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УДК 373

Научно-исследовательская работа как неотъемлемая часть современного школьного образования

The research work as an important part of modern school education

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Аннотация Традиционно считается, что научно-исследовательская деятельность осуществляется в ВУЗе, но формирование типов и стилей мышления происходит значительно раньше, поэтому научно-исследовательская работа должна стать неотъемлемой частью школьного образования. Каждый год обучающиеся школ нашего города принимают участие в научно-практической конференции, на которой они должны представить научно-исследовательский проект по разным предметам. В статье мы рассматриваем, что представляет собой научно-исследовательский проект по предмету «Английский язык».

Ключевые слова научно-исследовательский проект; проблема; содержание; структура работы; критерии оценивания.

Summary It is traditionally considered that the scientific research work is carried out in higher education institutions only. But the development of types and ways of thinking happens much more earlier. That's why the research work should be an important part of school edu-

cation. Every year students of schools of our town take part in a theoretical and practical conference where they are to present their research projects in different subjects. In this article we'll speak about the research projects in English and give a guide on what the research project is.

Key words   research project; topic; research question; contents; sections; assessment criteria.

New information society sets the system of education in Russia fundamentally new tasks. One of the most important tasks is the development of the creative, research potential of a person. The XXI century educational paradigm demands not only giving the students encyclopaedic knowledge, but also developing the set of competences, i.e. the ability to work with unknown information, with original tasks, to combine logic with intuition.

The research project is a piece of work requiring scientific and educational research effort that involves collecting detailed information on a particular topic. The aim of any project work is to make the process of education more active. It is a kind of transition from the development of personality to revealing intellectual and creative potential of a person, i.e. self-development. But in fact students face the problem of what and how to write and the research project is often turned into a report on the books and articles they have read.

So we decided to give a guide on what the research project is to students and their teachers and organized some seminars. The key points of these seminars are reflected in the article.

It is obvious that a research project must have a topic, but what sort of topic? Some teachers will give students a list and ask them to choose one. Others will give general guidelines only. But it's obvious that the topic (or at least some of its aspects) should be controversial or need investigation. So we suggest choosing a topic for a research project relying on the educational aim of teaching foreign languages. This educational aim presupposes getting knowledge about the culture of the country the language of which we study, including literature, music, architecture, art, history etc, and also knowledge about the lan-

guage itself, its system, peculiarities and so on. It is also supposed to meet personal cognitive interest in any field of activity, from professional to hobby.

The next step is to develop a research question. Students should take note that every research project should have only one research question. Here is an example:

• You start with a topic like: "The Cell Phone as an Agent of Social Change". As you begin research, you'll discover that the widespread adoption of the cell phones as a tool of communication and entertainment has revolutionized society. Thus your research question might be: "How has the cell phone transformed daily life of individuals?"

The way students structure or outline their research project is very important. It must have definite sections to it [1].

I. Introduction. Introductions should not exceed two pages. The introduction serves two purposes. First, it allows students to provide the reader with some brief background information about the topic. Second, it lets them state the research question. The research question must always be in the introduction. It's recommended to make it the last sentence of the introduction. So, students may structure their introduction according to the following plan:

- Describe the importance (significance) of the study - why was this worth doing in the first place?

- Defend the topic - why did you choose it? You might comment on its suitability from a theoretical point of view as well as indicate practical reasons for using it.

- Provide a rationale. State your specific hypothesis(es) or objective(s), and describe the reasoning that led you to select them.

- State your research question.

- Very briefly describe the experimental design and how it accomplished the stated objectives.

II. The Body. The body of the research project is the main part. It is generally broken down into various headings that deal with aspects of the topic. It is

not easy to decide what headings should be in the body or in what order they should come. Students must consider what issues they must cover in order to answer the research question.

III. The Conclusion. The conclusion summarizes the research and answers the research question.

IV. Literature Cited (The Reference List). The reference list is one of the most important parts of a project and considerable care must be taken in its preparation. In the first place the reference list presents a record of student's research into the subject, and it should be possible to regard it as a form of guarantee that students are fully acquainted with all significant earlier contributions to scholarship in the chosen field. All literature cited should be listed in alphabetical order, by first author. Only primary literature is used (original research articles authored by the original investigators). Inaccuracy in bibliographical details (eg. authors' names, titles of books or articles, dates and places of publication, etc.), and disorderly presentation of material not only are a source of irritation to a reader but can be positively misleading.

To establish clear connections between ideas and ensure that sentences and paragraphs flow together smoothly, students should use transition words and phrases in their research projects [2]:

- to indicate more information: besides; furthermore; in addition; indeed; in fact; moreover; second...third..., etc;
- to indicate an example: for example; for instance; in particular; particularly; specifically; to demonstrate; to illustrate;
- to indicate a cause or reason: as; because; because of; due to; for; for the reason that; since;
- to indicate a result or an effect: accordingly; finally; consequently; hence; so; therefore; thus;
- to indicate a purpose or reason why: for fear that; in the hope that; in order to; so; so that; with this in mind;

- to compare or contrast: although; however; in comparison; in contrast; likewise; nevertheless; on the other hand; similarly; whereas; yet;
- to indicate a particular time frame or a shift from one time period to another: after; before; currently; during; eventually; finally; first, second, etc., formerly; immediately; initially; lastly; later; meanwhile; next; previously; simultaneously; soon; subsequently;
- to summarize: briefly; in brief; overall; summing up; to put it briefly; to sum up; to summarize;
- to conclude: hence; in conclusion; so; therefore; thus; to conclude.

After the research project is completed and typed it is given for examination. We worked out and propose the following assessment criteria:
- topicality and significance of an issue;
- justification of the aim and tasks, their correspondence with the topic;
- consistency of the reference list;
- quality of evaluating other people works and providing own arguments; personal analysis is extremely important;
- quality of the project itself and its logical structure (if the student stays focused on the research topic of the paper; uses paragraphs to separate each important point (except for the abstract); indents the first line of each paragraph; presents the points in logical order);
- scientific style (the student should use transition words and phrases, avoid informal wording; shouldn't address the reader directly and use jargon, slang terms, or superlatives);
- grammatical correctness (it's necessary to use normal prose including articles ("a", "the", etc.); to use present tense to report well accepted facts; to use past tense to describe specific results);
- correct spelling, clarity of sentences and phrases;
- format (typeface, margins and spacing, numbering, etc).

After the project is assessed by an examiner, the students are to give the final oral presentation. This oral presentation is also evaluated by the following criteria:

- composition and design (the content of the presentation should meet the requirements of the written report);
- professional attitude (response to questions and remarks);
- presentation technique (use of language; use of slides; use of voice).

What can we reasonably expect from the students? The assessment criteria cover both substantive knowledge (contents), academic skills and attitude to work. All students should have an academic, critical attitude, and should be eager to learn and acquire these skills. They should be able to fill gaps in knowledge by reading literature and acquire skills with assistance from their supervisor (teacher). Besides acquiring knowledge and skills, formulating a research problem, ordering and integrating data, and testing it critically against the available literature, are also important aspects of the learning process.

So this article gives an outline of what we expect the research project should be. Our next paper will present more specific examples on how to develop the research project.

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