

и аппарат управления познавательной деятельностью студентов, направленный на реализацию учебных целей. Таким образом, содержание индивидуализации процесса обучения заключается: – в определении целей и задач индивидуализированного обучения; – в выборе форм и методов его организации процесса обучения; – в выявлении закономерностей, противоречий, принципов, приемов и средств реализации процесса обучения; – в разработке инновационных технологий управления и совершенствования видов контроля. Внедрение в учебный процесс активных и интерактивных методов способствует индивидуализации образования и совершенствованию языковой подготовки иностранных студентов.

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Specifics of Contemporary Foreign Language Education in the Higher Institutions of the United States: Challenges and Opportunities

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Foreign languages teaching makes an integral part of the curriculum in higher institutions of the United States. While many big Universities require students to complete four semesters of a foreign language, many colleges and Universities require only two. Students can also take a placement test to demonstrate their FL proficiency if they would like to avoid this requirement. On the elementary level (Elementary I focuses on the basic introduction to the FL with the assumption that students never studied the language), there is no division between students majoring in a FL and those taking it to complete the requirement for another major. Therefore, a large disparity of levels and interests frequently presents a challenge for instructors. Another challenge is large number of students in a classroom (22-27 students), low motivation of students taking FL as a requirement and limited time allotted for language classes (some Universities offer five credit hours per week for elementary level, but most offer three).

In view of these challenges, instructors feel an increasing need to incorporate technological platforms, group work exercises and visual materials to make more efficient use of time and to increase students' attention and motivation. For example, grammar material can be graphically presented in Power Point presentations to support instructor's explanations and help students process material visually as well as aurally. Frequent practice of the newly explained rule in pairs while the instructor listens in and provides individual feedback proves essential for students' mastering of the new concepts. Grammar exercises can also be included in the Power Point presentation with blank spaces that students have to fill in pairs or independently. Answer keys appear following independent work for students to verify and correct their responses.

Additionally, American Council on Foreign Language Learning stresses the importance of teaching cultural awareness to language learners to prepare them to function "in a pluralistic American society and abroad" [1]. A process-based approach which "recognizes vast disparities in perceptions, value systems and worldviews" has been identified by Galeano and Torres as the most efficient contemporary method to introduce cultural components since it teaches students to recognize their own sets of cultural beliefs and to be able to compare them to the beliefs of the people speaking the target language. This approach does not claim to relay all possible information about a cultural group, but rather convey bits of information relevant to the topic introduced in classroom and focus on the understanding and appreciation of cultural differences. Galeano and Torres emphasize that this approach helps students understand "the link between cultural belief systems and cultural artifacts and language and culture" [4:71]. More traditional teaching of the culture in the classroom through four F's defined by Kramsch ("Food, folklore, festivals and facts") implies sharing artifacts, food and explaining traditions and holidays [5]. Furthermore, grammar concepts can be efficiently practiced in cultural context where usage of structures is demonstrated in combination with culture-specific objects of clothing, food, or other artifacts.

Images in the form of paintings, drawings, photos, as well as moving images, such as commercials, youtube videos of festivals or street life, video clips, etc. also provide an excellent tool of introducing students to culture of the target language. Corbett explains that images can be used to practice vocabulary and grammar structures in context, act as input into information-transfer activities and work as prompts for language production [3:140]. Images can also prove indispensable in serving non-language related purposes, such as exploration of “their underlying cultural significance” through analysis of culture-specific concepts and objects [2:34]. While academic videos accompanied by textbook exercises prove to be a valuable resource for stimulation of listening comprehension and communicative skills, authentic videos (movie episodes, conversation scenes from youtube, etc.) are also essential to reinforce comprehension skills.

Finally, among the techniques gaining popularity in American language classroom online companion web sites occupy a significant place since they are used to supplement traditional teaching methods. They provide a variety of valuable resources and enable more efficient use of time in classroom and at home. Online discussions, homework activities with instant feedback, additional grammar instruction material and recording software enabling students to practice and improve speaking and pronunciation skills can all be efficiently used to maximize learning potential.

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