TEACHING STUDENTS BELONGING TO DIGITAL GENERATION: PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

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The article focuses on the nature and characteristics of digital generation or generation Z. The author pays special attention to strategies that can be useful for English teachers who work with this generation. It is noted that electronic educational environment is very important for successful implementation of teaching strategies. The author shares experience how to make students' autonomous work more effective. While using electronic educational platforms students are given some freedom in the choice of educational content but their professional interests and proficiency level in a foreign language should be taken into consideration. As a result, the process of learning becomes more exciting and efficient. The author considers an individual approach to be an effective way for professional and cultural competence development. The author comes to the conclusion that tutors play a great role in motivating students for autonomous work, encouraging and monitoring them in the process of study.

Key words: virtual educational environment, digital generation, generation Z, electronic educational platforms, teaching strategies.

There is no doubt that nowadays language learners compared with previous generations think and learn in a different way. It is believed that contemporary students belong to generation Z or Net generation. This generation can be called digital generation or the Millennials. It presents certain interest to find out if students of non-linguistic universities have some features of generation Z and if these features should be taken into consideration in the process of teaching and learning foreign languages. The purpose of the study to consider characteristic features of digital generation, analyze the role of information technologies in teaching foreign languages and find out how the role of the teacher of foreign languages has changed.

It should be noted that new information technologies used in teaching foreign languages can significantly change the process of learning and change its organizational forms [1, 2, 3]. It is obvious that in the process of teaching foreign languages in a non-linguistic University it is necessary to pay great attention to the formation of professional and cultural competences and to the development of language skills [5]. Moreover, much attention should be given to the personal development of students who have to study in real and virtual educational environment. According to some researchers, the difference between generations is determined not only by age of people but also by technologies they use and values they have [4]. It is believed that the economic situation in the country may affect the formation of the child's personality [4]. Every generation has certain values that may change over the years but the main values formed in childhood remain unchanged [4]. As a result of globalization and rapid development of information technologies

people belonging to the same generation living in different countries and on different continents, can have similar values. As for generation Z, it was born in the information society. M. Prensky seems to be right considering that students have greatly changed. He concludes that nowadays teachers should take into consideration students' psychological characteristics [6]. Students of digital generation prefer e-learning platforms and electronic textbooks with multimedia to traditional textbooks. Students born in the period of information technologies prefer multitasks rather than focus on one thing at a time. Students belonging to generation Z have less patience compared with previous generations and they have mostly short-term goals. D. Tapscott points out such characteristic features of the digital generation as independence and responsibility [7]. Generation Z includes those born since 2000. There is no doubt that the nature of Generation Z and the challenges they bring to the classroom should be investigated in a more detailed way as traditional teaching is not quite effective for the students belonging to this generation. Traditional methods of teaching when teachers follow textbooks may be not very useful. It seems to be obvious that effectiveness of teaching depends on the ability of teachers to adapt instruction to the needs of learners.

The main characteristic feature of generation Z is its ease with technology. M. Prensky uses the term *digital natives* [6]. He compares digital natives with *digital immigrants*, those who remember the world before invention of PCs, mobile phones and video games. It is impossible for young people of today to live without electronic gadgets and without the Internet. They consider information technologies to be an integral part of their lives. Language learners are experienced in using wikis, blogs, chat rooms and find them useful for educational process. Generation Z prefers to look for information in the web but not in textbooks. It is known that the number of students taking online courses is constantly growing.

A survey of the first year students who study at the Financial University under the Government of the Russian Federation in Moscow Financial University has proved the fact that students of generation Z are keen on using electronic educational platforms for studying foreign languages and find them useful. The study had objectives to determine whether students need help in time management, are able to work with the electronic educational platforms on a regular basis and be motivated for autonomous work. The hypothesis put forward was as follows: students need help in time management; they may have various problems in using electronic platforms on a regular basis; students should be motivated for work at the platform to upgrade their level of English. To achieve these objectives, at the beginning of the academic year there was a survey of the first year students who study at the Institute of distance learning and open education at the Financial University under the government of the Russian Federation. The students were asked to express their attitude to the statements concerning their time management skills, regularity of their work at electronic educational platform and if they need motivation in the process of autonomous work. They were offered a Likert scale to express their opinions: 1) fully agree 2) agree 3) neutral 4) disagree 5) strongly disagree. According to the results of the survey, a very small number of students think they need reminders that could help them to work at the electronic platform regularly. The number of students who would like to receive reminders is equal to the number of students taking a neutral position on the subject, and the greatest part of students consider that such

reminders are not necessary. Not all the students are ready for self motivation, namely, 20% expressed disagreement and 4% expressed absolute disagreement.

As for the answers to the question if students will be able to work at the platform for 20-30 minutes every day, we can note the following. A small minority of respondents, namely 4 % totally disagree, 2% just disagree. 29% of the students surveyed take a neutral position on this issue. Most students are absolutely sure and agree that they will be able to work at the platform on a daily basis (23% and 42% of answers, respectively). We obtained the following results concerning the third question. A large number of students expressed their full consent (29%) and simply consent (29 %) that they can motivate themselves to work with an electronic resource. A neutral position on this issue was expressed by 17 % of the respondents. However, as the results of the survey showed, not all the students expressed readiness for their own motivation, namely, 21% expressed disagreement and 4% - absolute disagreement. Taking into account the fact that the survey was conducted at the beginning of the school year, when students just started working with the platform and did not have enough experience, it presents certain interest to conduct a survey again at the end of the academic year and compare the results.

Taking into consideration the results of the survey, we can draw the following conclusion.

It has been noted that generation Z or digital generation has different values and needs than previous generations. Language teachers should be aware of the needs of generation Z. Those needs are related to students' digitalized virtual lives; their attitude towards time management and motivation, effort, feedback and their desire to have feedback. Taking into consideration these characteristics, teachers of English need to do their best trying to understand the nature of generation Z and adopt teaching strategies that respond to students' academic needs.

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