

Self-study Specificities in Teaching Medical English in Quarantine Conditions

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ABSTRACT

At present time due to COVID-19 pandemic the most part of Uzbekistan high schools started distance form of teaching, in particularly a foreign language (mostly English) in the first courses with great using of self-study principles.. The article is focused on the first experience of the distance learning based on self-study principles discipline "Medical English" of the 1st course students of Pediatrics faculty in the Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute under the quarantine conditions due to COVID-19 pandemic. The aim of the present study is to check the assumption that in teaching the Medical English language, in particular in distance learning conditions, such pedagogical strategies as tests and situation tasks contribute to learner self-study skills development and help work out techniques for assessing learner self-study. In this context, the article foregrounds self-study as a part of distance learning and highlights the importance of developing self-study skills via innovative pedagogical technologies . This is followed by an experimental study. The findings of this study can be used as a reference when reflecting on teaching practices that develop learner self-study skills. Finally, the authors conclude with pedagogical methods relevant for teaching self-study skills.

Keywords

self-study, distance learning, pandemic, medical school, English language, situation task

Introduction

Learning English by students became quite a fashionable trend 20 years ago in the Republic of Uzbekistan and it has been on its rise since. Many institutes all over the Republic offer the opportunity of second language learning, particularly English although in the capital city, Tashkent, there are institutes providing also French or German languages. However, these are usually lingual institutes and they use language immersion as their main teaching method. Other non-lingual institutes, technical or medical ones, offer the possibility of second language learning with the help of different foreign methods. Such classes are usually held once or twice in a week. But what in fact is self-study in the distance form of learning? What do the students do during off-line English lesson in medical institute such as Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute? How motivating should the lesson be? In the Republic of Uzbekistan many universities and institutes offer this possibility, some, particularly lingual ones, offer programmes only in English. However, these are just rare cases for medical ones. Most often high medical schools provide an English course for their students as basic curriculum

discipline once a week through telephone applications such as ZOOM, Telegram and Whats App.

Distance learning - means of getting a specialty at a distance from school at the house. One of the forms of distance learning there's an e-learning in which the teacher's communication and the student is by correspondence via mail, social networks, computer and telephone programme applications.

New computer programs and platforms have appeared, with the help of which distance education has received opportunities of closer communication between the teacher and students, getting certain special knowledge and control over its practical application. New modern educational programs are being developed aimed at spreading various forms of distance education in the world medical industry [1]. The use of modern electronic devices such as laptop, tablet, and mobile phone has allowed teacher-student communication face-to-face online, no matter how far away they are from each other. These possibilities have become us in the case of the spread of the pandemic COVID-19 around the world and the need to continue the educational process.

In accordance with the decisions and orders of the Special Republican Commission to fight against the Coronavirus, many high schools in Uzbekistan, including the Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute, since 1 April 2020 the first among medical universities in Uzbekistan has started distance learning for students using the latest technologies, computer programs and platforms such as Zoom and Moodle, where students and teachers could organize full-scale practical classes, credits, exams from the first days of introduction to the completion of COVID-19 quarantine.

The main problem was adapting general principles of self-education to distance learning practice.

The teacher was tasked with teaching and monitoring the application of self-study skills of medical students in English lessons during distance learning, with the use of tests and situation tasks.

The effectiveness of students' performance within the field of higher education is significantly determined by learner self-study. Fostering learner self-study's skills has received great interest from researches all around the world (Dam, 1995; Holec, 1980; Little, 1991). This issue is closely related to learner-centered methods (Benson, 2011). The methods interpret autonomous learners to possess the ability to control and take responsibility of their learning (Cotterall, 2000). Learners are viewed as active interpreters and processors of knowledge, which is based on their own interests and needs (Littlewood, 1996, Brown, 2006). Scientists argue that development of self-study is more efficient. They consider that being able to take responsibility for one's own learning implies intrinsic motivation, metacognitive skills, and awareness of the subject (Lewis & Reinders, 2008). The issue of assessing learner autonomy in learning foreign languages is also of great importance, though it has not been studied that widely. The education process itself is provided by teacher possesses not only a degree in teaching English but also pedagogical

Researches have approached self-study phenomenon from different perspectives. As a result, there exist various views on development of learners' self-study skills. While these points of view may differ from one another, they do share

technologies. For successful supply of the course in teaching Medical English to students with development of self-study skills, it is considered that teaching English as natural as native language. Moreover, also psychologists claim (Cai Y.) that it is good to start learning a foreign language because all the perceptions is stored in the same area of one's brain [2,36p.]. However each foreign speech has a different network of neurons, which consequently requires switching among individual networks. Therefore, as a proverb goes "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world". In addition to that, it has already been scientifically proven that professionals with knowledge and skills of English language and autonomic professional development actually has a strong potential to acquire almost an infinite number of new information, especially when second language learning is concerned. In according to psychological tests self-study principle learning improve cognitive activity at students in comparison to those, who do not. In socio-lingual sphere students that use self-study principle in learning English language have less barriers in professional and household communication.

The aim of the present study is to check the assumption that in teaching the Medical English language, in particular in distance learning conditions, such pedagogical strategies as tests and situation tasks contribute to learner self-study skills development and help work out techniques for assessing learner self-study. In this context, the article foregrounds self-study as a part of distance learning and highlights the importance of developing self-study skills via innovative pedagogical technologies. This is followed by an experimental study. The findings of this study can be used as a reference when reflecting on teaching practices that develop learner self-study skills. Finally, the authors conclude with pedagogical methods relevant for teaching self-study skills.

Literature Review

some underlying assumptions. Certain strategies and processes show that learner self-study can be developed in an institutional setting. They all view learner self-study as a learner's innate capacities (Benson, 2001; Errey & Schollaert, 2005; Esch,

2010). All of them describe the promotion of learner self-study skills as the provision of circumstances and contexts for language learners that will make the learners more likely to take charge of all or part of their language learning program. To clarify the theories on the promotion of learner self-study, Benson [3,p.152] promoted six different approaches: resource-based, technology-based, learner-based, classroom-based, curriculum-based, and teacher-based approaches. Resource-based and technology-based approaches refer mainly to out-of-class strategies. The four latter approaches consider the issue from within-a-classroom context. That is why they are essential to this study. Learner-based approaches, as Benson believes, show the relationship of learner training to learner development. Classroom based approaches, as Benson sees them, aim to promote learner autonomy by incorporating learners in the decision-making processes. Curriculum-based approaches, according to Benson, show that learner control is extended to the curricular level. Teacher-based approaches, in Benson's view, emphasize that learner autonomy takes into account teacher autonomy [4,p.32]. Littlewood (1996) offers a special framework for developing self-study skills in and through foreign language teaching. The offered framework, according to Littlewood (1996), demonstrates that self-study is a multidimensional capacity in two different ways. The first variant shows that self-study development consists of three domains: as communication (on a task level), as learning (on learning level), and personally (on a personal level). The second variant believes that self-study development in any of these three domains covers two obligatory components, namely, ability and willingness, which can further be subdivided into two components: ability into knowledge and skills, and willingness into motivation and confidence [5, p.427].

The framework offered by Dam (2011), is, in Benson's (2011) terms, a classroom-based approach to the development of learner self-study development . Dam (2011) pays special attention to the teacher's role in the development of learner self-study skills. The teacher should have students take over the responsibility of learning, i.e. planning, carrying out the plans, and evaluating

the outcome. Some researchers concentrated their work on the teacher and his or her role in learner self-study development[6,p.44]. For example, Powell (1988) argues that, while students are usually blamed for being heavily dependent on the teacher in their learning, teachers rely on students in their teaching as well, thinking that it is their job to teach and pass on information. In contrast, Powell (1988) points out that the role of the teacher is crucial in creating an atmosphere of trust and confidence, in which learners can exercise their independent judgement and pursue their interests[7,p.108].

Many researches relate learner self-study development with enhanced motivation. The relationship between the two seems quite obvious; by allowing students to set and act according to their own goals, they become intrinsically motivated to achieve their goals. This is the conclusion of Dickinson (1995), who states that there is a dynamic relationship between such concepts as intrinsic motivation and learner autonomy [8,p.164]. However, the direction of the connection has caused some debate. Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan (2002), for example, found that motivation may play an inhibiting or enabling role in the realization of learner self-study development: the connection between motivation and self-study development seems to be bidirectional. Thus, as Spratt et al. (2002) suggest, when facing resistance and avoidance on the students' behalf, rather than immediately pushing those students towards autonomy, the teacher should promote intrinsic motivation and devote time to activities that show the usefulness of language learning[9, p.245].

The research followed the scientists' point of view who analyzed the problem of learner self-study development and considered choice, goals, motivation, metacognition, support, and emotional climate to be the most important issues. From these, choice and support were chosen to be analyzed in this study. The authors of the study aim at verifying the supposition that pedagogical technologies in teaching foreign languages is a strategy that incorporates choice and support and contributes to learner self-study development.

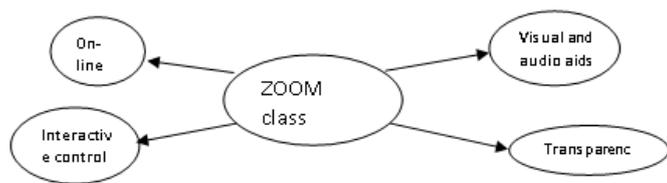


Figure 1. ZOOM class technologies

Methods

In the terms of different approaches, the authors of the article are concerned with the idea of introducing some creative elements (situation tasks) into the process of studying Medical English in distance learning process. Situation tasks were chosen due to the fact that situation task is one of the staples of English as a foreign language teaching. Situation tasks are used to allow students to practice speaking in a conversational situation, build confidence and fluency, assess progress, and put learning into action [10,p.125]. It was stated that the development of language performance occurred during sociocultural interactions in the learning process. Regarding the importance of speaking skills for professional communication, the authors made students communicate within the context of their future profession. After years of teaching experience, the researchers could affirm in this study that students’ creative abilities are an inherent part of distance learning process among the students with higher levels of motivation and the teacher’s contributions. This research pursues the idea that taking part in situation tasks can promote students’ autonomous learning, thus considering a situation task to be a strategy that is very important.

As we can see the most non-lingual high schools have their own programme in a foreign language with General English learning, not for specific preferences of students. Most English classes have less requirements and demands in lingual and communicative areas at students in non-lingual high schools. Some technical institutes include in these classes of English professional glossary, some invite foreign specialists for professional debates in English classes, which is obviously better since students motivation and interest to English classes are much higher. Moreover, the State Program of teaching English language in Uzbekistan published ESL

Instructions for non-lingual institutes based on British education reform trend (IELTS). Specifics future profession in teaching contains following suggestions: 1. involvement of professional glossary; 2. involvement interactive technologies; 3. Development social-lingual competence; 4. not use of native language; 5. use team and individual assignment

Table 1. Self-study skills in teacher-student strategy

Skills	Student	Teacher
Planning	take over the responsibility of learning	provide conditions and resources for students
	Student faced with the problem of studying English language for learning purposes, whether you are a teacher or a student, and then need to choose methods or ways of the upcoming work on its design and the concept of tasks.	As using well-known methods of organizing and teaching, the teachers provided students with the opportunity to conduct reflection in groups with structuring them in a certain semantic order, as required by the material
Evaluation	Students can send completed tasks to each other; participate in their discussion by writing comments and leaving feedback.	Teachers can develop a reward system for increase their interest and motivation to study

Experience shows that the ZOOM program in distance learning provides many opportunities for students to study themselves. Whether during a practical lesson or after teacher can answer

students' questions, to start the discussion in real time. The practical class starts with a control of students' presence at the class in the form of a test control or a situation problem on the topic.

The situation is a medical task, except the basic text, contains illustrative material. These could be photographs, schemes for assessing physical development of newborns and children of different ages, X-rays, electrocardiograms, results of laboratory and of instrumental research.

To solve a task that students receive via a link in Chat, a certain time is entered depending on the complexity of the task. A task can be solved in real time with the involvement of all students in the group, or it can be solved on its own. After self-study the student sends results to the Telegram channel.

Every lesson students solve from 1 to 3 tasks with an answer to a question from the teacher and 10 tests. All sent tasks and tests are checked by the instructor and an overall grade is given based on the student's active participation during the class.

Assignments are received by the student at the beginning, in the mid and at the end of the class, the instructor has the opportunity to control the student's constant presence in the class. If a student has registered, but hasn't completed any of these tasks, the teacher records his absence.

During the practical lesson, the teacher should have the opportunity to ask each student and get reply in real time, offer students to solve a situation problem and make a differential assessment, consider and to evaluate photos and diagrams of laboratory tests, X-rays, tomograms, electrocardiograms and etc. During such distance teaching, the teacher has the opportunity to determine the level of preparation for the knowledge of each student, and during a discussion or justification of answers to situation problems - to assess the level of English medical communication and self-education skills. Students can connect to ZOOM using computers, tablets, smartphones and other mobile devices. If a student does not have a video camera or microphone in the device, they can inform the instructor in real time at Chat about the attendance and send answers. Teachers can check the tasks and tests that are presented in the Telegram channel. In the next lesson, the teacher discusses

detected errors with students and organizes a group discussion to correct them.

Activities during English lessons. Besides Internet sources, there is a great number of teaching materials for students to use and apply on medical English learning. There are, for example, interactive technologies and computer suppliers that help intensify the educational process and motivate students to improve their English level. The students also like to see all different kinds of visuals: posters, flashcards, pictures, videos, PPT slides. The best is to combine printed materials with computers and audio-visual suppliers. The students like to be engaged in practical, fun activities and exercises on professional themes, and participate in making things like essays or presentations. There are several teaching methods which keep 1st course student's attention and concentration during distance learning. They are as follows: • method of monologue and conversation on-line; • method of role-plays on-line. Probably, the most effective method is the method of role games (role plays) because one remembers: 10% of what one has read, 20% of what one has heard, 30% of what one has seen, 50% of what one has heard and seen, 70% of what one has said, 90% of what one has done [11, p.1997]

Results

Distance learning was very positively received by students and accompanied by high and stable attendance.

Taking into account the constant and gradual extension of quarantine due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the organized form of distance learning with development of self-study skills was constantly changing and adapting to the current problems and, in our opinion, quite allows students to perform the training in a qualitative, timely and complete manner a plan for the Medical English discipline and prepare for the credits. During distance learning in the department "Foreign Languages" in the Tashkent Pediatric Medical Institute there were 70 groups in the 1st year at the same time. Thus, during the quarantine, the department organized distance learning with 700 students in real time according to the curriculum and class schedule. The help of such social networks as Telegram, What's App and

videoconference ZOOM, organized the distance learning. The social networks help to both teacher and students to be in contact for all time, controlling the processes of self-education. The videoconferences by application ZOOM, the English lessons for medical students were organized in creative way, by using audio and visual aids. Taking into account the time and space limitations, the department "Foreign Languages" in the TashPMI organized presentations and handouts in the MOODLE system. This system provides full control of students' activity and develops self-education skills in learning English lesson. The presentations on Power Point Program with photos and audio links on medical themes, for instance "Human body", "Skeletal system", "Cardiovascular system" improve reading and listening skills of Medical English language. The handouts in the form of homework such Worksheet, Tests, Crosswords and other grammar and lexical graphic organizers help students to increase motivation and improve writing skills. Speaking skills of English language as well as medical professional dialogues, monologues, retelling the text, debates, reports can be mastered by students during ZOOM videoconference.

English e-learning classroom activities often include role plays. The teacher tries to control the process during on-line English lesson and students respond to instructions requiring general knowledge of English language conversation and medicine. This approach can be used for practising and teaching various things and using it in students' activities is double effective. Moreover, it does not really take much for the students to prepare role plays-based English language activities because this approach requires not only basic language, but also professional medical themes: • Our Institute • Medical Education in GB • Anatomy • Physiology of human organism • Symptoms • Diagnostic tools • At the Chemist. Some of the interactive activities might be graphic organizers. For example, when talking about the body parts, teachers can use the fish bone for pointing shoulders, knees and toes. Or when learning diseases symptoms, students can work in brain storm style. For example, the teacher says: Angina Pectoris! And all the students tell the known symptoms of the given

disease. When they find out them, they discuss and sharing with own opinions in on-line mode.

Conclusion

The system of distance learning with self-study requires further development, improvement and technical support. There is no doubt about its effectiveness and usefulness in both normal and emergency conditions in higher education. In distance education, teachers improve their qualification, mastering new forms of teaching work, which fully meets the latest requirements in the organization of the educational process in a higher medical school.

The teaching of English to the 1 course students of medical institute will be more effective and motivated if it meets professional interests of each student and it is appropriate to his/her level. Moreover, it is successful if the teacher of English has an adequate knowledge of the target language, masters relevant methodology of teaching English at this stage of education and s/he is enthusiastic about teaching young people[12, p.183]. Then, it is also an asset for the student since s/he picks up the language in the same way as s/he acquires his/her native language.

Limitations and Future Studies

The limitations of the study are that only 1st year medical students in quarantine conditions participated in this research and that the differential implementation of the teaching medical English in the professional field of others specialties was not taken into account. Finally, we recommend to carry out similar research studies that include control groups so that the magnitude of the effect could be analyzed more accurately, which will ensure a higher degree of validity of the results.

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