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METHODOLOGICAL TECHNIQUES FOR ORGANIZING STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT WORK BASED ON RUSSIAN LITERATURE

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Abstract. The article examines methodological techniques for organizing the independent work of students at a pedagogical university, drawing on material from Russian literature. Independent work is conceptualized as the highest stage of learning activity — one that develops on the basis of motivation and combines the learner's reproductive and productive (cognitive-creative) activity. Using the examples of the reading journal and the literary portfolio, the problem question and the case study, the article demonstrates how methodological techniques establish an algorithm of independent learning actions — from the perception and processing of a literary text to the creation of the learner's own analytical or creative product — and cultivate the self-regulation, self-control, and reflection of the future teacher of language and literature.

Keywords: independent work, motivation, reading journal, literary portfolio, problem question, case study, home reading, teacher of language and literature.

Contemporary trends in the development of education are characterized by a steady strengthening of the role of students' independent work and by a shift in emphasis away from traditional teaching toward active self-education. The introduction of the competency-and-activity approach into the educational process makes it necessary to develop a methodological system aimed at forming the skills and abilities of independent work, as well as at cultivating a culture of independent activity in future specialists.

Independent work is understood as a form of organizing the educational process that affords the student the opportunity to search independently for the necessary information and to perceive and analyze the educational material in a creative manner. Independent work contributes to the consolidation of the knowledge acquired in lectures, to the comprehension and deepening of its content, to the formation of professional competencies, and to the successful completion of interim assessment and the final rating.

The aim of the article is to clarify the psychological and pedagogical content of the concept of "independent work" and to elucidate the methodological techniques for organizing it on the basis of Russian literature (the reading journal and the literary portfolio, the problem question and the case study).

The problem of independent cognitive activity has a long history. As early as Ancient Greece, the thinkers Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Archytas attached particular significance to cognitive activity and to the role of independence within it. Democritus (460–370 BCE) linked the formation of the personality with self-education, holding that neither art nor wisdom can be attained without independent effort. Aristotle (384–322 BCE) saw the meaning of life in

independent activity directed toward comprehending the foundations of the universe and toward a person's creative self-perfection.

The ideas of Eastern thinkers were reflected in the practice of the madrasa and in the works of al-Farabi (*The Treatise on the Views of the Inhabitants of the Virtuous City*), Alisher Navoi (*The Confusion of the Righteous*), Yusuf Khos Hojib, and Saadi (*The Gulistan*), which consistently advance the idea of the value of acquiring knowledge independently. The conceptions of the ancient and Eastern thinkers laid the foundation for understanding independence as a distinct form of human activity and were subsequently reflected in didactics.

The principle of continuity in the experience of organizing independent work across the various stages of education is of particular importance. According to A. A. Leontiev, an integral system of instruction is needed, one in which each link would address the tasks and apply the techniques and methods that correspond to the specific aims of instruction, the leading motives of learning, and the age-related characteristics of students [6].

Contemporary researchers reveal the essence of independent work in different ways, and these approaches tend rather to complement one another. Thus, Z. K. Kudasheva and S. S. Magdieva define independent work as a means of deepening students' sound knowledge, of forming their active engagement and autonomy, and of developing their creative abilities [5, p. 128]. The incorporation of independent work into the content of classes constitutes a pressing necessity and requires of the teacher the ability to organize the learners' activity properly, drawing to the fullest extent on the inner resources of each of them.

In reference works on pedagogy, independent learning work is defined as a type of learning activity that presupposes a certain level of learner autonomy in all of its structural components — from the formulation of the problem to monitoring, self-monitoring, and correction [4, p. 134]. This denotes a transition from the performance of the simplest tasks to more complex ones of an exploratory nature, which serves as a means of developing students' cognitive abilities and their aspiration toward continual self-education.

Of key importance for the present study is the conception of I. A. Zimnyaya. The scholar includes within independent work both a learning task and a form in which the student's activity manifests itself — memory, thinking, creative imagination — which develop in the course of performing specific tasks and contribute to the acquisition of new knowledge or to the deepening and expansion of knowledge already gained [3, p. 24]. I. A. Zimnyaya defines independent work as a purposeful, internally motivated, and structured activity whose performance requires a high level of self-awareness, reflectivity, self-discipline, and personal responsibility [3, p. 24]. This approach emphasizes the unity of self-regulation, self-activation, self-organization, and self-control, by virtue of which independent work brings the learner satisfaction as a process of self-perfection, self-realization, and self-cognition:

– **self-regulation** — the initial psychological foundation of activity, which in the course of development acquires personal meaning, imbuing the activity with psychic content;

– **self-activation** — the internal motivation for activity, formed on the basis of subjective grounds;

– **self-organization** — the personality's capacity to mobilize its potential resources purposefully in order to achieve its goals through the rational use of time and the means of instruction;

– **self-control** — an element of activity that ensures its execution at the personal level.

The productive, cognitive-creative dimension of independent work is revealed most fully when theoretical principles are embodied in concrete methodological techniques that organize the

student's cognitive activity on literary material. Presented below are techniques that have been tested in the practice of teaching Russian literature and that combine the learners' reproductive and productive activity.

The Reading Journal and the Literary Portfolio

The reading journal and the literary portfolio are interrelated forms of organizing independent work that ensure the regularity of home reading and the accumulation of the products of independent analysis. They draw on the technology of guided home reading [1; 2] and realize those components of independent activity that I. A. Zimnyaya distinguishes — self-regulation, self-control, and reflection [3].

The reading journal is a structured record that the student keeps in the process of independent reading. Its rubrics are arranged from the reproductive level to the productive one:

– the publication details of the work and the history of its creation;
– the narrative outline and the system of characters;
– key quotations accompanied by the student's own commentary;
– artistic details, symbolic images, and recurring motifs;
– "thick" questions and the problematic or obscure passages of the text;
– a glossary of unfamiliar words, realia, and historical-cultural concepts (especially significant for a non-native audience);
– personal impressions, evaluation, and reflection on what has been read.

Such a journal proves productive in the study of the short stories of I. A. Bunin. In reading "Antonov Apples," "The Gentleman from San Francisco," and "Light Breathing," the student independently records how, in Bunin's work, the artistic detail becomes a bearer of meaning: the scent of Antonov apples is a symbol of a vanishing gentry Russia, while the image of the ship *Atlantis* is a sign of a doomed civilization. By tracing the recurring motifs of memory, love, and death from one story to the next, the learner prepares material for a synthesizing class on the writer's poetics and becomes accustomed to reading slowly and attentively, in the mode of the "Satori" program [1].

The literary portfolio is a purposefully assembled collection of a student's work on a topic or a course: reading-journal entries, clusters and cinquains, summaries of critical articles, analytical essays, creative and project works, and reflection sheets. Depending on its purpose, a distinction is drawn among the accumulative portfolio, the achievement portfolio, and the reflective portfolio [7].

Work with a portfolio proceeds through several stages: goal-setting (what is being collected and why); systematic accumulation in the course of independent work; the selection and structuring of materials; the reflective analysis of what has been mastered and of what has caused difficulty; and presentation and self-assessment. Assessment is conducted according to transparent criteria — completeness and regularity, depth of analysis, independence of judgment, reflectivity, and neatness of presentation — which makes the portfolio an instrument both of learning and of interim assessment.

In this way, both forms transform reading from an episodic occurrence into an internally governed process: the student independently plans, tracks, and evaluates his own cognitive activity, which corresponds to the understanding of independent work as the highest, motivated stage of learning activity.

The Problem Question and the Case Study

The problem question and the case study realize the investigative, productive dimension of independent work. Both techniques create a situation of intellectual tension in which the learner

does not reproduce ready-made knowledge but rather independently constructs and substantiates his own position with reference to the text [7].

The problem question, unlike the reproductive one, has no unambiguous, ready-made answer within the text: it contains a contradiction, admits of several well-founded solutions, and calls for evidence-based reasoning. A well-formulated problem question draws on the text, touches upon the semantic core of the work, and is personally significant for the learner.

Such questions might include: “Is Bazarov a victor or a vanquished man, and why does the author ‘part’ with his hero?” (I. S. Turgenev, *Fathers and Sons*); “Does the novel refute Raskolnikov’s theory — and in what precisely?” (F. M. Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment*); “Is *The Seagull* a comedy or a drama?” (A. P. Chekhov); “Why is Pechorin, a man of exceptional gifts, unhappy himself and the cause of unhappiness in others?” (M. Yu. Lermontov, *A Hero of Our Time*). The independent work consists in preparing an extended essay-response or a set of theses with arguments “for” and “against,” supported by quotations.

The case study (the method of analyzing concrete situations) involves the examination of a “case” isolated from a literary work. The student must enter into the logic of the situation, assess the positions of the parties, and propose a well-founded solution or interpretation. A teaching case based on literary material includes:

– a description of the situation — a conflict or a fragment of the work;
– questions and tasks that direct the analysis;
– accompanying materials — the text, critical appraisals, and the historical-cultural context;
– the expected product — a reasoned solution or interpretation.

Thus, in the study of A. N. Ostrovsky’s drama *The Storm*, the case “Katerina’s Choice” is proposed: the student independently analyzes the situation of the heroine’s moral choice from the standpoints of different characters and of opposing critical readings (N. A. Dobrolyubov and D. I. Pisarev), and then formulates and substantiates his own interpretation. Work on the case passes through the stages of an individual acquaintance with the situation, the identification of the problem and its causes, the analysis of positions and the search for solutions, the argumentation of these solutions, and, finally, presentation and discussion — frequently already in a group, collaborative format.

Both techniques develop critical thinking and the skills of evidence-based reasoning, shaping the student’s own view of the problem under study. By implementing productive methods of instruction — the problem-based, partial-search, and research methods — they transfer the analysis of a literary text into the mode of independent discovery and thereby sustain the enduring cognitive motivation of the future teacher of language and literature.

Thus, independent work emerges as the highest, internally motivated stage of learning activity, the productive dimension of which is revealed in concrete methodological techniques. The reading journal and the literary portfolio, the problem question and the case study based on Russian literature establish a clear algorithm of independent learning actions and at the same time leave room for interpretation, ensuring the unity of the procedural and the logical-substantive (cognitive-creative) dimensions of activity. The systematic application of such techniques develops self-regulation, self-control, and reflection in the future teacher of language and literature and forms an enduring readiness for self-education.

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