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The necessity of ESL self-regulated strategies in remote education

The article deals with the problem of ESL self-regulated strategies in the context of remote education. The authors provide full overviews of various interpretations of the ESL self-regulated strategies concept, their advantages, and their impact on the learning process. The question of self-regulated strategies in the process of foreign language learning has been studied by foreign and Russian scientists. In the period of remote learning, self-regulated student learning has become more important than ever. Additionally, the relevance of the study is due to two more factors. Firstly, the amount of hours for students' independent work, as defined in the legislative and regulatory framework of the Republic of Kazakhstan in the education sector, has increased. Secondly, the research proves the need to familiarize students of the M. Kozybayev North Kazakhstan University with self-regulated strategies in studying a foreign language. The research was carried out based on M. Kozybayev North Kazakhstan University with as many as 134 people, the first-year and second-year students were involved in the survey. Research results proved that there is a strong necessity to make students familiar with more effective self-learning strategies focusing on how to learn some specific content.

Keywords: self-regulated strategies, ESL, remote education, university students, modern education, language learning styles, language learning strategies, questionnaire.

Introduction

When a student learns something new, he/she uses different methods of learning or strategies. There are a great number of them, but not all of them are effective or even appropriate for learning some specific content. We strongly believe that there is a necessity to make students familiar with more effective learning strategies focusing on how to learn some specific content. Such belief originates from the following ideas, which determine the relevance of the study:

– According to the State Compulsory Standard for Higher Education, in-class academic hours are followed by a certain number (amount) of individual students' work [1; 16]; in total, the teacher-student contact hours during lectures and practical classes (seminars) are accompanied by 2 hours of students' independent work for each contact hour. Thus, the number of students' individual work hours is large. In other words, a student learns a certain part of the academic load on his/her own.

– The modern curricular is built to teach the content of the subject by providing the theoretical material but not to train students on how to acquire it effectively. The key point is “what” students learn but not “how”. For promoting lifelong learning and boosting students learning, it is necessary to combine both “what” and “how” components, i.e., use the right learning strategy and background knowledge.

– Modern textbooks about educational learning technologies do not cover them properly, i.e., some omit effective ones, some do not provide adequate guidelines on how to use them, and some have limited applicability or are hardly beneficial. Moreover, teachers' training is not devoted to teaching students effective learning strategies.

– The information about learning strategies is scarce. Especially the ones that can be used by teachers without sacrificing too much class time. According to J. Dunlosky, “given the demands of day-to-day teaching, teachers do not have time to figure out which strategies are the best” [2; 13].

– The skills of independent work in the organization of educational activities laid down in the learning process will have a positive effect on further professional activity. According to I.L. Smagina, “despite the fact that the issues of organizing students' independent work are widely represented in the scientific literature, the issue of specific technologies and methods of organizing students' independent work remains poorly developed” [3; 4].

Therefore, the implementation of a competence-based approach in the modern educational process implies the training of an independent, active, creative specialist capable of self-development and self-education throughout life. When a student or a young scientist is aware of what recommendations and methods to use while working with new materials (learning it by heart, studying, identifying key ideas, summarizing, analyzing, or seeking new ideas or “insights”), it helps to:

- reduce frustration;
- increase understanding;
- hold focus;
- embed the materials more deeply;
- condense key ideas;
- prevent procrastination.

In this case, it becomes necessary to assist students in organizing their self-learning time and strategies in order to boost successful distance learning. Simple instructing students about any strategy will not solve the problem. Students need to be taught to use these strategies, to rebuild the already established way of working with new materials. Zimmerman argued that it is needed because the “initial optimism that teaching students various learning strategies would lead to improved self-regulated learning has cooled with mounting evidence that strategy use involves more than mere knowledge of a strategy” [4; 3]. This research is the starting point in a series of studies on students’ self-learning strategies and the implementation of courses or workshops to teach students to use these strategies.

Additionally, R.L. Oxford considers that “language learning styles and strategies are among the main factors that help determine how — and how well — the students learn a second or foreign language” [5; 271]. The scholar highlights differences between learning styles and strategies: “learning styles are the general approaches, global or analytic, auditory or visual, that students use in acquiring a new language or in learning any other subject ... these styles are the overall patterns that give general direction to learning behaviour” [5; 272]; whereas “learning strategies are specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques — such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task — used by students to enhance their own learning” [5; 272]. A learning style is a set of biologically and developmentally driven characteristics that make the same learning strategy great for some and terrible for others. When a learner deliberately chooses strategies that suit his or her learning style and a second language task, these strategies become useful tools for active, conscious, and purposeful self-regulation of learning. We focus on learning strategies, choosing the most universal, suitable for each student.

Thus, the goal of the research is to study how Kozybaev University students organize their self-learning time and what strategies they use to learn new materials in ESL classes during remote learning.

Experimental

For research practice, we conducted a survey among 134 students from Kozybaev University using anonymous Google forms. The research experiment took place among students of the first and second year. There were following questions:

- Is it difficult for you to start doing homework (learning new material)?
- If you find it difficult to start doing your homework, briefly explain why;
- How much time per day (on average) do you spend on independent study work (on your home task)?
- How often do you work independently on assignments that you need to complete during the semester?
- Have you ever postponed doing tasks that should be completed immediately?
- When preparing for practical classes, you use (choose from the given variants);
- Do you find it difficult to learn new materials by heart (for example, vocabulary for individual reading or new definitions);
- How do you learn new material? More than one answer is possible (choose from the given variants and write your own variant);
- How do you usually take lecture notes? More than one answer is possible (choose from the given variants and write your own variant);
- How do you usually check what you have learned?
- Would you like to take a short course on how to learn new materials effectively and how to organize your self-learning time properly?

These questions are closely related to the process of learning a foreign language, but they also have an impact on other subjects. The answers to the questions allow us to identify what styles and strategies students use to memorize new materials, take notes of lectures, organize study time, as well as to plan and perform independent work. Moreover, correct strategies help to build self-regulated learning in the remote format of education.

Results and Discussion

The results of the research showed that 40.3 % of students have difficulties with their homework, 41.8 % of students struggle to start homework, and only 17.9 % of students enjoy doing their homework. To the question “Why is it difficult for you to start doing your homework?” students gave the following answers (the most frequent responses are listed below):

- I am a procrastinator;
- I am too lazy;
- Procrastination;
- Because it is hard to stop watching or doing something else;
- Sometimes, tasks are simply very difficult;
- I do not have any motivation and desire to do the task;
- There are too many tasks in different subjects, and I do not know how to distribute time properly;
- My laziness does not let me do that;
- I do not know what to start with and whether I will be able to do as well as my A-groupmates;
- I think that I can spend a lot of time on work but not get the grade that I expect;

Considering the results and responses of the students, we can draw the first conclusions about the content of the program on learning strategies. Thus, the very first learning strategy to take note of is how to out-do procrastination. This strategy is rather broad-to-use and can be adapted by almost all students. The second point to be aware of is the difficulty of tasks, consequently, we are to show some effective strategies to manage such tasks and put away the cognitive block of “tasks’ difficulty”. Motivation is a great issue too. If a student is not motivated enough, it influences his or her academic performance. Thus, alongside overall learning strategies, there should be some motivational aspects to make the learning process more interesting or challenging for a student. Another thing is “time management”; it is important to show students how to plan their work effectively to balance study and personal life. The very last thing is the focus on the result rather than on the process, which can be the greatest block for students to start doing their home task. Consequently, we should take into consideration all these factors when preparing a program for ESL learning strategies.

As for the time students usually spend doing their homework, we have got the following results:

- 6 % — less than an hour;
- 16,4 % — an hour or so;
- 31,3 % — 1–2 hours;
- 17,9 % — 3 hours;
- 19,4 % — more than 3 hours;
- 1,5 % — about 7–8 hours a day;
- 1,5 % — it depends;
- 1,5 % — 1–4 hours;
- 1,5 % — always different depending on the subject. It can take up to 30 minutes, and sometimes all day;
- 1,5 % — it can be different, for some subjects, I permanently spend at least 3 or more hours, but some of the subjects take no more than half an hour;
- 1,5 % — it depends on which subjects I need to do and on a certain task.

The results show that the average time that students spend on their assignments per day varies from an hour to 3 hours for the majority of them. Additionally, there are 47,8 % of students who complete their home task in free time and only 26,9 % — as assignments arrive, 25,4 % — just before the class. Almost 62 % of students postponed the tasks that should have been completed immediately. It proves the need to familiarize students with such learning strategy as “time management”.

As for learning new materials, for instance, new words, definitions, rules which are crucial for some subjects and the second language acquisition as well, we received the following results (Figure 1).

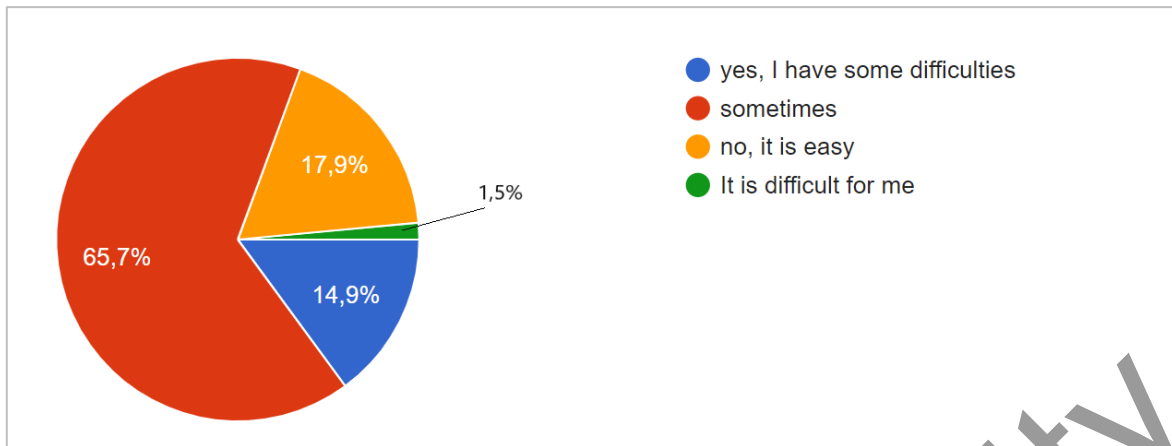


Figure 1. Answers to the question “Do you find it difficult to learn new materials by heart?”

Figure 2 shows what strategies students use to learn new material.

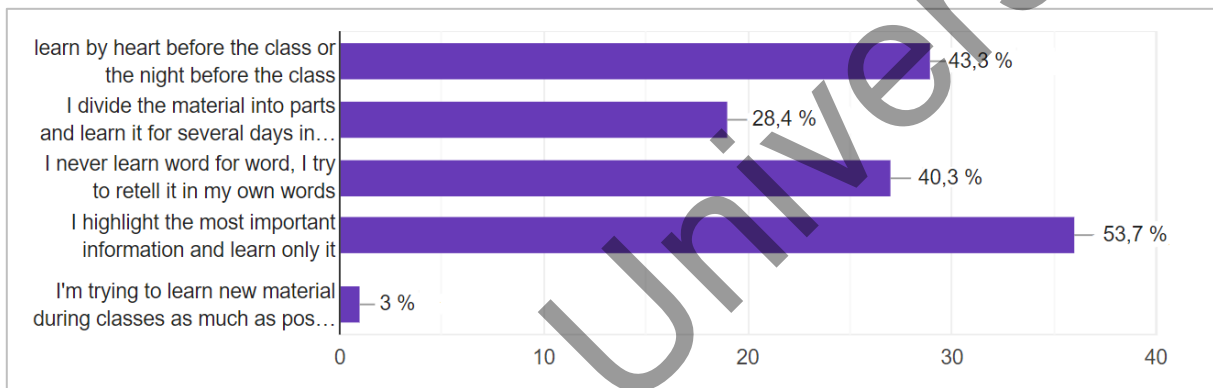


Figure 2. Answers to the question “How do you learn new material?” (several answers are possible)

From the results above, we see that about 20 % of students use effective strategies, while 65.7 % have difficulties and 43.3 % apply completely ineffective strategies in learning new materials. Such strategies will not be useful, the new materials will not be transferred to long-term memory, and students will not be able to use the materials later.

The next two most important questions focus on taking lecture notes and self-checking of the information learned. The results are presented in Figures 3 and 4.

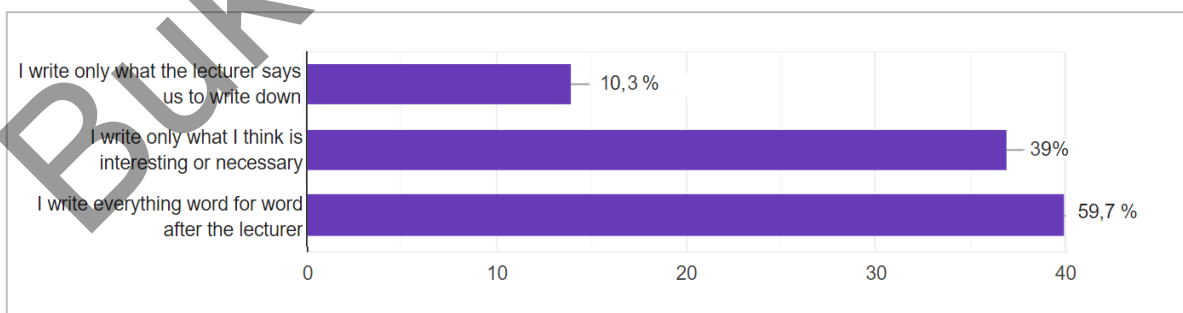


Figure 3. Ways students take notes during lectures

The results show that most students try to write the lecture word for word. This strategy is widespread but considered ineffective because, during the perception of new materials, the brain must be in a focused mode, i.e., think, solve problems, look for reasons, etc. In the process of writing down every single word, the brain focuses on the writing process. The mechanical recording of information is beneficial and facilitates

memorization. However, it should be borne in mind that the lecturer usually speaks and does not dictate; therefore, it is not possible to write everything down as well as remember. Students often lose track of the materials presented, get nervous or even lose interest in the lecture at all.

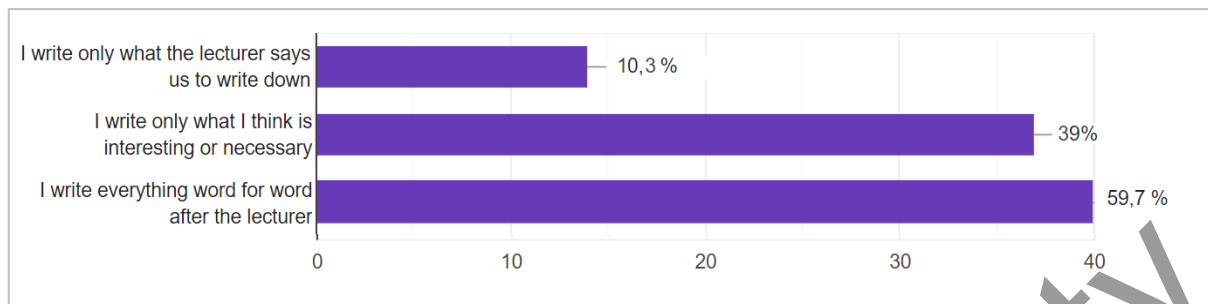


Figure 4. Answers to the question “How do you usually check what you have learned?”

We see good answers to the question on how to check the studied materials. Almost half of the students use the strategy of retelling the materials, 25.4 % of students use online tests, and 23.9 % of students do not test their knowledge at all.

Conclusions

Thus, the obtained results indicate the need to familiarize students with the program of ESL learning strategies. When planning the content of the program, the following points should be taken into account:

- motivation boosting;
- removing the cognitive block associated with fear of difficult tasks;
- focus on the process, not the result;
- effective time scheduling (self-regulation of learning);
- note-taking strategies;
- strategies for memorizing new materials and checking it.

We believe that familiarization with specific strategies should be taught as a separate module within the respective disciplines. Moreover, some strategies can be incorporated directly in the process of foreign language classes by means of separate exercises. The next step in our research will be to describe specific strategies for each of the directions and to develop a program.

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А.В. Старкова, О.М. Васильева, А.Б. Письменюк, Т.М. Сароян

Қашықтықтан білім беруде ESL өзін-өзі реттейтін стратегияларының қажеттілігі

Мақалада қашықтықтан білім беру контекстіндегі өзін-өзі реттейтін ESL стратегиялары мәселесі қарастырылған. Авторлар ESL өзін-өзі реттейтін стратегия тұжырымдамасының әртүрлі түсіндірмелерін, олардың артықшылықтары мен оқу процесіне әсерін егжей-тегжейлі сипаттаған. Шет тілін үйрену процесінде өзін-өзі реттейтін стратегиялар туралы мәселені шетелдік және ресейлік ғалымдар зерттеді. Қашықтықтан оқыту кезеңінде студенттерді өзін-өзі реттеуге үйрету бұрынғыдан да маңызды болды. Сонымен қатар, зерттеудің өзектілігі тағы екі факторға байланысты. Біріншіден, білім беру саласында Қазақстан Республикасының заңнамалық және нормативтік базасы қалыптастырылған, оған сәйкес студенттердің өзіндік жұмысы үшін сағат саны артты. Екіншіден, М. Қозыбаев атындағы Солтүстік Қазақстан университетінің студенттеріне шет тілін үйренудің өзін-өзі реттейтін стратегиясымен таныстыру қажеттілігін дәлелдейтін зерттеу. Жоғарыда көрсетілген зерттеу нәтижелері мақалада келтірілген. Зерттеу М. Қозыбаев атындағы Солтүстік Қазақстан университетінің базасында 1 және 2 курстардың 134 студентінің қатысуымен жүргізілді. Зерттеу нәтижелері студенттерге өзін-өзі оқытудың неғұрлым тиімді стратегияларын белгілі бір мазмұнды қалай үйренуге бағытталғандығымен таныстыру қажеттілігі зор екендігін дәлелдеді.

Кілт сөздер: өзін-өзі басқаратын стратегиялар, ESL, қашықтықтан білім беру, жоғары оқу орындарының студенттері, қазіргі заманғы білім, тілді үйрену стилі, тілді оқыту стратегиясы, сауалнама.

А.В. Старкова, О.М. Васильева, А.Б. Письменюк, Т.М. Сароян

Необходимость саморегулируемых стратегий ESL в дистанционном образовании

В статье рассмотрена проблема саморегулируемых стратегий ESL в контексте дистанционного образования. Авторы подробно описывают различные интерпретации концепции саморегулируемых стратегий ESL, их преимущества и влияние на процесс обучения. Вопрос о саморегулируемых стратегиях в процессе изучения иностранного языка изучен как зарубежными, так и российскими учеными. В период дистанционного обучения саморегулируемое обучение студентов стало как никогда важным. Кроме того, актуальность исследования обусловлена еще двумя факторами. Во-первых, сформирована законодательная и нормативная база Республики Казахстан в сфере образования, согласно которой увеличилось количество часов для самостоятельной работы студентов. Во-вторых, исследование, которое доказывает необходимость ознакомления студентов Северо-Казахстанского университета им. М. Козыбаева с саморегулируемыми стратегиями изучения иностранного языка. Результаты указанного выше исследования представлены в статье. Исследование проводилось на базе Северо-Казахстанского университета им. М. Козыбаева с участием 134 студентов 1 и 2-го курсов. Результаты исследований показали, что существует острая необходимость ознакомить учащихся с более эффективными стратегиями самообучения, сосредоточенными на том, как усвоить определенный материал.

Ключевые слова: саморегулируемые стратегии, ESL, дистанционное образование, студенты вузов, современное образование, стили изучения языка, стратегии изучения языка, анкета.

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