In this paper formation of communicative competence of interactive independent work of non-linguistic universities' students is analysed. Such forms as independent work with IT technologies, role-play, information and research analysis, project of a particular social research, etc. are discussed by the authors. They prove that Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) are the most effective teaching methods for students outside classes. Interactive learning, module structuring of the educational resources, creating individual educational plan and students' work confidentiality extend the lecturers opportunities in organising Independent work.

Keywords: LSP, interactive independent work of students, interactive learning technologies, students' intellectual activity.

1 INTRODUCTION

This article is devoted to the interactive independent work of students in the framework of professional language teaching. Teaching methods based on the usage of information technologies (IT) are aimed at developing communicative competence. All the other purposes (academic, developing and educational) are carried out while realising the main one (communicative).

Communicative competence includes knowledge of Language for Specific Purposes (LSP), communicative situation, participants of the communicative situation, skills of text creating, reading and listening comprehension as well as skills of keeping the conversation going. Communicative competence contributes to intercultural interrelation. IT creates a unique opportunity for the students to read authentic texts and communicate with native speakers. Interactive teaching actively involves all students in the learning process.

Present days witness drastic changes in the Russian educational system where vocational training moves to the forefront. At the same time we can affirm that professionals realise that their vocational knowledge should be blended with some humanities as a graduate regardless of their major cannot be a professional without developed human skills. LSP classes provide students with a great opportunity to learn how to perceive themselves and moderate their responses, talk effectively and build relationships of trust, respect and productive interactions [1].

Lack of highly qualified specialists that know foreign languages is a burning issue now. This is the reason why we are doing this research. We are trying to find out how to improve the language level and communicative competence forming for bringing into line all the modern demands to the requirements of the market.

The next issue the Russian system of linguistic education for non-linguist students faces is the improvement of its effectiveness. We mean how to make the educational process more effective if the number of contact hours is constantly decreasing. Both goals can be achieved through a large-scale introduction of independent work in professional language teaching. But this task poses a number of methodological problems that should be solved.

The heightened interest in teaching LSP in the Russian system of vocational education is explained by a number of social and economic factors and increased requirements imposed on the level of general knowledge, professional competence, and mobility for specialists of all profiles in the course of their training. Nowadays, university graduates are expected to possess the required professional knowledge and skills, be able to use new information technologies and be ready to cooperate. The discipline “Foreign Language” has been transformed into the means of achieving personal
professional development. The new language policy is aimed at flexible choice of studied languages and strengthening the principles of variability and continuity.

Foreign language acquisition goes in parallel with the development of students’ professional skills, learning specific characteristics of native speakers and culture of the country the language is spoken. The significance of LSP lies in its interdisciplinary character, and it is combined with the main disciplines to acquire the necessary expertise and form professional qualities of the person. Moreover, foreign languages contribute to the professional competence of students.

Professional language is characterised by a limited sphere of specific communication. Professional language has peculiar grammar, but its most distinctive feature is the lexical and phraseological structure. Professional language is a narrower concept than a general literary language as its functions are gnoseological, cognitive, epistemic, informative, logical, intellectual and communicative.

2 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGIES (ICT) AS EFFECTIVE TEACHING AIDS FOR STUDENTS

Compared with the 70s or 80s of the previous century today there is a heightened need for development of the linguistic component of the higher education, which is formed in the context of globalisation on the basis of oral and written communication, as well as linguocultural aspects. Therefore, the need for foreign languages appears while applying telecommunication technology to process large flows of information and in connection with developing international relations in the sphere of professional activity.

Information society has obtained the effective training aids – Information and Communications Technologies (ICT). The main advantage of ICT lies in the improved access to education, shaping open education as a system and developing qualifying features of a modern specialist.

Interactive independent work enables students to develop not only their language skills, but also their effective intellectual activity, communicative competence and analytical thinking.

A lot of scholars underline the necessity to intensify students’ intellectual activity. Emotional regulation of the students’ thinking activity is the foremost task of foreign language lecturers. So there exists the interrelation between motivation and positive emotional state of the students.

There is constant integration of internet resources into independent learning activities in teaching profession-oriented foreign language. It gives an opportunity to expand access to education, to form a system of open education and to create a highly qualified professional.

Interactive approach is one of the means to achieve communicative goals. Since the main objective of the independent work in the course of profession-oriented language learning is development of interpersonal and teamwork skills, the realisation of interactive communication approach is possible through the use of interactive learning technologies.

One of the effective ways of forming communicative competence when teaching professional language is the use of information technologies. This is the most innovative and promising method of teaching which improves all the previously used ones owing to the reformation of the educational system.

3 COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE FORMING BY MEANS OF ICT

Communicative competence is a specific peculiarity of the student's personality. This is their ability, that reveals itself in their behaviour and activities, contributing to the solution of practical problems. One of the disciplines that forms students’ communicative competence is LSP.

Working on the development of students’ communicative competence in the process of independent study of LSP, we have identified some objectives, the most important of which are: to improve educational efficiency through the use of active methods and to provide students with the opportunity to acquire such communication skills that can be used in real-life situations. Consequently, the basic content in the modern independent study of LSP is its communicativeness.

In the process of independent studies the cardinal focus is put on the development of speaking skills while grammar structures are introduced when they are needed in connection with any topic enriching practice of spoken language.
The use of active teaching methods requires development of complex educational environment promoting the formation of students' communicative competence. For example, a role-play is a methodological technique related to a group of active teaching practical LSP. In the role-play everyone gets a role and is asked to be an active partner in speech communication. In these role-plays students acquire such elements of communication skills as the ability to start a conversation, to support it, the ability to intentionally listen to the interlocutor, ask clarifying questions, etc. Thus, a variety of games, including interactive role-plays promote formation of communicative competence.

Today it is hard to imagine a lesson without the use of ICT – it is an imperative of our time. Using multimedia presentations is another effective method of teaching students. The use of computer presentations in the educational process allows students to intensify mastering the material and train them at a qualitatively new level.

The efficiency of learning depends largely on the extent and level of students’ independence in the selection of illustrative material. The use of ICT increases students’ motivation, since they get involved in independent learning and co-authorship with the teacher that facilitates formation of communicative competence of students.

Based on the foregoing, we can conclude that the independent work becomes more impressive with the use of active teaching methods. Computer-assisted technology allows making routine independent work creative and developing students’ communicative competence.

The process of teaching foreign language in non-linguistic universities with the help of interactive methods, such as business games, contributes to the formation of communicative competence of students. In addition to the expertise in LSP, students get the opportunity to develop their personality and skills of communication with the professional community.

Speaking about the significance of interactive methods of teaching LSP it should be noted that they play an important role in the development of professional communicative competence of students, and rely primarily on the interaction between teacher and student. Business game as one of the interactive methods creates an environment necessary for successful learning of professional communication in LSP.

We have developed a set of recommendations that are aimed at forming students' communicative competence with the help of ICT. They are adapted to the real teaching process and allow creating teaching materials on LSP.

Until recently LSP teaching was dominated by the structural approach, its goal being to master the language as a system of grammar and vocabulary. In the process of learning a foreign language, students got just a glimpse of its system and acquired the ability to use language material to produce correct language forms and structures. As a result of such training the main practical goal of mastering foreign language, that is, to be able to adequately express their own thoughts and ideas to understand the interlocutor in a real-life situation, was not achieved.

Thus, interactive teaching methods when they are applied in stages, give international students the opportunity to develop not only language skills, but also allow them to use LSP as a means of communication that promotes constructive intellectual activity, logical perception of information and its subsequent mastering.

4 INTERACTIVE INDEPENDENT WORK OF STUDENTS

For professional and career advancement future specialists need conditions under which they could form their individual willingness to work on mastering knowledge and ways of working in the professional sphere. These conditions will allow students to immerse themselves in a real professional activity.

Today one of the key goals of teaching foreign languages to students in non-linguistic universities is the independent work of students on the basis of interactive media, as well as simulating professional environment for students' self-expression. The advent of a new information sphere opens a large-scale access to information and interactive dialogue.

The experience of teaching based on new information technologies in foreign countries is much broader than in Russia, although even for global practice of teaching foreign languages this form of training is relatively new [2], [3].
Due to the growing technological capacities in teaching foreign languages, there is a need for new methods of computer-assisted independent work in a distance format.

Interactive aids of teaching foreign languages do not imply the dominance of one student over another. In the process of interactive learning of foreign languages, students learn to solve professional problems, think critically, evaluate and analyse different opinions, make decisions in the area of professional activity and to participate in scientific discussions. To this end, individual, pair and group work is organised, research projects and business games, as well as work with foreign sources of information are conducted, etc.

Interactive independent work is a kind of cognitive academic activity which can be determined by the following factors: purposes, stages of work and information source.

While defining interactive work one can take into consideration the fact whether a lecturer supervises by this activity directly or indirectly.

Interactive independent work effectiveness in LSP depends considerably on quality of the course books. Academic materials should include authentic texts containing both professionally significant and linguocultural information. They have to be elaborated in such a way that students' work in the classroom could be the continuation of their interactive independent work outside the classroom.

Such course books fulfil the teacher's main functions: organisational, administrative and controlling. They should motivate students to work and provide feedback that controls the correctness of these actions.

Moreover, one of the main tasks of all the educational resources is providing intensive interactive independent work of students, finding independent decisions, developing readiness for further self-education.

A core of the final stage of interactive independent work is creative cognitive and informative tasks (determining compositional structure, preparing logical structure, selecting clichés for annotations, etc.).

Interactive activity involves the organisation and development of a dialogue that lead to mutual understanding and interaction, to joint addressing common challenges. During the dialogue training, students learn to think critically, solve complicated problems by analysing the circumstances and relevant information, evaluate alternative views, make considered decisions and participate in discussions.

As a rule controlled independent work is effective if it is controlled immediately. Independent work is subdivided into work at home and work in the language laboratory.

Departments of foreign languages develop training resources for independent work of non-linguistic students. The type and number of assignments should be chosen taking into account the psychological characteristics of students, as well as the time each student needs for independent work.

Each student gets an access to the Internet that allows them to simulate the process of communication in which he or she is forced to make their own decisions in order to achieve their communicative goals. The unlimited access to economic, socio-cultural and socio-political information in a foreign language can improve students' motivation not only to study a foreign language, but also to translate, stimulate creative approach to the formation of communicative skills, individualise methods of obtaining the necessary knowledge.

The educational process is automated through electronic systems of distance learning Moodle, eFront, OpenElms, ATutor, Learn eXact. Some Russian universities in addition to multimedia educational courses develop their own discipline-specific systems for teaching LSP.

Students' work with these resources can greatly optimise the formation of their foreign language communicative competence both in oral and written activities, as well as their skills of independent work.

There is a need for a new learning tool which would allow monitoring and coordinating the performance of students’ work with internet resources. These platforms can be used for the following teaching objectives:

1) Work in blogs, forums, chat rooms, etc. for virtual interaction in a variety of forms (student-student, student-teacher, student-native speaker).
2) Disclose the advantages of individual, group and blended learning.

As for the individualisation of the LSP learning process, the platform Moodle enables to use internet educational resources and organise effective work with them.

Moodle, eFront, OpenElms, ATutor, Learn eXact are successful tools for performing learning tasks in which students are expected to work in small groups on implementation of various projects in business and role-play games and preparation of presentations and reports.

They enable to use efficiently the basic principles of LSP blended learning. As is known, these teaching methods involve a significant amount of learning using IT.

Previously, students were asked to work with a particular programme, e.g., to reinforce grammar for the development of a particular type of speech activity. This work was not an integral part of the learning process as there was no effective tool for planning and monitoring students' work with the assignments. Currently, all the above mentioned e-platforms can help to solve this issue since all students' independent work with ICT is completely controlled by the teacher, who, if necessary, can correct it.

One can consider blended learning as a separate method. Its main distinguishing feature is that the whole process of learning is built on the integrated use of teaching capacity of the modern ITC, training and informational resources of the Internet with Moodle, eFront, OpenElms, ATutor, Learn eXact as the basis in this training.

Much attention is paid to the development of skills for self-development, self-organisation and self-actualisation in this area.

To master a large amount of knowledge and acquire durable skills, while reducing the teaching contact hours, it is necessary to increase the extent and quality of the information perception and to introduce into the educational process the forms of student’s independent activities that will help increase their cognitive activity in everyday work and at the same time will form professional qualities of the person.

5 SOME FORMS OF INTERACTIVE INDEPENDENT WORK OF STUDENTS

Independent work can be integrated into Internet technologies. It enables:

- to take into account students’ individual characteristics giving them more freedom in IT environment;
- to minimise technical complexity of the tasks by means of IT level of each student;
- to integrate forms of IT technologies taking into consideration main points of the educational process.

We can single out two main groups of independent activity that are carried with the help of the Internet while learning foreign languages.

They present a planned and controlled educational process demanding lecturers’ special knowledge and skills in computer work and the Internet including teaching methods knowledge of integration of IT technologies into educational process:

- independent work with IT technologies which is aimed at organised search, analysis and transformation of IT resources and participation in Web-projects;
- specially arranged communication by means of forums.

We can give the following classification of IT tasks taking into consideration language levels:

- work with a list of hotlists enables to consider all the necessary aspects as extra IT resources;
- subject sampler is a list of references to IT resources;
- search and selection of a definite number of references; students ask a key question on problem understanding (treasure hunt);
- problem statement sample is the selected list of e-resources references in which it is offered to read or listen something, etc. After that they have to share their opinions paying attention to their experience.
So the main task of teaching foreign languages is interactive independent work today. The purpose communicative competence achieving is the most demanding nowadays by the students with different language levels. University graduates should be able to use IT in the area of their speciality.

One of the students’ independent work forms is mainly project work. The outcome of the project work is an essay.

The topic of the project work can be the problems of the professional sphere in the target language country. The teacher offers a suggested list of topics to students inclusive of their research interests. The project work involves compiling and processing materials, including statistics, newspaper articles, scientific papers, etc. Students make their independent work portfolios.

Using professional and society-oriented technologies implies a combination of classroom and independent work forms with a priority of the independent one.

The project method helps actualise and motivate project participants to reach the ultimate goal. With the help of Internet resources and services, it is possible to alter the method for independent (remote) training, apply a template for creating problems-web-search tasks. The main stages of project technology are: preparatory (the organisational phase): presentation of issues/problems, the project planning phase, the research stage: searching for information, the preparation stage for a presentation - a discussion of the final product, the stage of the project presentation, the stage of reflection: evaluation of the results and the process to identify new problems for discussion.

Thus, the stages of the project are: a problem - planning - information search - product - presentation. The main types of projects are:

1. Constructive and practical
2. Role-play
3. Information and research
4. Social research
5. Publishing projects
6. Scenario projects
7. Creative work

The integration of internet resources into independent learning activities in profession-oriented language training allows students to choose an authentic, relevant material of professional orientation for reading and listening, followed by study of lexical and grammatical material through the prepared interactive tests [4]. If the server does not provide any exercises to consolidate the read or heard material or according to the teacher, they are not enough to practise and consolidate the material or to develop specific skills, you can make up your own tests using special templates.

6 INTEGRATION OF INTERNET RESOURCES INTO STUDENTS’ INDEPENDENT WORK

Nowadays special attention is paid to the integration of internet resources into the students’ independent work in LSP and specialised translation. Such integration allows choosing an authentic, relevant material for reading and listening, and training students through interactive lexical and grammatical tests in the format of multiple choice, matching, filling in the gaps, true or not true statements, etc.

Trying to approximate the process of learning to future careers of students, it is necessary to use a number of problem methods of foreign language teaching: research, discussion, search and projects methods. Internet resources may alter the method for independent (remote) teaching using web-assignments on the sites.

In general independent work with the educational literature remains an important component of students’ independent work. With the use of information technology the potential of independent work of students is increasing. Essentially, all known types of electronic publications can serve as a basis for independent work of students [4].

The use of internet resources in teaching LSP and specialised translation requires the lecturer’s deep knowledge, development of instructional techniques and selecting approaches to their integration into
the educational process in order to bring independent work closer to classroom training in respect of the effectiveness and acquiring knowledge and skills necessary for work and life. Independent work is valuable because it helps students not only acquire knowledge, but also improve their lifelong learning.

The use of ICT in teaching a foreign language is carried out in several directions.

The effective interactive independent work is possible where there is students’ motivation. The main motivational driving force is the readiness for further professional activities [5].

The main motivational parameters include scientific and creative work of students, as well as control of students’ knowledge and personality of the teacher.

All this leads to the disclosure of the professional identity of the students. Joint activities of students mean that everyone makes their own individual contribution and shares knowledge.

Profession-oriented tasks within the framework of interactive independent work contribute to sustained motivation of students, helping to acquire additional knowledge and experience in cognitive and learning activities.

Control of individual-group independent work on fulfilment of advanced tasks is carried out by teachers, both in the form of individual consultations, and in the classroom. The tests are applied to identify successful mastery of speech and language skills as a means of individual control providing an objective assessment of the results of students’ independent work [6]. This will expand the opportunity for students to enter the real situations of professional activity, most clearly present themselves in accordance with their own motives and interests.

7 CONCLUSIONS

Interactive independent work has advantages over the traditional one. They are: active participation of a group of students, development of teamwork, doing exercises within a time limit. Students also have an opportunity to demonstrate their qualities such as interest and initiative.

Interactive independent work is a form of cognitive activity with projected targets. One of these goals is to set a comfortable learning environment, in which the students feel their success and intellectual consistency that make learning process productive.

Interactive independent work is used to make students’ work more active, prepares them for the research activity by means of foreign language, cultivate such skills as search for information, received information evaluation and taking part in professional communication.

Solving this task is determined by the rational system of exercises which have problem character, stimulate extended answers and promote communicative competence.

Our experience shows that self-control tasks with keys for self-check provoke interest of students.

Different didactic games (business, role and simulation) can be considered not only as educational ones but training and can help a teacher to build a real model of communication.

Such forms of interactive independent work increase learning LSP motivation as they raise students’ level of professional training.

Interactive independent work of students on LSP is a special form of self-education. It has multifunctional character and encourages teachers to form communicative competence of students and develop IT culture as they are necessary components of a modern specialist’s portfolio.

REFERENCES


