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THE PROBLEM OF CREATING THE DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES FOR FOREIGN STUDENTS AT THE INITIAL STAGE OF STUDYING

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Abstract. The problems of creating and applying new teaching methods on the basis of distance learning courses are analyzed. The possibility of distance learning of Russian as a foreign language is considered. The structure of the course (namely, introductory phonetics and basic courses, courses of scientific style of speech for the students of economic and philological specialties), its aims and tasks are discussed. The necessity to use the model of blended learning that helps to master quickly communicative and professional skills is emphasized.

Key words: distance learning course, Russian (Ukrainian) for foreign students, initial stage of studying, introduction of phonetics, basic course.

ДО ПРОБЛЕМИ СТВОРЕННЯ ДИСТАНЦІЙНИХ КУРСІВ ДЛЯ СТУДЕНТІВ-ІНОЗЕМЦІВ ПОЧАТКОВОГО ЕТАПУ НАВЧАННЯ

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Анотація. Розглядаються актуальність створення дистанційного курсу «Російська мова для іноземців», а також переваги дистанційного навчання при вивченні російської мови в інонаціональній аудиторії; йдеться про дистанційні курси «Російська мова для іноземців» (увідно-фонетичний і базовий курси, курси з наукового стилю мовлення), про їх цілі та завдання.

Ключові слова: дистанційний курс, дистанційне навчання, російська (українська) мова як іноземна, початковий етап навчання, увідно-фонетичний курс, базовий курс.

К ПРОБЛЕМЕ СОЗДАНИЯ ДИСТАНЦИОННЫХ КУРСОВ ДЛЯ СТУДЕНТОВ-ИНОСТРАНЦЕВ НАЧАЛЬНОГО ЭТАПА ОБУЧЕНИЯ

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Аннотация. Рассматриваются актуальность создания дистанционного курса «Русский язык для иностранцев», а также преимущества дистанционного обучения при изучении русского языка в инонациональной аудитории; говорится о дистанционных курсах «Русский язык для иностранцев» (вводно-фонетический и базовый курсы, курсы по научному стилю речи), об их целях и задачах.

Ключевые слова: дистанционный курс, дистанционное обучение, русский (украинский) язык как иностранный, начальный этап обучения, вводно-фонетический курс, базовый курс.

Introduction

The modern information technologies have entered our lives firmly and solidly that affected to the full extent the process of foreign language learning. It has become reflected in the design-

ing of new methods of teaching any languages. Recently a lot of attention has been paid to the question of development and implementation of computer technologies in the process of learning such languages as English, for instance. We consider it necessary to develop and implement

such technologies in the process of teaching Russian or Ukrainian as foreign languages.

Analysis of Publications

The theoretic and methodological basis of this article is created by the works in the field of computer science and pedagogics that explore different processes, methods and means of using computer technologies to teach foreign languages (E. Azimov [2], A. Bashmakov [3], M. Bovtenko [4], A. Bogomolov [5], A. Gartsov [6], E. Polat [7]).

A. Gartsov wrote: «By its nature, methodology of teaching languages, like no other science, is interested in using multimedia and interactive properties of computer technologies, since these qualities allow the most basic principles of didactics to be realized to the fullest extent: visibility, accessibility, feasibility, individualization, consciousness, activity. The conducted scientific analysis shows that new information technologies create conditions for their full implementation, changing radically the entire educational process» [1].

Purpose and Tasks

Despite the scientists' great interest to this subject and the big number of existing works we should mention the lack of special information needed for distance learning of Russian and Ukrainian as a foreign language. This proceeds from the fact that the spheres of teaching Russian or Ukrainian as a foreign language are not provided sufficiently with contemporary computer didactic materials which can intensify learning activities and transfer students to the completely new level. There is an evident deficiency of teaching materials in the form of electronic books, which can be used as an additional resource for the students' independent work, can be found on the Internet and allow to perform adequate learning activity while the students are distanced from each other and the teacher.

The Necessity of Distance Learning Courses Creation and Implementation

In this respect the development of distance learning courses is of great interest nowadays, because distance learning of the Russian and Ukrainian languages has the following features:

1. Flexibility. The students who study in the system of such distance learning can work when

it is convenient for them, where it is convenient for them, they can use the appropriate speed, and they can study as much as each of them needs personally to master Russian or Ukrainian. The training platform 'Moodle' meets requirements of the contemporary learning process due to its flexible possibilities.

2. Communicativeness. The distance learning of Russian as a foreign language is a form of training where the cooperation between a teacher and students, as well as the cooperation between students help to develop communicative competence of the students outside the language environment.

3. The multimedia teaching materials allow creating more favorable conditions to improve students' intercultural competence and the quality of various types of speech activities, particularly reading and listening.

4. Forum and Chat. They give a possibility to the students to develop speech skills and experience, necessary for writing and oral communication.

5. A specific quality control of learning. Such distantly organized control forms as tests and examinations are used. The analysis of results of students' performance permits to estimate the students' efforts, as well as difficulties they encounter in the process of assimilating the language material and mastering speech skills, to analyze their mistakes and results. The teacher can always alter the training material and improve the course contents if needed.

Distant learning meets the requirements of the modern life due to such advantages of this type of education as efficacy, flexibility, modularity and parallelism.

The process of foreign language learning at the initial stage of education should always correspond to the communicative needs of the foreign students who come to Ukraine to receive higher education. This concerns not only the educational and professional spheres of communication, but also culturological and social ones. Judging by the practical work with the foreign students at the initial stage of education, the usage of computer technologies during the Russian (Ukrainian) language lessons intensifies drastically the learning process. Recently the teachers of the Department of Philology at Kharkiv National Automobile and Highway University have

created appropriate materials and use them actively in the interactive presentations Smart Board and a complex of lexico-grammatical presentations, created for such a special discipline as «Russian (Ukrainian) as a Foreign Language» and called «School of Cases».

At the moment higher education institutions of Ukraine are elaborating and introducing actively various distance courses. In our opinion, the use of the distant learning course at the initial stage of foreign language learning can considerably help both the teacher and the student. It is a common knowledge that at the present moment the students who take the preparatory course in Ukrainian higher education institutions:

- have a low or insufficient level of basic education;
- belong to different language groups of African and Asian countries and do not usually speak intermediary language.

Moreover, a serious problem for students in achieving good results during the first months of studying is the considerable time stretched arrival in the country and the unstable quantitative composition of the group.

During the studies at the preparatory faculty, every foreign student should pass all the stages of formation of communicative and professional competence within a short period of time, using the language of the country where he will continue further studies.

In our opinion, to secure better results in achieving professional competence in the non-native language we find it reasonable to use a model of blended learning which combines the use of a distance learning course with the traditional classroom activities. Surely, the undoubted advantage of the distance learning course is the fact that the students are not limited by the time frames and can choose by themselves the most convenient speed for studying.

The students who hardly understand a foreign language have the opportunity to listen to the explanation of the new grammar material once and again, to check their knowledge, to pronounce new words without the fear of making a mistake and to do training exercises as long as they need.

On the other hand, the distance learning course can help advanced students who easily learn the

language material. This unsupervised mastering the distance learning course, fulfilling creative tasks, participating in the discussion of various subjects on the forum encourage such students' motivation to learning and give them the opportunity to receive some new information.

Our department designed and certified a distance learning course, called «The Russian language for foreign students. Introduction into phonetics» and intended for 5 weeks of learning by foreign students at the initial stage of education. The process of learning phonetics of Russian as a foreign language can become much more effective if it is based on the combination of traditional teaching methods with the use of printed materials and modern informational technologies.

Professor A. Bogomolov says: «When you create a distance learning model of teaching Russian as a foreign language, you should base it on a specific educational language environment that includes specially developed teaching materials and a set of tools that makes it possible to compensate for the separation of participants of learning communication by distance, to organize their communication not only in the asynchronous, but also in synchronous modes, including that by voice» [8].

At the heart of the distance learning course there is an educational complex «Globe», an educational manual for listening comprehension and speaking «Talking workbook», as well as methodological information prepared specially for this distance learning course.

The introduction into phonetics includes 5 basic subjects:

1. Introduction of Russian phones.
2. Noun. Gender. Personal pronouns. Possessive pronouns.
3. Noun. Number. Possessive pronouns.
4. Verb. Present tense. Conjugations 1 and 2. Adjective. Gender. Number.
5. Accusative case of objective complement. Question WHAT? Final test.

Every topic includes:

- Audio presentation «Listen, repeat» which helps to develop and improve the phonic, auditive and motor memory (Figure 1.1.);
- Grammar tables which help to revise and solidify grammar knowledge (Figure 1.2.);



Fig. 1.1. Fragment of the «talking» text-book

Род имен существительных Таблица 1

♂ ОН	♀ ОНА	☐ ОНО
— стол_ -й музей -ь словарь	-а комната -я семья	-о окно -е море
папа дядя	тетрадь мать дочь	имя

Fig. 1.2. Gender of nouns

– Training work (training grammar exercises, educational texts with a complex of tasks, exercises on the text comprehension and on control of vocabulary). To develop these grammar exercises the authors of the distance course used a program shell «Hot Potatoes», because this product enables work with Cyrillic and other unconventional alphabets (Chinese, Arabic and others) (Figure 1.3.);

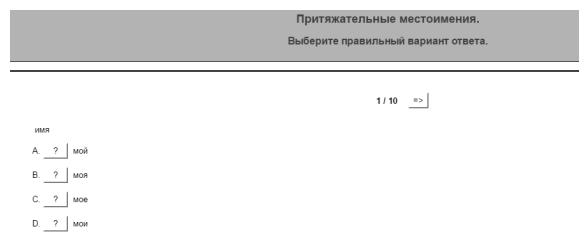


Fig. 1.3. Example of the exercise to teach genders of nouns

– Control work (tests on understanding of the material learnt). The work with crosswords and cartoon films helps to study a variety of subjects.

At the present moment the teachers of the Department of Philology are developing a basic distance learning course which includes 10 subjects. The duration of learning the course makes up 10 weeks. Apart from the materials used in the introduction of phonetics (Audio presentation «Listen, repeat», grammar tables, training exercises, control work), there have appeared some new tasks that allow students to come to a new level of communication, and some new educational tables which help them to understand the meaning of every phenomenon (Fig. 1.4). Viewing of selected fragments of an unadapted cartoon with «before viewing» and «after viewing» tasks designed for each fragment is suggested. In comparison with other educational media cartoons feature some peculiar agility as an advantage. This is explained by the fact that the space-time relations between the objects and scenes make the students think synthetically. While describing and narrating the student should not only know how to build correctly the separate sentences, but also pay a lot of attention to the inter phrase connections. It is important that the students can hear the Russian speech in authentic situations. The amplitude of phonic and auditive information facilitates content understanding; causes a desire to experience independent speech activity.



Fig. 1.4. Table of verbs to be used with accusative case

After viewing a short fragment of the unadapted cartoon the students have the opportunity to discuss the viewed material with friends on the forum. One can also discuss the topic or content of this cartoon with the teacher or other students.

We believe it possible to use computer technologies also when studying the scientific prose style. Up to date the teachers of the Department

of Philology of the Preparatory Faculty for foreign students at Kharkiv National Automobile and Highway University have created two distance learning courses for foreign students at the initial stage of education: «Russian. Scientific prose style: «Economic geography and Economics» and «Society and individual». These courses are designed for students of classical and economic profiles at the initial stage of studying at foreign students' departments who are taught the scientific prose style at the lessons of Russian. This course relies upon «The guide for the scientific prose style for foreign students at the initial stage of studying». The objectives of this course are to teach students:

- to read and understand texts related to their future profession;
- to master the skills of working with books and learning terminological vocabulary;
- to make notes in the classroom, to build statements logically and consistently;
- to understand, recognize and use properly scientific constructions;
- to compose questions and denominative plans to the texts.

The minimal structural element of the course is a subject-week. While learning the course the students read texts, do pre- and after-text tasks, participate in forums. At the end of every second week they have a test, and at the end of the course - the final examination.

Conclusion

In our opinion, the implementation of distance learning courses can help greatly to teach foreign students at the initial stage of education at Ukrainian high educational institutions, as well as to increase significantly intensity and efficacy of learning. To develop special forms and methods of teaching the scientific prose style it is necessary to decide how to bring training situations nearer to the real communication at all stages of studying, what methods are most effective to develop skills of speaking, writing, listening comprehension and reading, how to ensure the relations between various stages of learning Ukrainian or Russian as a foreign language and professional disciplines.

It should be pointed out that foreign students of the KhNAHU Preparatory faculty can use a multimedia distance learning course «Russian for foreign students» to solidify knowledge obtained at the lessons, starting with the first week of

their studies. In the described distance learning course «Russian for foreign students» the interactive strategies under the conditions of a remote contact were developed; the original decisions to test and to manage the automated process of knowledge and skills acquirement in a flexible way were suggested. When the student receives the grammar material and perform the tasks, he should show the results to the teacher.

Thus, the distance learning course «Russian for foreign students» designed by the teachers of the Philology Department, makes an opportunity to individualize the learning process, to adapt teaching materials to the students' needs and contribute to creation of a virtual educational environment.

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