational material.

There are also some problems and disadvantages related to the use of SLT. They include the lack of a standardized list of software to use in the learning process and the absence of computer-oriented scientific and methodological support. In this regard, there is a necessity to develop normative documentation, considering the latest electronic learning tools.

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