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Teaching Russian As A Foreign Language In Pedagogical Universities

Khosiyat Nazarovna Kadirova

Senior Lecturer Chirchik State Pedagogical University

Abstract: The article discusses various approaches to the use of computer technologies in teaching RFL and methods of working with modern computer teaching aids. Various types of Internet resources, electronic dictionaries and libraries, databases, distance courses are characterized, and the process of creating a new virtual learning environment is analyzed. Particular attention is paid to the methodology of creating exercises and tasks using the Internet.

Key words: Russian as a foreign language, Internet, computer technology, virtual educational environment, computer exercises and assignments.

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are developing rapidly. What seemed almost impossible 10–15 years ago is becoming an everyday occurrence. This concerns primarily the spread of the Internet and related communication technologies (e-mail, forums, Skype, etc.), methods of organizing information built on Web 2.0 (these are the so-called wiki technologies, social networks, resources for storing video and photo information such as youtube, picassa, etc.). All these new types of ICT are considered by methodologists in the linguodidactic aspect. Recent works have explored the possibilities of using social networks, blogs (internet diaries), and three-dimensional space in teaching foreign languages.

When analyzing and classifying various electronic educational resources and tools, it is important to take into account the peculiarities of structuring and describing educational material in them, as well as to characterize the main categories of users (for example, schoolchildren, students, teachers). Another

approach is to divide educational electronic publications and resources into information and reference, educational and general cultural ones.

Information and reference sources provide general information support for the learning process. Educational electronic publications and resources support the educational process and represent systematized material within the framework of a given academic discipline. Publications and resources of a general cultural nature are intended to form and expand the cultural environment: virtual travel, excursions, etc.

In the field of language teaching, the following types of ICT are used: electronic textbooks, interactive teaching aids (simulators), virtual environments (virtual museum, virtual classroom, virtual trip), computer presentations (demonstrations), universal learning environments and tools for creating educational materials, electronic databases, reference and information sources (online translators, dictionaries), electronic libraries, electronic periodicals, electronic collections (collections of audio, photo, video files).

All of the above makes it possible to practically solve the problems of creating a special electronic (virtual) educational space for students of RFL. This task has already been posed in a number of works [6, 9, 11], and its solution should be helped by the coordinated activities of Russian specialists in many countries. The electronic educational space for students of RFL includes:

• specialized portals and resources on the Russian language, the number of which is constantly growing ("Gramota.ru" - gramota.ru, "Culture of writing" - gramma.ru, "Russian dictionaries" - slovari.ru, "Russian language for a business person" – mylanguage.ru, a portal on using the Russian language and obtaining education in Russian – russianforall.ru);

• distance courses for students studying Russian and for teachers improving their qualifications;

• database of texts and educational resources;

• electronic libraries and encyclopedias;

• electronic dictionaries;

• virtual communities in which problems of learning and teaching the Russian language are discussed;

• collections of audio, photo and video files on certain topics, downloaded from the Internet;

• means of communication;

• means of organizing the educational process.

Each of these components of the environment has its own technological and content features (more on this below). In connection with the identified new opportunities of ICT, the very concept of so-called computer literacy is changing. Unfortunately, a significant part of teachers, including Russian language teachers, do not fully possess the skills to use the full range of modern ICTs (unlike the vast majority of students, for whom the use of ICTs has become an everyday reality). Although knowledge and use of modern ICT is one of the important elements of the professional competence of a language teacher [1, 5], there is a certain gap between the knowledge and skills of students and teachers. In English-language literature, even the terms digital native (that is, a person for whom the electronic environment has become natural and native) and digital immigrants (these are people for whom the electronic environment still remains alien and even hostile) have appeared. The first group of people has the skills to understand opportunities, transform, find, evaluate, create information, and communicate using digital technologies. Modern computer literacy, from our point of view, for RFL teachers includes, for example:

• active use of e-mail;

• ability to find the necessary information on the Internet;

• creating presentations using Power Point;

• participation in various kinds of virtual communities, popular network services;

• communication through blogs, including your own blog;

• understanding the features of electronic encyclopedias, including Wikipedia, participation in the creation of materials for Wikipedia;

• using Internet services to search and post video, photo and sound files;

• communication in video conferences, social networks, via Skype;

• creation of educational materials based on Internet software.

Let's take a closer look at some elements of the electronic educational space: distance technologies, electronic dictionaries, translators and libraries, databases, communication resources, tools for creating educational materials on the Internet, technologies for preparing automated exercises using special software shells.

The use of distance technologies in teaching RFL is of great interest to methodologists, which is justified by a number of reasons.

Firstly, accessibility of training is ensured. Regardless of location, anyone can receive certain educational services on an individual basis. Secondly, new forms of organizing and presenting information are being used: text, graphics, video, animation, a huge amount of reference, basic and accompanying information. Thirdly, new forms of certification of knowledge and skills are being introduced through the use of tests, essays, projects, etc. Distance learning is ensured by the use of a set of educational technologies in which targeted indirect or incompletely indirect interaction between the student and the teacher is carried out regardless of their location and distribution in time based on pedagogically organized ICT, primarily using telecommunications.

The main factors that determine the distance learning form:

1) separation of the teacher and students by distance;

2) the use of new teaching tools that can unite the efforts of teachers and students and ensure the assimilation of course content;

3) new types of interaction, interactivity between teacher and student, between course administration and students;

4) the predominance of self-control over control on the part of the teacher, the organization of independent work of students.

Recently, the concept of "distance educational technologies" has also been found in the literature, which refers to educational technologies implemented mainly using information technology and telecommunications, with indirect or incompletely indirect interaction between the student and the teacher. E.S.

Polat introduces the concept of "pedagogical technologies of distance learning," which is understood as a set of teaching methods and techniques that ensure the implementation of the educational process remotely in accordance with the chosen concept and learning goals [16]. Distance technologies are implemented in a distance course - a set of hardware, software, organizational and methodological support, aimed at meeting the educational needs of users. The components of distance learning are: a training center, information resources (training courses, reference, methodological and other materials), means of providing distance learning technology, teacher-consultants, students. For the effective functioning of the distance learning system, the work of all these components is necessary. The basic requirements for the training system are determined by the fundamental features of distance learning: an individual approach to learning, the dialogical nature of interaction, a combination of the online method (i.e. direct interaction between the teacher and the student using telecommunication channels) and offline (the use of information resources that are constantly located in Internet), conducting current and final control, regular updating of educational materials, a combination of traditional and distance learning, etc. Recently, various distance courses for students and teachers have been posted on the Internet, among them: pushkin.edu.ru/modus - distance learning advanced training course for Russian language teachers; dist-learn.ru – distance course dedicated to the Russian language and culture "On the Air in Russia"; speak-russian. cie.ru/time_new/ – distance course for initial teaching of the Russian language "Time to speak Russian", etc.

Electronic dictionaries can be divided into two groups: a complete electronic version of a printed dictionary (sometimes with a search system) or a dictionary with built-in additional functions: voiceover, search for various interpretations or translations, etc. The first group of dictionaries is located, for example, in the "Dictionaries" section search engine Yandex or on the portal Gramota.ru. Electronic dictionaries have a number of obvious and significant advantages over traditional dictionaries. Modern electronic dictionaries not only significantly exceed book dictionaries in volume, but also allow you to find the

desired word or phrase much faster. Moreover, you can search in any form. For example, ABBY dictionaries (products of Lingvo) are built into all major office applications, and the selected word can be translated by pressing a few keys. Electronic dictionaries not only contain transcriptions, but can also pronounce words. MultiLex dictionaries (a program from MediaLingua) have a built-in sound synthesizer and all words are pronounced with its help. In ABBYY Lingvo, heading words are voiced by a speaker. Among the new versions of electronic dictionaries, it is worth noting the electronic version of the "New Dictionary of Methodological Terms and Concepts" [4], which is located in the "Dictionaries" section of the Gramota.ru portal. The electronic version of the dictionary includes a word search system, provides navigation through hypertext links, etc. The dictionary contains about 2,500 dictionary entries describing terms, terminological combinations and concepts from the field of theory and practice of teaching languages, as well as some terms and concepts from disciplines related to methodology, which are basic for it.

Recently, electronic translators have also become very popular - devices designed to translate individual words (the majority of translators translate only one word at a time) or phrases (only a limited number of translators have this function, the translation is not always correct) from a foreign language into Russian or reversed. Some models have the ability to voice the translated word or phrase (depending on the model, the voice acting occurs with an electronic voice or the voice of a professional announcer). Almost every model of electronic translator has a phrasebook, divided by topic and including the most frequently used phrases and expressions, which can also be listened to if there is a pronunciation function. Many translators have additional technical capabilities that help in learning a language, such as: transcription, educational programs in the form of electronic grammar textbooks, spelling correctors, games, etc. One of the most promising ways of providing information to education today is the use of electronic libraries and databases . There are various definitions of a digital library. Sometimes even the entire Internet is called a digital library. There are over a thousand resources on the RuNet that

have the words "electronic library" in their names. This name sometimes includes: online stores, electronic catalogs of regular libraries, network representations of regular libraries, catalogs of network resources, bibliographic databases, collections of certain resources and some other systems. The first electronic library on the RuNet was the library of Maxim Moshkov (lib.ru).

The most common idea is that an electronic library is an ordered collection of heterogeneous electronic documents (including books), equipped with navigation and search tools. An electronic library can be organized as a separate website, which accumulates various texts, programs and media files. All of them can be found by the user using search engines or catalogues. Electronic libraries can be universal, striving for a wide coverage of sources: for example, the "Open Russian Electronic Library" (rsl.ru), and more specialized, like the "Philological Portal" (philology.ru), which presents literature on literary criticism and linguistics. A special place among electronic libraries is occupied by libraries on scientific or scientific-educational topics, for example, "Electronic Scientific Library" (elibrary.ru).

Each electronic library has specific features: for example, the "Fundamental Electronic Library of Russian Literature and Folklore" (febweb.ru) is focused on the most accurate reproduction of authoritative printed publications, and the collection of magazines on the Internet "Magazine Hall" (magazines.russ.ru) can be considered as an electronic library that presents modern Russian magazines. The National Language Corpus is an information and reference system based on a collection of natural language texts in electronic form (ruscorpora.ru). The national corpus represents a given language at a certain stage (or stages) of its existence and in all the diversity of genres, styles, territorial and social variants, etc. The national corpus, firstly, is characterized by a representative and balanced composition of texts. This means that it contains, if possible, all types of written and oral texts presented in a given language (art of different genres, journalistic, educational, scientific, business, colloquial, dialect, etc.). Secondly, the corpus contains special additional information about the properties of the texts included in it (the so-called markup, or annotation). Markup is the main

characteristic of the corpus; it distinguishes the corpus from simple collections (or "libraries") of texts presented on the modern Internet, including in Russian. As the creators of the National Corpus note, the richer and more varied the markings, the higher the scientific and educational value of the corpus. The National Corpus of the Russian Language currently uses four types of markup: meta-textual, morphological, accentual and semantic; In the near future, it is planned to introduce syntactic markup. The national corpus is becoming a very valuable source for Russian language teachers, authors of textbooks and dictionaries. The Federal Center for Information and Educational Resources (fcior.edu.ru) was created in the period 2005–2007. within the framework of the project "Informatization of the education system". The purpose of creating a collection of resources is to concentrate in one place and provide access to a full set of modern teaching tools designed for teaching and learning various academic disciplines in accordance with the federal component of state educational standards for primary general, basic general and secondary (complete) general education. The collection currently houses more than 111,000 digital educational resources covering virtually all core curriculum subjects. A significant part of the collection consists of materials on the Russian language. The collection contains sets of digital resources for a large number of textbooks, educational and methodological developments, various thematic and subject collections, as well as other educational, cultural, educational and educational materials.

The functioning of a unified collection of digital resources is based on the implementation of a number of fundamental principles, for example: • ensuring the unity and unification of the description of metadata of all resources, regardless of their structure, type, format and source of receipt based on standards used in world practice, which makes it possible to develop and store resources in a decentralized manner ;

• openness of the system, which allows for interchange with external sources and consumers of information resources, regardless of the software platform on which they are implemented;

• distribution and territorial independence of the system, which gives the user the opportunity to easily select a source of information about the resource.

Recently, the capabilities of the Internet as a means of electronic communication have begun to be actively used in the educational process. This is evidenced by a large number of publications on this topic in Russian scientific and methodological literature.

Researchers believe that the use of electronic communication as a teaching tool helps to partially solve one of the main objectives of learning - the creation of a natural language environment, since it provides additional opportunities for communication in the target language, including with native speakers. A natural communication environment based on such means of electronic communication as e-mail, chat communication, forums, guest books, online diaries, Skype, can be used by foreign language teachers to maintain motivation, increase the level of knowledge, and assess the speech behavior of their students in different communicative situations. At the same time, depending on the content and learning objectives, electronic communication can be carried out both in synchronous and asynchronous modes using various formats: text (email, chat, forum, online diaries), audio or video (video conferences, voice mail) , sending audio and video files). Social networks are becoming increasingly widespread among Internet users. Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, Odnoklassniki, and VKontakte are popular in Russia. All of them are used both for personal purposes and for professional activities. Unlike the vast majority of Internet projects, the content of such resources is formed by all network participants. Social networks and the services that support them have proven to be a very effective method of ensuring website traffic, feedback, and have gradually become one of the means of generating content. The open multilingual encyclopedia Wikipedia gained great popularity. This social system is focused on preparing encyclopedic articles about any concept that users deem necessary. The system provides opportunities for correcting and discussing articles, comparing their versions. From the point of view of organizing educational interaction, the following advantages of social networks are noted: 1) modern young people currently

spend a lot of time on social networks, communication in them, obtaining information with their help is familiar and natural; 2) students can communicate in real time not only with the teacher, but also with each other, creating virtual mini-communities (which is quite natural for all users of social services); 3) the teacher has a significantly expanded channel of communication and opportunities to communicate with students, he can provide additional information, becomes not only a mentor, but also one of the participants in communication, communicate with students with whom, for one reason or another, real contact is difficult. Electronic telecommunications in the educational process can be organized in various ways (there is already positive experience in using these technologies in the educational process.

• participation in an individual or group telecommunications project (implementation of the pedagogical technology "project method");

• maintaining network diaries / online magazines / blogs as a tool for solving the problems of professional self-education of students (implementation of the pedagogical technology "student portfolio");

• communication with a pen pal as a representative of the world of the language being studied;

• use of e-mail and social services for interactive exchange of information between students and the teacher within the framework of distance learning courses.

There are also quite a few electronic forums on the Internet related to the discussion of problems of teaching the Russian language (see, for example, the forums on gramota.ru and russianedu.ru). This form of communication is becoming increasingly widespread among Russian scholars. Various types of Internet conferences on RCTs have begun to be organized more often. Internet conferences held by the portal "On the use of the Russian language and obtaining education in Russian" (russianforall.ru) are of great interest.

Modern Internet technologies make it possible not only to use ready-made Internet resources, but also to create new educational materials. Let's give a few examples. It should be borne in mind that the programs listed below were not

always designed for language teaching, but their linguodidactic potential allows them to find a place in teaching a foreign language. This applies, for example, to the linguistic and methodological interpretation of the use of Word text editors, PowerPoint presentations, etc.

Thus, Internet technologies have significant educational opportunities that can be used in teaching RFL. Progress in this area of activity is beyond doubt. The most promising, in our opinion, are distance technologies, since on their basis it is possible to build fundamentally new forms of teaching, as well as software shells that allow teachers themselves to create and post training and test tasks and exercises on the Internet. It should, of course, be understood that organizing an electronic (virtual) educational environment is a complex process. It involves the creation of educational portals, distance courses, electronic textbooks and dictionaries, which often requires the joint efforts of teams of methodologists and programmers.

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