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## **Organizing Students' Independent Work under the Guidance of a Foreign Language Teacher at the University**

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### **Abstract**

The article examines the actual problem of undergraduate students' poor proficiency in foreign languages at non-linguistic universities. The purpose of this article is to develop and to test a technology for organizing students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher of foreign language at a technical university, facilitating their perception of profession-oriented information. The study was based on the existing technology and the developed by us technology of organizing students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher in teaching English as a foreign language in the first year at a polytechnic university. The study involved two groups: the control group was engaged in the existing technology of organizing students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher, and the experimental group had classes on the developed by us technology of organizing students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher. As a result of the work carried out at the developed by us technology of organizing students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher which mandatory component is authentic foreign texts in specialties,

special profession-oriented tasks for simple common texts of a foreign language and controlling-measuring profession-oriented materials, it was revealed that the proposed profession-oriented technology of organizing students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher contributed to better proficiency and understanding of profession-oriented texts by students of technical specialties.

Keywords: foreign language, independent work under the guidance of a teacher, methodological guide, profession-oriented foreign language, specialists, technology of organizing independent work.

## **Organización del trabajo independiente de los estudiantes bajo la guía de un profesor de lenguas extranjeras en la universidad**

### Resumen

El artículo examina el problema real de la poca competencia de los estudiantes de pregrado en idiomas extranjeros en universidades no lingüísticas. El propósito de este artículo es desarrollar y probar una tecnología para organizar el trabajo independiente de los estudiantes bajo la guía de un profesor de idiomas extranjeros en una universidad técnica, facilitando su percepción de la información orientada a la profesión. El estudio se basó en la tecnología existente y la tecnología desarrollada por nosotros para organizar el trabajo independiente de los estudiantes bajo la guía de un maestro en la enseñanza del inglés como lengua extranjera en el primer año en una universidad politécnica. En el estudio participaron dos grupos: el grupo de control estaba involucrado en la tecnología existente de organizar el trabajo independiente de los estudiantes bajo la guía de un maestro, y el grupo experimental tenía clases sobre la tecnología desarrollada por nosotros para organizar el trabajo independiente de los estudiantes bajo la guía de un profesor. Como resultado del trabajo realizado en la tecnología desarrollada por nosotros para organizar el trabajo independiente de los estudiantes bajo la guía de un maestro, cuyo componente obligatorio son textos extranjeros auténticos en especialidades, tareas especiales orientadas a la profesión para textos comunes simples de un idioma extranjero y controlando la medición de materiales orientados a la profesión, se reveló que la tecnología orientada a la profesión propuesta de organizar el trabajo

independiente de los estudiantes bajo la guía de un maestro contribuyó a una mejor competencia y comprensión de los textos orientados a la profesión por parte de los estudiantes de especialidades técnicas.

Palabras clave: lengua extranjera, trabajo independiente bajo la guía de un maestro, guía metodológica, lengua extranjera orientada a la profesión, especialistas, tecnología de organización del trabajo independiente.

### **1. INTRODUCTION. LITERATURE STATE-OF-THE-ART**

In earlier studies carried out by B.G. Likhachev, V.P. Bespalko, M.V. Klarin, V.A. Stastenin who dealt with pedagogical organization and planning students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher (SIWT), various aspects of the problem of SIWT in the traditional didactic aspect were revealed. To obtain a detailed picture of the problem, we studied various approaches to SIWT organization by Russian scientists (A.G. Kiryushkina, P.I. Pidkasisty, G.K. Selevko and others), Kazakhstan scientists (D.A. Kaldiyarov, A.A. Kussainov, G.K. Akhmetova and others) and foreign scientists.

### **2. CONTRIBUTION TO THE LITERATURE**

The purpose of this study is theoretical justification and development of the technology to improve organization of students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher when studying a foreign language at a technical university.

Practical significance of the work is:

- in developing the technology to improve organization of students' independent work under the guidance of a foreign language teacher at a technical university.

Reliability and validity of the results obtained are ensured by the holistic approach to solving the problem:

- by methodological validity and consistency of the initial theoretical propositions; by the use of a set of methods that meet the goals and objectives of the study; by verification of the experimental work results; reproducibility and use of the results in the university practice.

### **3. METHODS**

To confirm the hypothesis put forward, we used a technology for organizing students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher (SIWT) that will help to highlight the students' professional orientation. Further,

we will provide an algorithm for implementation of pedagogical activity regarding a profession-oriented class of SIWT in the form of Figure 1.

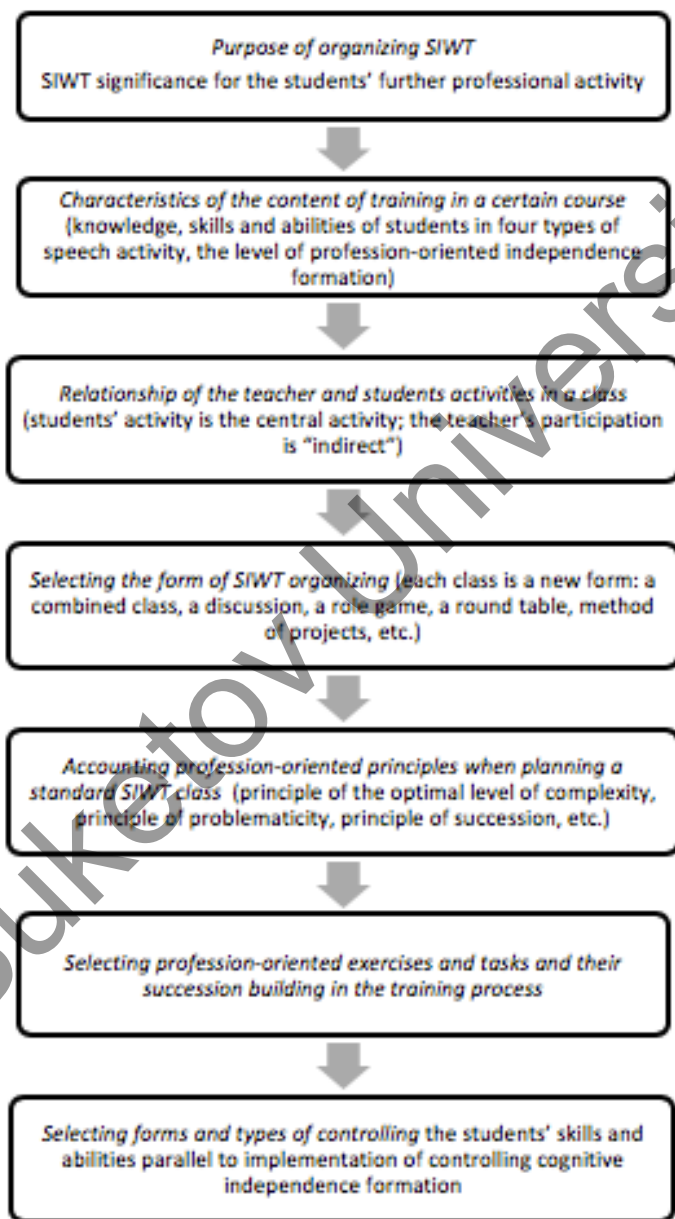


Figure 1: Algorithm of implementing pedagogical activity regarding

This algorithm has helped us in developing a tutorial that incorporates the principles of vocational education, and adapt it to the teaching of a foreign language in the first year of a technical university. To test the developed tutorial, we conducted a pedagogical experiment that lasted 2 academic terms, i.e. the first year of studying at Karaganda State Technical University.

The experiment took place in natural conditions of teaching the basic course of "Foreign Language" for the first year students of the university with full compliance with the objectives of the educational process and the requirements of the State Educational Standard of Higher Professional Education, the program "Foreign Language for Technical Universities".

For the purpose of comparative analysis of the results of control and experimental training, the following conditions were equalized:

- 1) the number of credits (3 credits);
- 2) the number of training classes (45 hours);
- 3) the number of SIWT (45 hours);
- 4) the number of students' independent work (90 hours);
- 5) the training duration (2 terms);
- 6) the time of working in a practical class and SIWT class (50 minutes each);
- 7) the number of students in the experimental and control groups (104 students in each group);
- 8) the conditions for the preliminary and final assessments (in the classroom). Thus, all the conditions of didactic training were equalized, with the exception of hypothetically planned ways of its improvement. The main variable component was conducting and the content of extra-curricular classes of SIWT: in the control group organization of extra-curricular SIWT was carried out according to the traditional method (based on the syllabus) adopted in the first year of the technical university using approved teaching aids and textbooks.

In the experimental group classes differed in the following parameters:

- organization and the content of the classroom SIWT (in the experimental group personality-oriented, profession-oriented approaches);
- students studied the strategies and methods of organizing SIWT using the developed methodological tutorial based on introducing profession-oriented texts in the process of conducting SIWT classes in the first year of technical university.

The second stage of the pedagogical experiment consisted in testing the tutorial on organizing students' independent work with a foreign language

teacher at a technical college on the basis of the profession-oriented approach.

We developed this tutorial on the basis of analyzing methodological literature, our own observations and practical results obtained by us with the help of questioning, testing and preliminary interviews with teachers and students.

We have identified the following stages of organizing and conducting a formative experiment based on the syllabus in the English language for the first-year students of the Faculty of Power Engineering, Automation and Telecommunications:

Stage 1: introductory (first 7 weeks of the 1st term), including the content of independent work of 1 credit according to the syllabus;

Stage 2: intermediate (8-15 weeks of the 1st term), including the content of independent work of 2 credits, respectively;

Stage 3: final (the 2nd term), corresponding to the content of the 3rd syllabus credit.

At the first stage of the formative experiment, grammatical themes were included in the content of the classroom SIWT: a noun: the category of number, gender, noun declination, a simple sentence; a verb: the category of a person, conjugation of verbs, mood; pronouns: personal, possessive, demonstrative, reflexive. In accordance with grammatical themes, lexical-grammatical exercises were developed including active and passive profession-oriented vocabulary. The developed tasks and exercises make a lexical-grammatical module focused directly on the professional vocabulary in the texts.

For the first stage, the tutorial included the following lexical topics: “Autobiography”, “Work of my friend/girlfriend”, “Professional foreign language today”, “Profession”; communicative situations: “Acquaintance”, “Applying for a job”, “Business lunch”, “Dress code”. In addition to these texts, students were offered to view and search for the necessary information, brochures, statistical data, guidebooks and other sources of actually existing information.

The first (introductory) stage of independent work of a student with a teacher at the language was a transitional stage between school and university courses. The need for an introductory stage was conditioned by the insufficient level of proficiency in a foreign language by school leavers, and, consequently, their inability to go straight to acquiring the university program.

During the first stage two intermediate assessments of knowledge were

conducted, the results of which helped us to make sure of the correctness of the hypothesis and the selected scope of work. The data are presented in Table 1.

Based on the data of the Table, we can make a preliminary conclusion about the correctness of the experiment that allows proceeding to stage 2. The purpose of the second stage was to improve, with the help of profession-oriented means of a foreign language, linguistic and communicative competences, sufficient for students' independent educational activities in obtaining, supplementing and using profession-oriented information in speech activity. At the second stage the following lexical and grammatical material was included in the content of independent work: grammatical topics: active and passive voice (tense forms and their use), adjective (adjective declension, degrees of adjective comparison), adverb (degrees of adverb comparison), participle (formation, use), word formation (nouns, adjectives, adverbs, verbs); lexical topics: "The daily routine", "First working day", "Forms of corporate leisure", "Study at the university", "Goods and services", "Favorite profession". In accordance with the lexical themes, authentic texts selected by the teacher and students were used. It should be noted that some texts were found by students independently at various foreign sites, the list of which was compiled by the teacher in advance.

Table 1: Results of intermediate assessments of knowledge (the 1<sup>st</sup> assessment is the preliminary assessment of the students' knowledge; the 2<sup>nd</sup> assessment is the intermediate assessment of the pedagogical experiment effectiveness).

Level of proficiency	1 assessment		2 assessment		% of changing (between the 1 and the 2 assessments)	
	Control group, (%)	Experimental group, (%)	Control group, (%)	Experimental group, (%)	Control group, (%)	Experimental group, (%)
High (90-100%)	9.6	8.7	9.6	8.7	0	0
Medium (50-89%)	52	54.8	54.8	61.5	+ 2.8	+6.7
Low (0-49%)	38.4	36.5	35.6	29.8	- 2.8	- 6.7

During the second stage two assessments were also conducted for monitoring. Intermediate control at this stage also included an examination test to check lexical and grammatical skills and work with texts of varying

complexity to check availability and use of profession-oriented reading strategies (2-5 texts depending on the level of preparedness of the student to use strategies of profession-oriented reading). The results of the second stage assessments are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2: Results of intermediate assessments of knowledge at the 2<sup>nd</sup> stage (3 assessment: the preliminary assessment of the students' knowledge; 4 assessment: the examination assessment of the pedagogical experiment effectiveness).**

Level of proficiency	3 assessment		4 assessment		% of changing (between the 1 and the 2 assessments)	
	Control group, (%)	Experimental group, (%)	Control group, (%)	Experimental group, (%)	Control group, (%)	Experimental group, (%)
High (90-100%)	9.7	8.9	11.5	13.5	+1.9	+4.8
Medium (50-89%)	55	62.3	57.7	69.2	+2.9	+7.7
Low (0-49%)	35.3	28.8	30.8	17.3	-4.8	-12.5

Based on the above data of Table 2, we can confirm the preliminary conclusion about the correctness of the experiment, which allows proceeding to stage 3.

At the third stage the following training material was included in the content of SIWT: grammar topics: a complex sentence; a subordinate sentence; infinitive; modal verbs; modal constructions; participle constructions; subjunctive, gerund; lexical topics: “Geographical position of Kazakhstan”; “The political system of Kazakhstan (+ a country to choose from)”; “The economic system of Kazakhstan (+ a country to choose from)”; “The geographical position of Kazakhstan (+ a country to choose from)”; as well as “The system of higher education in Kazakhstan and England”, “Cultural traditions of Kazakhstan and England”.

The third (final) stage included two assessments: a current and a final. The final control was based on conducting a final lexical-grammatical test consisting of 100 tasks to test the knowledge of profession-oriented vocabulary and grammatical material. In addition, for the final assessment of educational and cognitive activity of students in the SIWT conditions, a set of examination texts was prepared for reading with the use of profession-oriented strategies of introductory, searching, viewing, learning and combined types of reading. The results of these assessments are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Results of intermediate assessments of knowledge at the 3<sup>rd</sup> stage (5 assessment: the preliminary assessment of the students' knowledge; 6 assessment: the final examination assessment of the pedagogical experiment effectiveness).

Level of proficiency	5 assessment		6 assessment		% of changing (between the 1 and the 2 assessments)	
	Control group, (%)	Experimental group, (%)	Control group, (%)	Experimental group, (%)	Control group, (%)	Experimental group, (%)
High (90-100%)	12.2	14.4	16.4	16.4	+4.2	+2.0
Medium (50-89%)	62.4	73.5	74	83.6	+11.6	+10.1
Low (0-49%)	25.4	12.1	9.6	0	-15.8	-12.1

Thus, at each stage an unequivocally positive trend is traced: a high and medium level of proficiency in a foreign language rises, and a low one decreases.

Thus, our research and the results obtained suggest that the system of pedagogical conditions developed by us for profession-oriented classes of SIWT provides an improvement in organization of students' independent work with a teacher of technical specialties in a foreign language.

#### 4. RESEARCH RESULTS

For a visual comparison of the initial and final picture of knowledge available in the experimental and control groups, we built a graph (Figure 2) where you can trace the growth/ decline of the level of proficiency in a foreign language in the studied groups.

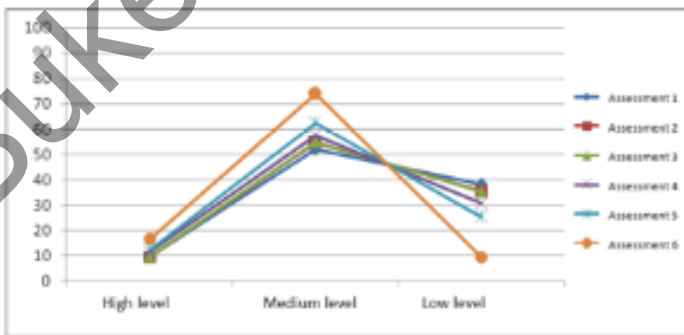


Figure 2: Comparative analysis of changing the level of knowledge in the control group.

Here we clearly see the dynamics of growing positive levels (from 9.6 %

to 16.4 % high level; from 52 % to 74 % medium level) and decreasing the negative level (from 38.4 % to 9.6 %).

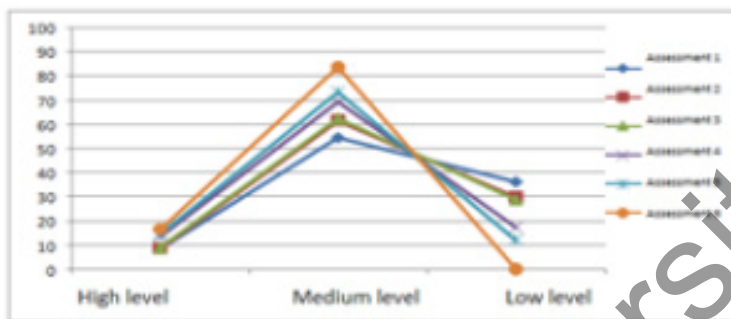


Figure 3: Comparative analysis of changing the level of knowledge in the experimental group.

In the graphic image (Figure 3) we also clearly see the dynamics of growing positive levels (from 8.7 % to 16.4 % HL, from 54.8 % to 83.6 % ML) and decreasing the negative level of knowledge (from 36.5 % to 0 %).

Thus, the technology developed by us for SIWT organization and its appropriation allowed proving the need of changing the existing system of SIWT organization. Our studies and results allow determining possible areas for further research: in accordance with the proposed concept to develop a program of profession-oriented linguistic training in non-linguistic trajectories of technical higher education institutions; to determine the functions and development of stages of forming profession-oriented independence of students. The results obtained also make us believe that the system of profession-oriented conditions developed by us provides for improved organization of foreign language SIWT classes at technical universities.

The results of the study confirmed the correctness of the hypothesis. This study and the results obtained do not pretend to be an exhaustive solution to all the aspects of the problem of improving organization of students' independent work under the guidance of a teacher, further theoretical and practical development of this problem can be continued in the following works dealing with studying the aspects of SIWT in the system of continuous learning of foreign languages, using information and communication technologies to improve the independent work of students under the guidance of a teacher when studying a foreign language in the first and subsequent years at non-linguistic universities.

## 5. DISCUSSION

In present day conditions language education has become one of the main state priorities of Kazakhstan. Linguistic training of specialists becomes an indispensable guarantee of employment and an indicator of competitiveness of a specialist in the global labor market. Today initiative and independent specialists are able to improve constantly their professional skills characterized by high sensitivity, curiosity, readiness to update quickly their knowledge and a wide range of skills (Selevko, 1998).

Based on the above-said and thanks to our own pedagogical experience, we revealed an omission in the system of SIWT organization and we came to the conclusion that one of the main tasks of linguistic education is to provide profession-oriented pedagogical conditions for organizing SIWT when learning a foreign language in junior years at a non-linguistic university in order to raise the level of vocational education and professional development of students. Possessing not only general knowledge, but also the ability to adapt simple professional skills to learning (Asanov et al., 2004), searching for material (Nasser-Abu Alhija, 2017), searching for key information, students have the opportunity to expand the boundaries of their professional development (Wurf, 2018), and improvement from the very first classes of SIWT (MacLellan, 2016), which later will greatly facilitate the process of their perception of profession-oriented texts (POT). It should be noted that in determining the essence of the concept of “independent work” (Ushakov, 2008), it is difficult to find a unity of opinions, as it is evidenced by the scientific and methodological literature. So, the concept of “independent work” is interpreted as:

- independent search for necessary information, acquisition of knowledge, its use for solving educational, scientific and professional tasks (Kiryushkina, n. d.);
- activity consisting of many elements: creative perception and understanding educational and professional material at a lecture (Liang, & Kelsen, 2018), preparation for classes, exams (Shahriari et al., 2018), tests, implementation of course and diploma *pa6op* (Bulyko, 2006);
- a variety of individual, group cognitive actions of students in the classroom (Hedges, 2017), or within extracurricular time without direct control, but under the indirect guidance of the teacher (Nilson, 1976);
- performing various tasks of the educational, research and self-educational nature (Slovar inostrannykh slov, 2012).

As it can be seen from the above definitions and interpretations, SIWT is considered, on the one hand, as an activity that stimulates independ-

ence, cognitive interest, as well as the basis for self-education, a stimulus for further professional activity, development and, on the other hand, as a system of pedagogical conditions that provides guidance for independent activities of students (Brinkworth et al., 2017).

In this study, we consider in detail SIWT, since the analysis of scientific and methodological literature allows concluding that there are ambiguous interpretations of the concept of SIWT in various sources, and there is no unambiguous perception of this definition. For example, S.B. Abdygapparova and S.R. Akhmetova, basing on the data of the Dictionary by S.I. Ozhegov (1988), define SIWT as one of the forms of educational work in the credit system of education that is carried out as classroom work, as joint classroom work of students and a teacher in the interactive mode (Abdygapparova et al., 2004).

The rules of organizing the educational process with the use of credit technology do not give a specific definition of SIWT, they only describe the nature of this type of activity (Hollander, 2018): consulting on homework, course projects and work, coursework and test papers, reports and other types of knowledge control (Shahriari et al., 2018).

In their monograph A.A. Kussainov A.A. Omirbayev and S.S. Karypykov consider the distribution of hours for independent work of students under the guidance of a teacher, its connection with seminars and practical exercises, but they do not focus on information about the goals and the content of this type of work (Kusainov et al., 2010). Some researchers distinguish external and internal aspects in the structure of the SIWT. The external aspect is conditioned by the pedagogical functions of the teacher, the internal aspect is conditioned by the students' cognitive functions.

Thus, the general concept of SIWT can be understood the method of educational activity, when a student is given assignments and recommendations, while the work is supervised by the teacher.

The current labor market requires professionally educated specialists, while universities, in the first year of foreign language studies, focus the students' attention on standard non-deployed general social topics (1st year) that do not allow experiencing a first year student professional orientation of a foreign language and realizing its difference from school program. Therefore, when the time comes for a profession-oriented foreign language (2nd year), the students doubt their own abilities (as they are afraid of the abundance of terms in the text and the lack of practical skills in working with POT), which leads to decreasing the academic performance and a desire to further improve profession-oriented foreign language, as well as to the

development of a phobia in front of the studied subject (Bronson, 2016). According to the scientists, the possibilities of organization and management in the classes of SIWT to increase the efficiency of perception of the professional aspect when learning a foreign language are great (Unt, 1990). The essence of SIWT is determined by the characteristics of professional-cognitive tasks, embodied in the specific content of all the studied general social topics. Naturally, in all the above views on SIWT, its main distinguishing feature is the performance of tasks by students with the direct participation of the teacher, which allows varying the work of any aspect and adjusting it to the existing professional and pedagogical needs (Mouratidis et al., 2017). This feature allows the teacher adjusting both the form of conducting SIWT and the content of the material being studied, which will allow introducing an element of professional orientation in studying the material approved by the syllabus and checking the quality of work of the developed technology. It characterizes this work as an organizational form of training.

In earlier studies conducted by B.G. Likhachev (1992), V.P. Bepalko (1989), M.V. Klarin (1989), V.A. Slastenin (1997), P.I. Pidkasisty (1980), who dealt with pedagogical organization and pedagogical planning of students' independent work with a teacher, there are revealed various aspects of the SIWT problem in the traditional didactic aspect. However, nowadays more attention should be paid to solving the problems of students' professional unpreparedness and fear of profession-oriented texts. In solving this problem, the developed by us technology of organizing SIWT as the students' classroom activity (taking into account not only didactic, but also motivational, procedural and technological aspects of the educational process) will contribute to improving the perception of profession-oriented information. To achieve the goal, it is necessary to solve the following research tasks:

- 1) to consider the essence of the concept of independent research work;
- 2) to develop a technology of organizing profession-oriented classes of SIWT when studying a foreign language at a technical college;
- 3) to test and to prove the effectiveness of the technology of organizing profession-oriented classes of SIWT when studying a foreign language at a technical college.

The hypothesis of the study is as follows: organization of SIWT for learning a foreign language with regard to the developed technology contributes to improving the quality of students' learning, increases the level of POT perception from the first classes on the subject "Profession-oriented

foreign language”, so this technology is aimed at developing perception skills of POT that is one of the main priorities of the modern technical educational paradigm.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

This study proves the existence of the problem of the first-year students unpreparedness in foreign language classes at a non-linguistic universities. To solve this problem, we have developed a new technology for organizing students’ independent work under the guidance of a teacher when teaching English in the first year at a non-linguistic (technical) university, which helps students from the first classes not to be afraid of professional orientation and technical features of the foreign language studied at the university. When testing our research, it was proved that the technology developed in the course of our studies contributes to improving the quality of students’ learning and facilitating their interaction with profession-oriented texts. The objective was to prove the need to change the existing technology of organizing SIWT when teaching a foreign language in the first year of a technical (non-language) university was definitely achieved.

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