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English on-line Olympiad as a new method of students' knowledge assessment

Abstract.

The aim of this article is to analyze English on-line Olympiad as a new kind of Olympiad, which appeared due to the rapid development of modern technologies. The research focuses on functional peculiarities of English on-line Olympiad and compares it with English Olympiad, performed without usage of ICT. Through showing advantages and disadvantages of English on-line Olympiad, this research highlights the importance of such kind of Olympiad as a method of students' knowledge control.

Keywords: on-line Olympiad, ICT, the Internet, CALL, TELL, assessment.

I. Introduction.

Language is not only a major aspect of culture, but also a means of access to a different cultural mindset, it is an imperative arising out of the needs, ties and interrelationships of people entering the "interdependence age" [2]. The status of English as a "Language for International Communication" is no longer in dispute and rarely attracts critical scrutiny. In modern society English performs many important functions. That is why a lot of attention is paid to the effective learning of this language by people all over the world. The number of users of the English language is constantly increasing. English penetrates into every branch of industry and becomes widespread around different strata of society.

Worldwide over 1.4 billion people live in countries where English has official status. Scientists comment that there has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English. Hereby over 70% of the world's scientists read English, about 85% of the world's mail is written in English. And 90% of all information in the world's electronic retrieval is stored in English. And the most

surprising fact is that the number of people who speak English as second or foreign English exceeds the number of native speakers. In addition English is used for more purposes than ever before. And one in five (over one billion) is studying English nowadays [4].

Learning of English is a prolonged process, which requires a lot of energy, purposefulness and a burning desire to learn foreign language. But every process of studying is impossible without some control aspect. Olympiad is an effective and rather productive way of the assessment of the level of students' knowledge of foreign language. The main aims and tasks of the Olympiad lie in identifying and developing students' creativity and interest in the English language, in the creation of the conditions, necessary to support gifted children, in the promotion of linguistic and sociocultural knowledge connected with the history and current functioning of the different variants of the English language and the history and culture of English-speaking countries.

The English Olympiad plays an important role in the whole process of study in Ukrainian schools, institutes, universities. In the Olympiad different tasks are given to students, which are made on the basis of educational programs implemented on the steps of basic, secondary (complete) general and higher education.

The main tasks of the Ukrainian Olympiad in foreign languages are:

- to encourage the creative self-perfection of Ukrainian students;
- to identify gifted students and to help them in choosing a career;
- to form the creative generation of young experts in foreign languages for different spheres of public life;
- to increase the interest in the profound study of foreign languages;
- to improve the level of teaching of foreign languages and professional training of students [1].

In our modern society technology is becoming increasingly important in both our personal and professional lives. Computer-based materials for language teaching, often referred as CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning), appeared in the early 1980s. CALL activities are mostly CDs, teaching computer programs, computer

test and encyclopedias. In 1990s the term TELL (Technology Enhanced Language Learning) appeared in response to the growing possibilities offered by the Internet. Today computers and the Internet allow people to connect, collaborate and communicate on-line [4].

The use of ICT by both English students and teachers is very important today. There are many reasons for it:

- most of the students are growing up with technology and it is a natural and integrated part of their lives;
- English as an international language is being used in technologically mediated contexts;
- the Internet presents us with the new opportunities for authentic tasks and materials;
- the Internet offers excellent opportunities for collaboration and communication between learners who are geographically dispersed;
- technology is becoming increasingly mobile. It can be used not only in the classroom, lecture hall or computer classroom, but it can also be used at home, on the way to school, at any place on the planet;
- using of ICT tools give learners a great practice in all of four main language skills – reading, listening, writing and speaking on the principally new and effective level [4].

The role of the ICT usage in the process of the learning of English is being studied nowadays by Gavin Dudeney, Nicky Hockly, Michael Russell, Walt Haney, Mary Sprat, Alan Pulverness, Melanie Williams, Nataliia Fominykh.

Consequently, with the growing importance of technologies people have an opportunity to take part in on-line Olympiad. This is a new kind of Olympiad, which has its advantages and disadvantages. We made a survey among the students, who took part in on-line Olympiad, and on the basis of its results we analyze advantages and drawbacks of English on-line Olympiad. Such phenomenon as English on-line Olympiad is rather topical today, because it is a relatively new kind of students'

knowledge assessment and it can provide both students and teachers with the whole range of opportunities, which can be useful in our modern society.

II. The aim of the research.

The aim of this article is to analyze English on-line Olympiad as a new kind of Olympiad, which appeared due to the rapid development of modern technologies. **The object** of the article is English on-line Olympiad as a method of students' knowledge control. **The subject** of the article is functional peculiarities of English on-line Olympiad and the differences between this kind of Olympiad and Olympiad, performed without ICT usage.

III. Results.

On-line Olympiads are more convenient way of assessment of the level of knowledge of foreign language as no student can imagine his life without computer and the Internet. Students have the opportunity to check their knowledge of English sitting in front of computer in their own home. It is more convenient than to come to some town or another educational establishment.

But there is something that on-line Olympiad can not provide. During Olympiad student will discover a lot of new things: firstly, that the subject is not limited to textbooks, and questions can be non-standard and unusual, and it turns out, someone is interested in the personal opinion of student or erudition regardless of the educational program. Moreover, when a student gets on the district Olympiad, it appears that there are more strong students than in his class, although there is almost no communication. Communication begins only at the regional level of Olympiad and continues in national and international Olympiads. So, of course, the whole atmosphere of Olympiad plays an important role: sitting in the classroom surrounded by many other students from different schools; teachers, who try to keep an eye open for each of the participants; and the whole wave of excitement and fear to fail in front of the audience. Of course this atmosphere is irreplaceable.

That is why on-line Olympiad is a totally different kind of Olympiad. But it definitely has many positive aspects. For modern students Internet is a powerful source of getting information. They got used to do everything on-line and that is why

it is more convenient for them to perform tasks on-line. They don't worry so much, because there are no other students or teachers around them.

Teachers, who supervise the whole process of Olympiad, are absent. On the one hand, such case can lead to cheating while performing tasks. But on the other hand, the absence of teachers contributes to better understanding of tasks and accordingly to their more effective performance. Students acquire self-control skills and can organize their work and regulate their time on their own. No control from the side influences everyone in a different way. But the general function remains the same – it gives students an opportunity to control their actions and time by themselves.

On-line Olympiad contributes to the individualization of the process of study. The absence of other students also has its pros and cons. First of all, competition is an essential part of the process of study. In on-line Olympiad the competition is also present, but it is not so visible. Secondly, no chance to ask another student for help is also of special importance. Student relies only on his own knowledge and has no thought to expect some additional help from other student. On-line Olympiad contributes to student's realization of his weak and strong sides, helps to develop his own method of learning and to understand his originality. Of course student has an opportunity to communicate with other participants on-line in order to share the experience or just to find some new friends.

As it was mentioned before, our society is developing rapidly. New technologies appear every day and people have to learn how to use them. The performance of on-line Olympiad helps students to acquire new skills: they learn how to work with a computer and learn something new about the Internet every day. These skills are very valuable and irreplaceable nowadays. On-line Olympiads are instrumental in developing these essential skills, which each person should have in our modern world.

There is only one problem with on-line Olympiads – not every person has computer or access to the Internet. It makes the performance of such kind of Olympiad more difficult and even impossible for some citizens of our country.

People, who can not afford to buy a computer or those, living in small villages with no possibility to get access to the Internet, are the classical example of such case. But we consider that this is the only hindrance in the way of on-line Olympiad in our country and we suppose it will be soon overcome, judging by the extremely rapid development of modern technologies.

The other substantial advantage given by on-line Olympiad is the way of assessment of students' works. The assessment of results by computer is more impartial and gives no shade of doubt that something was set up or that somebody knew the tasks of Olympiad beforehand. Also the attitude of teacher to the student (the oral task is meant here) is out of question in this case. A computer is the most unbiased "teacher" and the assessment given by it is true and really impartial. With the help of computer students can learn their results of Olympiad more quickly (within several minutes). So modern techniques give many advantages in this case: teachers don't have to look through countless papers of students; students don't have to wait long hours or even days to learn their results and of course the impartialness of assessment is of great importance here.

The only substantial disadvantage of on-line Olympiads is the influence of computer usage on student's health. Sitting in front of the computer during long hours can lead to some serious problems with health, such as visual impairment, incorrect posture and a lot of psychological disorders. Surely it is the task of parents and teachers to watch over this process, but still many examples of this negative aspect are obvious nowadays. It concerns not only on-line Olympiads in particular, but the usage of ICT in general.

Still, using a computer in the process of learning of the English language and the correction of knowledge allows to activate cognitive activity of students. In addition to cognitive motives, expressed in the cognitive interest, students have educational motives: interest in new ways of learning (using a computer), interest in innovative ways of learning and cognitive activity.

IV. Conclusions.

As we have mentioned the main aim of any Olympiad is the motivation of students to learn English, to organize and conduct independent and impartial control over the formation of students' skills and knowledge of foreign language. And we came to the conclusion that on-line Olympiad is able to perform all of these tasks. On-line Olympiad is a new kind of the standard notion of Olympiad and due to the rapid development of technology it is also a highly effective way of the students' knowledge assessment.

Soon on-line Olympiad will be an integral part of the process of study. It is more convenient for both teachers and students to held and take part in such kind of Olympiad. This Olympiad gives many advantages that are essential in our modern society: beginning with the opportunity to develop Internet skills and ending with the great convenience and the impartialness of the assessment process. Having elaborated the results of the survey, we can affirm that on-line Olympiad is rather popular nowadays due to the extremely rapid development of technology and as a relatively new method of students' knowledge control it is rather effective. We presented the advantages and disadvantages of this new kind of Olympiad and we assume that the results of this research will be useful for the further study of this phenomenon, will help teachers and students to get the general idea about on-line Olympiad and will contribute to the development of the methods of knowledge control in pedagogics.

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