

HOW TO ORGANIZE THE INDEPENDENT STUDY WITH THE WEB

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Independent study, learner autonomy and learner empowerment are becoming crucial points of higher education today. This shift in educational process has an important impact on foreign language teaching. Thus foreign language instructors are now concerned not only with instructions in the classroom, but also with organizing learning process out of the classroom. Independent study is aimed at deep learning, as well as developing interpersonal and professional skills. But there is more. This approach to teaching introduces a shift from building a basic knowledge store toward emphasizing a wider range of skills. This is provided by integrative nature of modern education when the learning process is based on interaction between teacher and students as well as on student's team-work and cooperation. That is the difference between independent and self-study. Self-study is a complicated process when a student relies only on his own efforts, organize the learning process without assistance and control. The aim of independent study is to provide students with possibilities of mutual work, communication between all the participants of the process. It focuses on demands of an adaptable, thinking, autonomous person, who is a self-regulated learner, capable of communicating and co-operating with others. The key competencies of independent study are problem solving, critical thinking, formulating questions, searching for relevant information, making informed judgments, efficient use of information, conducting observations, investigations, inventing and creating new things, analyzing data, presenting data communicatively, oral and written expressions. Social competences include leading discussions and conversations, persuading, co-operating, working in groups, etc. Independent study provide students with the possibilities of self-evaluation and self-efficacy.

But still the analysis of learners questionnaires and interviews show that there are difficulties and problems in organizing the independent study concerning:

- productivity and effectiveness of such method of teaching
- students' motivation and feedback
- lack of authentic and interesting tools that help to achieve and empower learner independence.

We see the way out in using the Internet and Web platforms in order to organize the process more effectively. Internet has already been widely used in teaching and learning processes as a tool for searching information. We propose to focus on communicative and social usage of virtual environment. Web 2.0 services are aimed at social cooperation that allows users to produce and contribute to the resources jointly, to share information and items, to save links and Multimedia with the possibility of constant access to them. In that case the main objective of the tool coincides with the educational objective: co-operation and contribution using simple and available methods.

We propose to devise and to work in such virtual educational environment that include effective educational multimedia websites for independent students' study. It must possess the following features:

- appropriate and sufficient materials and activities
- calendar
- clear grading procedures

- opportunities for feedback and reflection
- easy and ergonomic interface

Such approach incorporates a number of specific curriculum ideas, some of which are described below:

Web or Dynamic educational programme

The informational and communicative functions are presented equally in these types of programmes. Students get links to and description of all the resources and materials they will need during the course. It includes:

- supplemental resources and sites
- course books
- texts and articles
- electronic papers and magazines
- archives
- electronic libraries
- educational student projects and papers

The great advantage of these programme is ensuring students with «excess» information unlike «needed» information in case of a traditional programme. It means that educational information is not restricted by author's conception but allows students to choose, compare and analyze data they find reasonable and desirable. They can be introduced to variety of opinions and judgments on a problem.

Web project

This is a combination of project work, cooperative learning and virtual learning environment.

Due to Web technologies students get access to a wide range of information, opportunity for cooperative and co-dependent activities. Web projects can integrate participants from different countries that stimulates motivation, team spirit, personal responsibility. The group incorporates students with different levels of language skills thus providing interdependency and mutual aid because the aim and the success of the whole group depends on the contribution of every participant.

Wiki wiki web

A wiki wiki web is a web site that allows pages to be edited by users through a web browser. This ease of interaction makes a wiki an effective tool for collaborative authoring. Wiki can be used in order to replace the lecturer-administered course web page. All the usual course information is available on the wiki (course policies, test dates, lecturer contact details, etc.), as well as the agendas and minutes for class meetings. Students are expected to use the wiki to record their work in progress, and to comment on other students' work. This provides visibility of student work, allows students to coordinate their work activities, and for lecturing staff to monitor student progress.

We believe that such way of independent study organizing is going to provide effective and efficient way of language study as well as it can satisfy students' professional and personal needs being aimed at training and development of vital language and communicative activities.

FAQ

Students can submit reports on their experiences. These are peer reviewed, and their peers are asked to add experiences of their own. Descriptions of common experiences and how they were dealt with are collected together in an FAQ to serve as a resource for subsequent courses.

Annotated lecture notes

An instructor provides PowerPoint lecture notes to his class, and has each student sign up to annotate a particular lecture—by providing hyperlinks to definitions, more detailed

descriptions of particular points during lecture, and examples of the concepts that are presented. The best-reviewed annotation of each lecture is put on the course web site for use by students in revision.

Topic map

Students are assigned to do readings and fill out a “topic map” based on what they have learned. These are peer-reviewed, and revised in response to those reviews. Since the topic maps cover different subjects, they can be linked together into a topic map of the entire course – giving a cross-referenced hyperlinked encyclopedia of the course material.

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