ORGANIZATION OF STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT WORK WITHIN STUDYING ENGLISH IN MODERN DIGITALIZED EDUCATIONAL CONDITIONS: CHINA AND EUROPE COMPARATIVE CONTEXT

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Abstract: The article is related to the organization of independent work of non-language faculties students while learning a foreign language. Comparative analysis of the organization of students' independent work within the course of studying English in Chinese higher education institutions is carried out with the reference to western- and Eastern European models (in particular, on the examples of France, Czech Republic, and Ukraine) The relevance of the research is proven with the fact that independent work of students is one of the most important elements of education and upbringing in higher education, thus its proper organization is crucial for the development of independence, creativity, and competitiveness as the major leading personality traits of a specialist with a university education. Moreover, it is demonstrated that students' individual perception and motivation during English classes have ethnopsychological background, which should be taken into account in designing methods and tools of teaching. The aim of the research is to present analysis of its main features, forms of presentation during English classes and benefits for the modern university learners along with the examples of the group of practical tasks. The outcomes of the ongoing research have witnessed the following advantages of the students' independent work within learning English: it provides the most complete fusion of knowledge, skills, personality orientation; it assumes various forms of students' activities; it ensures the highest level of knowledge acquisition, the formation of abilities, skills, contributes to the activation of their mental, creative activity; it is the basis of the future self-education of a specialist; it forms the appropriate motives that contribute to the implementation of the modern educational paradigm, which is based on the provision that learning is going on continuously throughout life; it affects the formation of different personality qualities in students, such as accuracy, diligence, self-criticism, organization, discipline, responsibility; it helps to develop strong-willed qualities - purposefulness, determination, perseverance and tenacity, initiative and independence.

Keywords: students' independent work; digitalization; on-line activities; English; information and computer technologies; practical English trainings.

1 Introduction

The development of modern society requires from the higher school the training of highly educated specialists capable of making non-standard decisions. In the conditions of growing integration of education, science, and of production, the task of preparation and formation of even more creative personality of a specialist stands out, as well as the task of gradual transformation of educational student's activity in professional sphere. Any real education is achieved only through self-education – namely it can provide constant growth of professional qualifications and self-improvement of a specialist, contributes to the improvement of the style of activity, encourages creative search [8; 33].

In this context, the task of a higher school is to educate a specialist who is constantly capable of improving own professional skills. According to the terms of the Bologna Declaration, in the process of learning, the proportion of direct information to the student decreases, while the use of interactive forms of student work under the guidance of a teacher, the share of independent work, self-organization, self-education of students are gradually increasing [7; 23; 38].

Independent work of the student in laboratories, reading rooms, participation in scientific research forms a modern specialist capable of assimilation and practical application of meaningful information. Modern requirements for specialist with a higher

education are focused not only on the level of his specialty knowledge, abilities and skills, but mastering a foreign language is also one of the key requirements facing the modern specialist and increasing his competitiveness in the labor market [3; 5; 9]. The problem of activating students' independent work is one of the main ones [2, 30, 42, 50]. The activation of independent work of students is understood as a purposeful joint activity of a teacher and students, involving the improvement of the content, forms, methods, techniques of cognitive activity in order to form positive educational motivation, increase the professional competence of future specialists based on the development of such personal qualities of students as activity, creativity, independence. Activation of independent work of students in the educational process is an important condition for improving their knowledge. It contributes to the formation of skills and abilities to apply the acquired knowledge in practice, leads to their deep and lasting assimilation, leads to a change in the position of the student in the educational process, turning him into an active subject of learning in universities and is possible if students master all the components of self-educational activity (motivational, goal-setting, organizational, procedural, controlling and evaluative). Pedagogical practice uses various ways of activating students' independent work, the main of which are: problem-based learning, a variety of forms, methods, teaching aids that stimulate the activity and independence of students.

The problem of activation of students' cognitive activity during study of foreign language as an educational subject is now acquiring increasingly more value. Teachers face the task of organizing the process of learning foreign language in such a way that students could experience it in practice, increasing the level of their knowledge; however, this type of activity causes the most difficulties in students. So the organization of independent work of the student becomes one of the priority tasks in the work of the teacher in educational institutions of any level [25, 50].

However, the concept of modern linguistic training should include, along with the study of languages, the study of a multinational, multiethnic culture, characterized as a set of material and spiritual achievements of peoples united by a planetary space [1, 46]. In particular, the modernization processes taking place in Chinese education in the last decade are aimed at solving strategic problems in this area. In the context of the rapid renewal of the content of education, a clear understanding of the changes in the language educational space of the country is necessary, in particular, in order to improve the methodology for teaching Chinese students English as a foreign language. The special mentality, socio-cultural, academic, ethno-psychological, and other traditions and characteristics of the representatives of the PRC suggest some specificity in determining the content and technologies of teaching a foreign language.

English is currently one of the most prestigious foreign languages in China. According to some estimates, it is studied by more than 200 million people living in mainland China, i.e., approximately one in six [32]. At the beginning of the new century (starting in 2001), the Chinese Ministry of Education began to encourage the transition of university programs to English-language instruction. Moreover, in modern China, projects to improve the level of English proficiency among the population receive significant support from the state, as contributing to the creation of a positive image of China. In addition to creating a positive image of China, government and public support for the teaching of English has a number of other reasons. In particular, English is the official language of the UN, the language of international communication, and knowledge of it is the main condition for career growth. However, as Chinese experts note, such transformations in the higher education

system are often associated with a number of difficulties: a lack of qualified teaching personnel, poor quality of teaching materials, lack of a language environment, and a learning situation that is more focused on passing an exam rather than acquiring new knowledge [31, 34]. Thus, the study of the possibilities of effective teaching of English in Chinese universities, taking into account both the best world practices and national characteristics, is a very relevant scientific task.

The purpose of this work is not only accumulation of professional knowledge, skills, and abilities by students, but it should create an opportunity for the development of students' creative abilities. Independent work of students is available as one of the components of the educational process, therefore it represents a system of organizational and didactic measures aimed at training specialists for various directions and specialties. Depending on the place and time of the event, the nature of the teacher's leadership and the way of controlling its results, there are the following types of independent work of students within learning a foreign language:

- Independent work during basic practical classes;
- Independent work under the teacher's control in the form of planned consultations, creative contacts, credit;
- Extracurricular independent work when the student performs homework, educational and creative tasks [6; 7; 39].
- Traditionally, independent work of students is carried out according to the following forms [24, 25, 55, 56]:
- Individual (referential message, course, diploma design, independent research work, individual consultations, Olympiads);
- Group (project and problem-based learning, cooperative learning, games design, group consultations, optional classes, classes in circles);
- Mass (project training, programmed training) (Figure 1) [18; 41].

Thus, considering the actuality of the students' independent educational work, the aim of the research is to present comprehensive theoretical analysis of its main features, forms of presentation during English classes and benefits for the modern university learners within ethnocultural context of students' background, along with the examples of the group of practical tasks, as well as conference paper themes formulations.
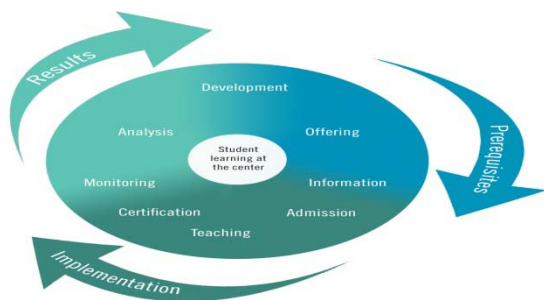

Figure 1. Students' independent work: main educational operations

Moreover, analyzing the changes that the modern education system has undergone at all levels as a result of a sharp jump in the development of digital technologies, it should be noted that namely in teaching a foreign language technical means are most in demand, allowing mastering the skills of perceiving information in a foreign language and reproducing speech samples, taking into account features of the sound pronunciation of specific letter combinations in words.

Currently, the potential of modern digital technologies greatly expands the ability of teachers to present educational material, to form linguistic competencies and, through the study of a foreign language, professional competencies [7].

Teaching a foreign language at a university is based on the creation of an artificial foreign language environment. The inclusion of educational and methodological materials developed through digital technologies in the learning process brings the educational process out of the traditional learning format, expands the prospects for teaching a foreign language at a university [24, 45, 49]. The advantages of digital technologies are the high speed of providing educational and methodological materials to students, the one-time provision of information to a large circle of people, the multimedia nature of high level and quality, which allows increasing the level of information perception and mastery of subject aspects, the technical simplicity of digital tools that are used to develop and create educational materials. Technologies based on artificial intelligence, as well as virtual and augmented reality, are increasingly being used.

Also, among the digital tools that contribute to the development of foreign language competencies, one should note the presence of educational platforms, the content of which can be used both in foreign language classes and as students' self-training. The combination of project and case learning methods and platform communications gives very impressive results, as evidenced by the experience of a number of countries, not only of the "Western" model, but also, in particular, China.

2 Literature Review

The term "independent educational work" is considered in the Pedagogical dictionary as "a type of educational activity in which a certain the level of independence of the student is present in all of its structural components - from the production problems to the implementation of control, self-control and correction, with the transition from performance of the simplest types of work to more complex ones that have exploratory nature, and in a means of forming the cognitive abilities of students, their focus on continuous self-education" [39, p. 134].

The concept of "independent work" is multifaceted, so it is natural that it did not receive a single interpretation in the pedagogical literature. For us, it is important to consider the concept of "independent work" in detail and analyze its essence in relation to different levels of education, because now the issue of acute relevance at all stages of life is continuous education of the individual. The only education system, where "each link would solve the problem (and apply the appropriate techniques and methods) that correspond to specific learning goals, leading learning motives and the age characteristics of the students is the task that is now on the agenda" [7, p. 24].

Researchers dealing with the problem of organizing independent work in relation to higher education emphasize that the term "independent work" has a different meaning. In particular, the concept of "independent work" is interpreted: as an independent search for necessary information, acquisition of knowledge, use of this knowledge for solving educational, scientific and professional tasks [38]; as an activity consisting of many elements: creative perception and understanding of educational material during the lecture, preparation for classes, exams, assessments, completion of coursework and diploma work [3, 12, 17, 33, 34].

Representatives of pedagogical science understand various types of independent work by individual, group cognitive activity of students in classes or in extracurricular time without direct supervision, but under supervision the teacher. B. Johansen and other researchers examine the organization of independent work in higher education institutions as a system of activities for the education of activity and independence as a personality trait [4; 14; 21].

Independent work is also understood by a number of authors as a system organization of pedagogical conditions that ensure educational management activities which take place in the absence of the teacher. Moreover, sometimes independent work is equated with self-education [24].

As can be seen from the above definitions and interpretations, independent work is considered, on the one hand, as a type of activity that stimulates independence, cognitive interest, and as a basis of self-education, pushing for further qualification improvement, and on the other hand – as a system of measures or pedagogical conditions that provide guidance for independent activity of students.

Thus, Drăcşineanu believes that "independent work in higher education exists as a specific pedagogical means of organization of independent management activity in the educational process" [11].

On the one hand, in opinion of Hamidah et al., independent work is an educational task, the object of the student's activity, offered by the teacher or programmed manual, on the other hand – it is a form of manifestation of a certain method of the activity of performing the corresponding educational task, namely the way of human activity in relation to obtaining completely new, previously unknown to him, knowledge, or about arrangement, deepening of existing knowledge [17].

Assaf describes independent work as "fulfillment of various educational tasks, production, research of self-educational nature, which act as a means of assimilating the system of professional knowledge, methods of cognitive and professional activity, formation of skills and abilities of creative activity and professional skills" [2].

According to Candlin and Mercer [8], the following characteristics are inherent to the independent work of students:

- It forms in the learner, on each stage of his movement from ignorance to knowledge, and requires a certain volume and level of knowledge, skills and abilities to solve cognitive tasks;
- It forms in the student's psychological attitude to the systematic replenishment of own knowledge and developing skills to navigate the flow of scientific information;
- It is the most important condition of self-organization of the learner is mastering methods of professional activity, cognition and behavior;
- It is a tool of pedagogical guidance and management of independent cognitive and scientific and industrial activity of the student in the process of study and professional self-determination (Figure 2) [4; 13; 29].
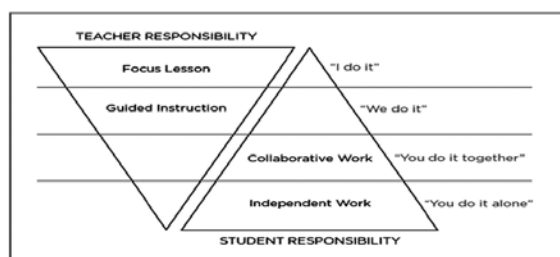

Figure 2. Cooperation between students and teachers within independent work

3 Methodology

Learning a foreign language is a process of direct immediate development and self-development of the student. Namely for this reason, a foreign language should be treated as a discipline for developing practical skills, and the grammar-translation approach in teaching should be moved away [3; 9]. The major purpose of learning a foreign language lies in the development of communicative competence of students, which is the basis of language skills. In turn, the development of communicative competence depends on social-cultural and sociolinguistic knowledge and skills providing the interrelationship with the society and contributing to the socialization of the individual in this society. Thus, the elements of ethnocultural direction in andragogy are applied in the article.

The overall methods used in the course of the present research are as follows: theoretical (studying and analysis of linguistic, methodological, pedagogical, psychological literature on the research problem); pedagogical (monitoring the course of the educational process; conversations with teachers and students); immanent (description, analysis); fact-gathering method; generalization [9; 51].

The effectiveness of pedagogical interaction in the classroom depends on numerous factors, namely: successful determination of the goals of joint activities, compliance of pedagogical tactics with the specific task of this interaction, the activity of students. Along with this, the factor of optimal choice of teaching methods is of particular importance – their implementation in the specific conditions of the educational institution gives a high level of quality of students' training [12; 18; 19].

The analysis of research and practice allows us to distinguish the main approaches and methods of teaching foreign languages in higher education institutions. The classical teaching methodology is based on studying grammar, reading books, understanding the language as a full-fledged means of communication, and involving focused work with all language components [4].

The main methods of teaching in the process of foreign language communicative training involve demonstration of a new foreign language material and ways of operating it:

- Management of learning activities;
- Organization of students' independent search;
- Teacher's explanation;
- Organization of training;
- Control of students' progress [9; 13].

4 Results

To activate independent work, it is necessary to observe the following conditions:

- Ensuring the correct combination of the volume of classroom and extra-auditory space for the independent work of students;
- Methodical organization of all types of independent works of students;
- Providing the student with the necessary methodical materials for the purposeful transformation of the process of independent work into a creative process;
- Control over the organization and progress of independent work;
- Use of student incentives for quality performance of independent work [23, 22; 41].

Among the most effective methods in modern pedagogical practice of independent work of students, contributing to individualization and intensification of educational process, one should highlight [2; 12; 35]: problem-searching methods; method of project education; methods of collective mental activity. The method of applying the latest information and communication technologies in training should also be included here [12; 29; 41].

Problem-searching methods are aimed at activating cognitive student activities. The application of these methods encourages students to conducting independent research and increases the motivation for further work, promotes the development of logical thinking; as a result, the development of their creativity independent activity takes place. The ideal result of learning by problem-solving methods is the formation of skills to rationally apply every component of systems of these methods in development and interconnection. Composite part of these methods is the student's independent work and his work under the guidance of the teacher. The method of independent work is used in various types of educational activities, for example: extracurricular work with authentic or specialized literature; work with authentic or professional literature in lessons; working with authentic or professional literature in foreign languages,

setting the goal of acquiring the skills to obtain the necessary information without distortions of technical content [6; 12; 36].

Working with an article, for example, can include the following stages:

1. Understanding the task.
2. Overview reading of the entire article.
3. Identification of informative text.
4. Reading the identified parts to obtain complete information.
5. Informational and semantic analysis and recording of the required information by means of native or foreign language [20; 30; 34].

Figure 3 demonstrates the effectiveness of various language active learning methods.
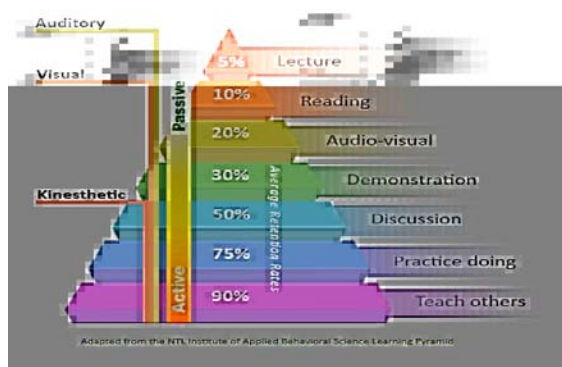

Figure 3. The percentage results of the English language active learning methods

In China, the use of organizational forms of teaching English to Chinese students in a blended learning environment has its own characteristics. In particular, when doing written work in electronic form, Chinese students expect editing. The teacher uses commenting "in the margins" of the document, without interfering with the trainee's thinking. The ability to leave text comments is available in many Google document formats: text, spreadsheets, presentations, and drawings [19]. This tool is indispensable in those forms of organization of "teacher-student" interaction that require the support of the student - help, advice, feedback, and not just the final scoring or control. It is also possible to comment on the work of students by voice.

Classes with online simulators or other electronic resources can be implemented both in the classroom and in independent work at home. Online simulators, educational platforms, or other electronic resources can be used as one of the stages of the lesson, as a stage of explaining the material (presentation, video, etc.), independent homework or extracurricular English classes. The WORDWALL platform is one of the innovative and versatile tools that can be used to create interactive and printed materials for practicing lexical, phonetic, and grammatical skills. The method of operation of this platform is similar to popular among teachers Learning Apps, but WORDWALL has a much higher functionality used in blended and distance learning. Printed versions can be used as self-study assignments. Even the free version gives the access to a huge stock of exercises.

Particular attention is paid to the development of reading skills and abilities of Chinese students. A testing based on the Stroop experiment, which is used in psychology to determine the flexibility of cognitive thinking, is applied. If a person can quickly switch from reading words to designating colors, then his cognitive thinking is quite flexible. It is about a contradiction between what was read and what was seen. In the classroom, the teacher explains task 1 (name the color of the word in English), and an online simulator is offered for self-training, which is located in the QR code in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Examples of tasks for the development of cognitive linguistic thinking in Chinese universities [53]

Wedge table exercises (Figure 5) are used to expand the horizontal and vertical components of the clear vision spot. Daily work with wedge-shaped tables for 5–7 minutes will help to significantly speed up the speed of reading and reading comprehension.
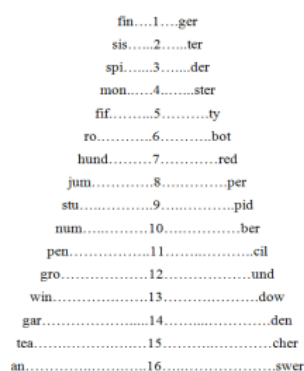

Figure 5. An example of an exercise with wedge tables [52]

To organize independent individual reading, the famous series of adapted popular science books by the Oxford University publishing house Read and Discover for English learners, starting from the Elementary level, is used. Colorful, well-structured manuals are popular with Chinese students as additional material. In addition to learning English and improving reading skills, one can learn interesting facts about the life of our planet and the surrounding galaxy, unusual historical, scientific, and non-scientific hypotheses. Books of the Read and Discover series are completed with audio versions and workbooks, which allows them to be used in any foreign language lesson, as well as for independent work. Every week students listen, read, and translate into their native language 3-4 chapters of the book (Figure 5), writing out 7-10 new words with their definition in English. Then they record a video reading of one chapter for a test reading and send it to the teacher in a personal chat, and after the test they perform various tasks on the chapters they have read. Gradually, students begin to develop tasks for their classmates themselves and discuss the contents of the book together. This type of work allows students to plan a weekly amount of reading, increases the motivation for reading due to the various possibilities of working with text [53].

Linguistic studies of recent years demonstrate a particular interest in the phenomenon of multilingualism (polylingualism). The Department of Language Policy of the Council of Europe defines polylingualism as "a person's knowledge of several foreign languages (at different levels of competence)" [22]. As a result, knowledge of foreign languages becomes a very significant skill in the field of personal and professional communication of a person and contributes to the formation of an internationally oriented personality. The use of various types and methods of work in multilingual lessons contributes to the formation of both subject and meta-subject results: students develop skills in working with texts in two languages, the ability to get out of a difficult situation in the face of a shortage of

language tools when receiving information, the ability to freely switch from one language into another, refract learned lexical and grammatical moments in a different speech situation, which is extremely important for successful independent work of students.

The strategy of the new Internet Plus Education in China is developing faster every day, and the deep integration of the Web into the educational process has become the vanguard of innovation and reform in the field of education. Compared to traditional learning, digital learning of a foreign language includes relatively new content, organization of the educational process, principles, approaches, components and concepts. The curriculum includes digital learning resources and educational service systems, mainly in the format of images, videos, PPT presentations, and other comprehensive educational presentation resources. There is an increase in the number of platform solutions for learning languages - in this China is even ahead of European countries. At present, in China, three types of platform solutions that are used in the educational process are distinguished [50, 52]:

1. Multidisciplinary platforms: The content of this type of platform is comprehensive, including the humanities and fields such as society, education, art, science, etc. The content is co-created with well-known schools, qualified teachers and professional teams (institutional platform or school platform), such as Superstar Erya, NetEase, China MOOC University, etc.
2. Streaming platforms: Their hallmark is a high degree of interactivity. Compared with video recording, broadcasting, and other forms of online learning, streaming can enable effective communication and interaction, allow timely responses to questions, and maximize student offline learning, thus educational technology can become more efficient. During online streaming, the teacher can control the learning process of students, motivating them to focus on the lesson. Also, the teacher tries to ensure effective learning time and the degree of comprehensibility of the material by students. Streaming platforms not only improve the quality of video recording, but also have a beneficial effect on the development of distance learning (for example, Tencent Classroom, Duobei, Dingtalk, Yuketang, etc.).
3. Specialized platforms for learning a foreign language. Among the specialized platforms, we note the following:
▪ Putclub Online forum for learning English; exercises in listening, speaking, reading, and writing in English. Practicing English for business communication, foreign trade, travel, interviews and other comprehensive courses; preparation for international exams in English: CET-4, CET-6, IELTS, TOEFL, SAT, GMAT; a large number of additional resources for learning English
▪ Translation School. Software for learning English vocabulary and listening comprehension, videos with subtitles; informational video on the study of the theory and practice of translation
▪ 51talk. An online platform for learning English, aimed at an individual approach to the student; teachers are native speakers. 51talk English is a professional online English language platform specializing specifically in individual learning.
▪ Hujiang. Its products include Hujiang Net, CCtalk, Hujiang Net School, and Happy Cichang; learning English, Japanese, Korean, German, Spanish, Thai, and other languages; acquaintance with the basics of the language, practice of listening, speaking, vocabulary, reading, acquaintance with the culture and national specifics of the language being studied, preparation for passing the exam for studying abroad. Hujiang has successfully developed an intelligent learning system that contains a series of interconnected, integrated, and compatible technologies and functional modules that can effectively apply and combine digital technology with a variety of experiences of teachers and students in the learning and cognition process. The software script allows performing the functions of

teaching, learning, practice, and testing. In order to ensure the accessibility of the educational environment in remote primary and secondary rural schools, the founder of Hujiang in October 2015 initiated the Hujia Project, a social welfare project in the field of distance education. It aims to change traditional education through distance learning, implement a joint course and exchange online courses throughout China, enable small schools in remote areas to use high-quality educational resources, and make learning easier, more accessible and more interesting [33].

It should be noted that in Chinese culture, the teacher plays a major role in the learning process. The authority of the teacher is indisputable. Respect for the teacher as a senior mentor in China is instilled from early childhood. As a result, students try to complete all tasks, following all the requirements of the teacher, since the competence of the teacher is not questioned. When introducing new, non-typical teaching methods, it is observed that Chinese students may experience difficulties. They are not ready to argue with their teachers, to enter into a discussion with them, as they expect the usual instructions from them. So that all participants in the educational process do not have problems in mutual understanding and communication, the teacher needs to model interaction with students in such a way that it does not contradict national characteristics. When working with Chinese students, it is necessary to take into account the peculiarities of their mentality. The Chinese rarely show initiative in communication, they try not to ask 'unnecessary' questions, being afraid to show disrespect and tactlessness to the interlocutor. National features of the Chinese character, such as modesty, unwillingness to impose own opinion, can make it difficult to conduct such communicative forms of work as discussions, brainstorming, round tables, and expressing opinions. In such an environment, namely independent work based on the use of digital tools comes to the fore as an effective means of teaching a foreign language.

The transition to problem-based learning can act as an alternative option. Students learn to make their own decisions and evaluate learning outcomes [6]. As part of problem-based learning, students develop their own projects. The project method is a universal method that can be easily integrated into any lesson structure.

In the EU countries, a number of other effective strategies and tools are used to organize independent work of students in learning a foreign language. In particular, in France, the development of transversal skills among engineering students is an important task on the way to solving the problem of producing a specialist who is adapted and competent to the requirements of the enterprise. The choice of new educational strategies underlies the competency-based approach to the educational activities of universities and the orientation of training towards practical activities, as provided for by modern educational standards [10]. Today, in order to be in demand in the labor market, a university graduate, in addition to professional competencies, must acquire communication skills, business communication skills not only in native language, but also in English, computer literacy, the ability to use Internet services, and adaptability to changes. Based on the experience of the European Union, leading European universities, French educators are aware that in the development of these skills, along with the content of education, the teaching methodology used plays an important role.

In particular, in one of the engineering universities in France, creative tasks were developed for the video material VideoTed.Talks, Andrew Forrest "A radical plan to end plastic waste" for the profile "Machines and apparatus for industrial ecology" for undergraduate students with an average level of foreign language proficiency. The teachers tried to develop exercises aimed primarily at developing skills such as expressing own opinion, problem solving, developing creative thinking, teamwork, and the ability to find the advantages and disadvantages of a given topic. The tasks below were preceded by a series of tasks for learning new vocabulary (translating new

words and phrases from English into French, answering questions on the video material, filling in the gaps, etc.).

1. Work in groups. Select all the possible statements from the video material and try to come up with your own or change the ones given.

2. We divide the class into several working groups. Group discussion. What is the role of the environmental engineer in industrial development? How does this affect the operation of the enterprise as a whole? Is teamwork important to produce fruitful results in dealing with pollution problems? Give reasonable justifications using lexical constructions from the video.

3. Work in groups. Imagine that you are the owner of a company that manufactures polymer products. The following questions are presented for group discussion:

1) What types of polymer products would you like to produce and why? Where would you put the issue of environmental protection (purchase of appropriate equipment, etc.) and making a profit? What imperative goal would you set first? How will it contribute to benefit and profit?
2) What criteria must the management personnel of such an enterprise meet in order to qualify for fame? Use the words and phrases from the video as much as possible.
3) If you start manufacturing hearing aids, what will it be like? What imperative goal would you set first? How will it benefit and profit?
4) Divide the class into four groups. Each group should think about the negative impact of plastic waste on the environment. Each group should make a mini presentation using the information from the video.
5) Try to answer questions and write a resume. What is an environmental engineer? What does an environmental engineer do? What is the job of an environmental engineer?

After conducting such classes, students were sent a questionnaire reflecting their personal opinions and interests. "Do you think that video lessons with VideoTed.Talks with tasks and exercises help develop creative thinking, expressing your opinion, teamwork, problem solving skills, organization, readiness to learn new things, but also, of course, enrich your engineering vocabulary and most effectively improve your speaking skills?" All students answered "yes" [7]. Thus, such an innovative synergistic form of teaching a foreign language simultaneously with teaching a specialty (in this case, engineering) is an effective form of learning that creates a stimulating language environment designed not only to improve language skills, but also to solve the key problem of developing students' transversal skills.

In the Czech Republic, educators with experience in working with computers seek to interest students in the "digital game", creating favorable opportunities for learning a foreign language through the use of computer games within the educational process or digital game-based learning, even MMORPG. In MMORPGs, the system of alliances and clans - in-game associations of players - is extremely important. Discussing the game, farming resources, negotiations with other clans, social institutions and leveling, joint events and complex quests - there are a lot of communication options. Communication is provided using chats or game servers, for example, in Discord. Moreover, in large alliances they often communicate using audio and video communications. MMORPGs are played all over the world, so English is considered the most common language in clans - thus, this is a unique platform for learning English.

In one study conducted in the Czech Republic, a group of 118 students improved their English skills in an MMORPG, while a control group of 102 students took classical classes with a teacher. The experiment itself took 2 months. The experimental group did not study according to the classical system. Instead, the students were given an MMORPG. Especially for this study, a training scheme was developed inside an online game for the

development of writing, reading, and listening skills. As part of the educational process, students were united in game groups ("parties") and sent to complete quests. Part of the training quests was specially created on closed servers to enhance the result - as part of the gameplay. In these quests, the researchers recreated the principles of repeating educational material in a game mode. The quest already had a certain number of new words, and in the course of its execution they were repeated. All completed tasks were rewarded with experience and loot, as well as more difficult tasks. At the end of the two-month experiment, all participants passed the final test, during which the experimental group showed markedly better results compared to the control group [32]. The experimental group improved their listening skills the most (which usually causes the greatest difficulties in classical English teaching). The dynamics of improvement was almost twice as high as in the control group. Reading and writing also improved markedly. Among the main reasons for this result, researchers identify interactivity and involvement in the process: the student does not just perform exercises, but completes game quests. Namely this ecosystem allows multiplying the results of the study. The advantage of this method is the principle of student independence and minimal teacher intervention. The specificity of the use of computer games as a means of motivation for learning a foreign language is the formation of sustainable internal motivation. The latter, in turn, originates from extrinsic motivation. The data obtained during the survey confirm the hypothesis according to which the passion for online games, which involve communication in English, contributes to the transformation of external motivation into internal one. The role of the teacher is to help students in the formation of their individual educational trajectory, taking into account the factor of live communication in English. A necessary condition for such work is a direct discussion and analysis of the difficulties that arise in the course of communication and the communicative success of students. Such work not only allows transferring knowledge directly, but helps to learn independently and continuously, gain knowledge and master new skills and abilities.

However, unlike Western culture, which puts the individual "Self" at the forefront, such a concept as "personality" in Chinese culture is not implied in the Western understanding of this concept, due to the fact that collectivism is superior to individualism in Chinese cultural 'profile' [38]. Namely for this reason, it is difficult for Chinese students to publicly express their opinions, because they are supposed to be part of a collective and need to agree with the majority. In addition, it is unacceptable for the Chinese to lose "face" (reputation), and as a result, many Chinese prefer not to express their thoughts in public.

Among the characteristic differences of Chinese students, one should note a special restraint: the difference between the Chinese and Europeans is that they try to avoid a situation that could put one of the interlocutors in an uncomfortable position. The Chinese strive to preserve both their own and someone else's 'face', which in China is called "culture of face (reputation)", that was formed historically. In discussions, Chinese students are primarily concerned with other people's feelings and express their opinions tactfully. After graduating from secondary education and entering foreign universities (including those whose branches are located in China but teach according to Western methods), it is difficult for Chinese students to adapt to a new educational environment in which, unlike most schools in China, communicative approach is applied. To overcome this gap, digital games-based learning seems to be a highly expedient tool.

The experience of Ukraine is also interesting. While organizing the annual students' conference on the Faculty of International Relations in one of famous national universities, the participants were proposed the following themes of their research papers within independent work module [55]:

1. Benefits of International Studying;
2. Differences between Ukrainian and Foreign Universities;

3. Respected Universities around the Globe;
4. Basic Requirements for Entering Universities in Different Countries;
5. Soft Skills as Important Abilities of Modern Professionals in Legal Area;
6. Studying Law in the UK (USA, France, Poland, Turkey, Spain, Germany, Italy);
7. On-Line Platforms for Learning English: Challenges and Opportunities;
8. International Programs for Studying Law;
9. International Programs for Learning English;
10. Travelling and Its Advantages for Self Development and Self Education;
11. Necessary Communicative Skills for Winning Debates and Negotiations;
12. Translator's Main Capabilities;
13. Distance Learning: Challenges and Opportunities for Modern Youth.

In Ukrainian higher education, it is considered desirable to pay more attention to working with periodicals in foreign languages to improve search tasks: write out a professional vocabulary, analyze the titles of articles, make an announcement according to the sample, plan an article that interests a student, write out and analyze advertising slogans and create own [25; 26].

The project learning method is aimed at achieving the predicted goals results of independent work. The project method allows organically integrate students' knowledge from different areas around solving one problems, gives an opportunity to apply the acquired knowledge in practice, while generating new ideas. The use of this method is impractical and impossible without a clear definition of didactic tasks, which students solve in educational activities according to various types of projects.

Regarding foreign language classes, the project is specially organized by the teacher as a complex of actions performed by students independently and it ends with the creation of a creative product. The project is valuable because namely in progress of its implementation, students learn to independently acquire knowledge, get experience of cognitive and educational activities. Project methodology is characterized by high communicativeness and implies students' expression of their own thoughts, feelings, their active inclusion in real life activity, acceptance of personal responsibility for advancement in education [1; 29; 54].

The project methodology is based on the cyclical organization of the educational process. A separate cycle is considered as a completed independent period of study, aimed at solving a certain problem in achieving a common goal of mastering a foreign language [27; 28]. The main goals of introducing the project method into the educational process are as follows: to show the ability of an individual student or a group of students to use the acquired learning process method, research experience; realize student' own interest in the subject of research, increase knowledge about it; to demonstrate level of foreign language proficiency; rise to a higher level of education, development, social maturity. A distinctive feature of the project methodology is special form of organization. When organizing work on the project, it is important to note that several conditions must be observed:

a) The topic can be related to both the country of the language being studied and the country of residence;
b) The problem is formulated so as to orient students to involving facts from related fields of knowledge and various sources of information;
c) It is necessary to engage in work all students, offering each task taking into account their level of language skills;
d) To activate students' activities, teacher should propose an interesting and relevant problem.

Project methodology combines verbal and other means of illustrative expression techniques: drawings, collages, plans, maps, schemes, questionnaires tables, graphs and charts. Thus, the development of communicative skills is reliably supported by a variety of means that transmit other information. The project method can transform foreign language lessons in discussion-research, a club in which interesting, practically oriented solutions of significant and relevant problems for students are developed [11, 13].

At the heart of the implementation of any project, a certain problem lies, and its solving requires not only knowledge of the language, but also mastery of a large volume of various subject knowledge necessary to solve this problem. In addition, students need to possess certain intellectual, creative, communicative skills. Skills can be attributed to the first work with information, with text in English (or any another) (it implies highlighting the main idea, conducting a search for the necessary information in English text), analysis of information, making generalizations, conclusions for the competent use of the project method, a significant preparatory work [37, 42].

The experience of working with the project method allows highlighting the main requirements for using the project method, namely:

1. The presence of a significant research and creative problem/task that requires integrated knowledge, a research search for its solution (for example, the study of the history of the celebration of various holidays in English-speaking countries – St. Patrick's Day, Thanksgiving Day, Halloween, Christmas, Mother's Day and organization of appropriate events, organization of trips to different countries; problems of families, the problem of free time among young people);
2. Practical, theoretical significance of the expected results;
3. Independent (individual, pair, group) activity of students on English classes;
4. Structuring the substantive part of the project;
5. Use of research methods: definition of the problem, tasks implying the research resulting from it, the proposal of a hypothesis, finding solution, discussion of research methods, design of final results, analysis of the received data, summarizing, corrections, conclusions [17, 22, 41].

The choice of project topics can be different in different situations. Informed English language project method can be used within program material on almost any topic, since the selection of topics is conducted with practical relevance to those who study English (or another foreign language). The main thing is to formulate the problem that students will work on in the process of working on the topic programs. The role of the teacher in the preparation of project presentations consists in guiding and advising students, he can also prompt vocabulary and correct grammatical constructions if necessary. Performance evaluation of the project can be carried out by the group members themselves by voting, or the teacher independently evaluates students' projects, and it is mandatory to indicate the weaknesses and strengths of each project [17, 27, 29].

Application of the latest information and communication technologies in training consists in the use of computer technologies and the Internet as the main way of interest and encouragement of students to independent work. The use of computer technology caused the appearance of a new form of organization of the educational process – work with search engines. The Internet provides unlimited access to a large amount of language and country studies material, detailed description of the latest technologies, innovations, the opportunity to constantly increase the level of mastering language [4; 22, 44].

Figure 6 shows the vision of active learning methods as they can be applied in working with online sources and online educational communication.
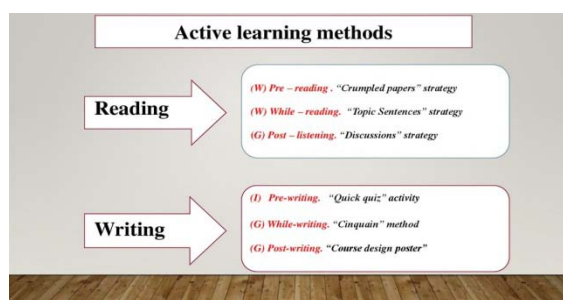
Figure 6. Students' independent work active learning methods in reading and writing

Communication of young people online with foreigners changes their attitude to a foreign language - it is transformed from an educational subject into a real means of communication. All this becomes a powerful motivational factor for learning a foreign language. The purpose of independent work with such systems can be: formation of the ability to independently select the material according to one specified subject; development of theoretical material; the ability to solve practical problems assignments from particular specialty and development of argumentation and drafting skills of a logically related message as suggested, or independently chosen topic. Today there are a number of computer programs for studying, development, and improvement of students' knowledge, abilities and skills [23, 24, 41].

The Internet is an excellent means of obtaining information about the latest events in the world, almost all significant newspapers in the world have their web pages. Information on the variety of periodicals can be obtained from by visiting the Media Info page (http://www.mediainfo.com/emedia), which offers links to many publications. In Ukraine, the use of online magazines in foreign language lessons, or blogs gradually receives spreading. A blog is a personal website that is organized in the form of a journal or diary, it is a bright form of independent work of students. Campbell University in its classification of blogs in use in teaching language disciplines claims that the learner blog is a blog supported by the student individually [9].

In the Internet, one can found many blogs, which are describing things at work, hobbies, social and political problems, and have their followers Most bloggers today use Blogger (www.blogger.com) or WordPress services http://wordpress.com [9].

An important element of independent educational activity of students at mastering a foreign language is the use of video materials. Work with such materials diversify students' activities, increase the level of motivation for learning a foreign language, gives an opportunity to work with authentic samples of the language, which is especially relevant in view of the lack of foreign language environment. The effectiveness of video materials for communicative language teaching is obvious [6].

Video materials provide the most accurate representation of language in use because in them, language is used by specific speakers and is closely related to a certain speech language situation; moreover, communicative purpose is reinforced by a number of visuals, coded non-linguistic characteristics (postures, facial expressions, gestures) [3; 5; 8; 11]. Selection of the video material must correspond to the topics studied according to the program. Working with video material consists in conducting preparatory exercises implying a series of questions and review tasks being performed before viewing and understanding of the video material, as well as the final set of exercises on discussion of what has been seen and completion of creative written tasks. Task, which are performed before watching the video, contain exercises on predicting the content of the film, working with vocabulary, setting students to perception of relevant material, activation of background knowledge [6; 8; 27]. Discussion of movies and performing exercises helps to develop memory,

attention, logical and creative thinking, as well as deepening students' knowledge about the country, language which is being studied. The set of exercises should be aimed at the development of every types of speech activity, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing [3, 13, 38].

The use of modern educational technologies with the application of electronic educational and methodological and test resources makes it possible to focus on the dominant cognitive style of each individual, stimulate his interest in the material being studied, develop his communication skills and thereby influence the quality of professional language training of a future specialist [5, 10, 46]. Significant advantages in the use of these technologies lie not only in the students' independent search for useful data on the Internet, but also in the active use of virtual, augmented, and mixed reality technologies in the formation of foreign language competence of students, especially of non-linguistic specialties. US universities are already widely using educational games using AR technology in the educational process. A significant experience in this area is the developments of the University of New Mexico on the creation of the game Mentira, a detective quest based on the historical events of the city of Albuquerque for students studying Spanish. Mentira uses the ARIS (Augmented Reality for Interactive Story telling) platform, which was developed by a small group of programmers led by D. Gagnon from the University of Wisconsin-Madison [51]. Portuguese researchers in their experiment also indicate that "the use of AR and VR in teaching foreign languages has a positive effect on the deepening of knowledge" [41]. The main purpose of the pilot study was to make the foreign language teachers of the university understand the advantages of using augmented and virtual reality as a tool that helps students immerse themselves in the language environment, which can be effectively used instead of classical listening exercises when the student does not interact with a native speaker. Of interest is the Virtual Speech solution - this program, using a virtual reality helmet, helps to feel like a speaker at a conference. It also develops communication skills in a foreign language, memory and listening skills of sounding foreign speech. In this application, there is a function of the ability to save the audio file of student' speech in front of virtual colleagues.

Today in China, VR is concentrated almost exclusively namely on education. There are few programs where Virtual Reality has been fully implemented. However, the government is encouraging different education groups in starting to transfer learning into VR [15]. "Both on a national and local level, Chinese educators are investing heavily. The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology established the first government-backed Industry of Virtual Reality Alliance. Despite this, crafting pedagogies for VR is proving difficult. Academics have called for new design guidelines, an assessment of the effective use of VR in everyday teaching and learning as well as greater awareness of how VR can address cultural sensitivities" [16]. Although AR and VR are used in China predominantly not in teaching foreign languages but in other disciplines, there is high potential of using this technology.

5 Discussion

It is important to enable formation of independent work skills in students as early as possible. It is known that graduates who successfully engage in the independent activities, subsequently successfully improve their qualifications and professional level. Self-education should be considered as the main direction of professional growth and as the most important means of 'civilized' ensuring the specialist's competitiveness on the labor market. The formation of the experience of self-education shows: firstly, the presence of a need to independently acquire and constantly improve the knowledge necessary for implementation of successful activities; secondly, mastering modern methods and means of using information; thirdly, the skill of rational organization of own cognitive activity – ability to plan, carry out, evaluate, adjust [4, 12, 51]. Figure 7 below clearly shows the effectiveness of active learning methods.
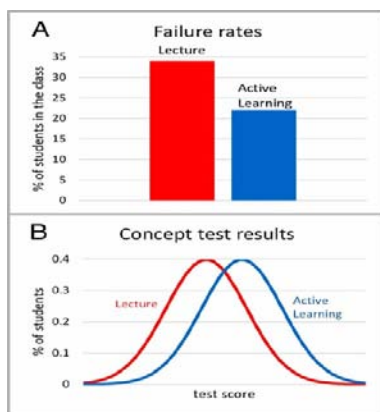
*Figure 7. The effectiveness of active learning in students'
independent work*

In the psychological and pedagogical literature, the issue of reasons and factors causing inefficiency and non-productivity independent work of students are considered. In particular, among these reasons, there are weak orientation of the traditional education system on individualization and personal growth of the student as a subject of educational activity, lack of accounting his potential opportunities and individual psychological features, the level of his readiness for independent educational activity, lack of real educational cooperation of the teacher with students, shortcomings in the organizational and methodological support of the learning process [3, 12, 24, 34].

The effectiveness of independent work is also reduced by factors such as vagueness of assignments according to forms of independent work, vagueness in criteria assessments, late delivery of them to students, inconsistency of task topics with SRS ('road map') and topics of lecture classes, uneven load during the semester and the lateness of issuing tasks for the independent students' work, the lack of a room where students can be effectively engaged in the independent work, vague methodical instructions for performing tasks within independent work, students' formal approach to the implementation of the independent work, lack of creative independent work skills [1, 12, 20, 46].

In addition, among the limited opportunities of teachers in the implementation of individual work, incompetent approach to students is also noted: high complexity of individual tasks for the independent students' work and inconsistency of their systematic updating; high complexity of individual tasks verification; impossibility of timely delivery of results for checking tasks for each student and explaining errors and shortcomings due to large number of students in the group [8, 13, 25, 35].

To overcome the above-mentioned shortcomings, the following organization of students' independent work was proposed in the Ukrainian context, combining three conceptual learning environments (see Figure 8):
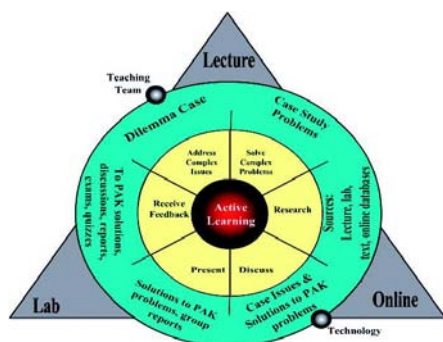

Figure 8. Three active English language learning environments

The tasks provided below were proven as effective for organization of students' independent work within learning English in Ukraine [11, 23, 38, 42]:

Educational Independent Work Training #1. Open the group discussion by paraphrasing the quotations below. Which one do you agree with? Why?

▪ The most important thing in communication is to hear what isn't being said. Peter F. Drucker.
▪ Good communication is just as stimulating as black coffee, and just as hard to sleep after. Anne Morrow Lindbergh.
▪ Communicate in a respectful manner – don't just tell your team members what you want, but explain to them why. Jeffrey Morales.
▪ Wise men speak because they have something to say; Fools speak because they have to say something. Plato.
▪ The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place. George Bernard Shaw.
▪ Effective communication is 20% what you know and 80% how you feel about what you now. Jim Rohn.
▪ There is only one rule for being a good talker – learn to listen. Christopher Morley.

Educational Independent Work Training #2. Show what you know. Study the following vocabulary giving extensive explanations; come up with statements including some of them as well as try to add couple of your own to this list. Consider the presented tips for using lexis:

▪ Look carefully through the list to make sure you know the words and are confident that you can use them in your written or spoken English.
▪ Look up the meaning of any new words and put them in a sentence. If you're not sure your sentence is correct, post it in the comments section at the bottom of the page and we'll check it for you.
▪ Make a handwritten note of any new words, ideally in a separate note pad that you carry with you. Whenever you have a few minutes – waiting for a bus, just before going to sleep, waiting for the kettle to boil – take out the list and look through, reminding yourself of the word and the meaning.
▪ Improving your vocabulary for IELTS takes practice, so try to use the new word(s) in any suitable situation over the next few weeks – using the new word will help you remember it!
▪ Write the new word a number of times – writing down vocabulary will help you remember it and will also help with spelling.

Educational Independent Work Training #3. Get acquainted with two scientific researches concerning advantages and disadvantages of internet communication skimming together with scanning two texts below. Prove the content comprehension with 10 questions for groupmates' discussion. Exchange the list of enquiries with other partners in form of dialogues and mini-presentations.

Educational Independent Work Training #4. Write an opinion essay based on topic "The Pros and Cons of Online and Offline Communication" applying the following linkers: to express opinion, in my opinion, personally, I think / I believe (that I strongly believe that, it is clear (to me) that, I (completely) agree/disagree with, it seems to me that, as I see it, in my view, from my point of view, as far I am concerned, I am sure / convinced that, I (dis)agree with the statement, because my main reason is/another reason, one reason for is, many people say / believe that, because, since, because of / due to.

Educational Independent Work Training #5. Broadly applying various possible modern translation techniques and appliances (paper Cambridge dictionary, on-line translation, on-line dictionaries), change the following into Ukrainian putting it in your own words. Comment on what you have read.

Educational Independent Work Training #6. Research activity: complete this list looking for as more as possible the newest expressions lately appeared in modern speaking on business.

Educational Independent Work Training #7. Make a project on the theme "Global Communication: Barriers and Opportunities" in three possible deliveries: a) presentation in front of audience with personal speech and comments; b) written report-analysis based on collective data from various sources; c) multimedia option presented by means of selected topical video.

Figure 8 explains the logic of these work trainings.

Figure 8. Cycle of the successfully organized independent students' work

At the same time, for Chinese students, such highly communicative methods of learning English will likely appear not effective, due to above-mentioned features of national mentality. The ethnopsychological characteristics of students also correlate with national differences in educational systems and prevailing teaching methods. When developing a methodological and didactic "canvas" of students' independent work within studying English, these features should be taken into account, since the success or slowdown in the process of forming skills and abilities of all types of speech activity in a foreign language directly depends on the level of their formation in their native language (or first foreign language) and is determined by the individual-subjective aspects of the process of assimilation/mastery of language and communicative competencies,

6 Conclusion

Thus, the correct organization of independent work of students at learning a foreign language will allow developing in students skills of independent activities, self-education skills and desire to professional self-improvement, the ability to independently make reasoned decisions. Application of the latest information and communication technologies represents extremely effective tools in self-organization works of students and deserves wide use. Computer technologies and the Internet create an opportunity for comprehensive development of speech, speaking, writing and listening skills, they allow a deeper understanding of the culture of the country whose language is being studied, encourage interest in learning a foreign language.

Therefore, it helps to increase the productivity of students' independent work using a differentiated approach to its organization and maintenance. Differentiated learning is a system of education that ensures development the personality of each student, taking into account his capabilities, interests, inclinations and abilities; it is a form of organization of the educational process in which the teacher works with a group of students formed taking into account availability of any general qualities significant for the educational process in them; it is a part of the general didactic system, which ensures the specialization of the educational process for different groups of students.

The main goal of organizing students' self-study and independent work is creating the most comfortable conditions for shaping effective learning personalities that ensure their achievement of such a level of assimilation material that corresponds to their cognitive abilities (but not below the minimum), as well as the development of these abilities.

In the basis of the organization of students' independent work, differentiation can be laid: according to characteristic individual and ethnopsychological student' traits; according to organizational form of education; according to the content of works; according to the form of providing pedagogical support.

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Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AI, AM