Didactic Features of Educational Technology "Edutainment" in English Language Classroom at the University

The term "edutainment" is formed from two English words: "entertainment" and "education" and combines entertainment and learning. Edutainment is a special education technology, viewed as a complex of modern technical and didactic means of teaching, based on the concept of learning through entertainment. The principle difference between edutainment and the modern paradigm of learning is that the subject is actively involved in the educational process. Edutainment technology tasks have to meet three pedagogical principles: the principle of theory with practice linking, the principle of consistency and the principle of accessibility. Edutainment technology has great potential in the organization of the learning process at the university. It is necessary to maintain a reasonable balance between education and entertainment. Tasks created to promote the interest, need to be balanced with activities to improve intelligence. The main task of edutainment in the university education process is to ensure the enjoyment of the student in the learning process, which can be expressed through interesting content of the material; satisfaction from the independent decision of any task; social interaction with other students; progress in learning; motivating, representing the meaning for a student of material related to the practical aspects of his life. Various edutainment tools were considered – interactive reading, case-study, WebQuests. The author presents the experimental work using Treasure Hunt method as the basis for game-based learning. The results of the study show that edutainment technology contributes to the formation of certain personal and professional qualities of students (tolerance, communication skills, and ability to overcome the psychological barrier when communicating in a foreign language) by the presence of personal meaning in the study of the subject.

Key words: technology; edutainment; active learning; motivation; game; student-centered approach; subject-subject communication; didactic and technical educational means; English language classes

Introduction

The term "edutainment" is formed from two English words "entertainment" and "education" and combines entertainment and learning. Game and entertainment learning is of particular relevance due to the fact that, unlike the older generation, modern students prefer other ways of obtaining information. The constant use of computer technology affects their cognitive skills. Young people are better at multitasking. They began to better understand the information presented non-linearly, that is, allowing the active participation of the person perceiving it. The habit of participating in the cognitive process develops the ability to learn from your mistakes. It is believed that the technology of edutainment meets the needs of a modern man, whose perception is changed due to the constant use of computer technology.

Research methods

Research methodology included *literature analysis* aimed at establishing key ideas about edutainment, *action research* into teaching foreign language on the base of edutainment technology to students of the Department of Philology and Journalism of Orenburg State University.

Theoretical foundation

Definitions of edutainment in Russian and foreign science are very diverse. Thus, Yang Wang argues that edutainment is a place where children can enjoy what they are clearly learning. The word "place" means that edutainment is a part of the educational process, which has a special role. Edutainment is intended to diversify learning but it should not affect the traditional educational model [16].

M. M. Zinovkina uses the term "creative education". One of the goals of creative education is the formation of the student's own creative experience. Creative education uses passion as entertainment [18].

O. L. Gnatiuk believes that the digital content connecting educational and entertainment elements is edutainment. It should be noted that the work itself with digital content is not always associated with entertainment and can be very stressful [8].

Sharon de Vari sees edutainment as an "effective balance" between psychological techniques, multimedia products and modern technologies [3].

According to N.A. Kobzeva, "Edutainment is a learning technology, viewed as a complex of modern technical and didactic means of teaching, which is based on the concept of learning through fun" [10, p. 195].

Michela Addis argues that edutainment is based on "simultaneous learning and satisfying one's own curiosity". [1, p. 2]

Rob Donovan introduces edutainment as a combination of social order with entertainment mechanism and considers it an effective means to spread information to a large number of people in a short time. The author points to the ability of edutainment to relieve unnecessary stress in the learning process and its effectiveness in teaching a large number of people in a short time. [4]

A.V. Popov, a teacher of the Moscow school of business, talks about "learning as entertainment". In his opinion, the cognition of the world in a game form helps to establish an emotional connection between the student and the subject of study. [12]

In our further work we will adhere to the definition of O. M. Zheleznyakova and O. O. Dyakonova: "Edutainment is a special type of learning, which is based on entertainment and the formation of primary interest in the subject, further involvement with the pleasure of the learning process and the ultimate passion with a strong interest in the learning process" [17, p.69].

The attitude of researchers to edutainment is ambiguous. Some of them consider it dangerous to increase the entertainment element in education. According to Neal Postman [13], the love of entertainment is instilled in the modern man from childhood. Glenn Russell expresses fears that there will be a transition from learning, aimed at a vertical deepening of knowledge (deep wisdom), to a horizontal expansion of knowledge (collection of scattered information). This transition can impede integrity and consistency in cultural understanding. S.L. Soloveitchik contrasts entertainment and learning. He points out that "teaching with passion is not at all teaching with entertainment. The school is not a circus, it cannot entertain, should not do that. School is labour, serious, long, sometimes hard mental work" [14, p.5].

Although the main purpose of edutainment is learning, complex topics cannot be learned quickly and easily. In such cases, the edutainment should not be fun, but it can remain interesting. "... one of the main tasks of edutainment is to ensure the enjoyment of the recipient in the learning process, which can be expressed, for example, through interesting content of the material; satisfaction from the independent decision of any task; social interaction with other students; progress in learning; motivating, representing the meaning for a student of material related to the practical aspects of his life" [9, p.207].

N.A. Kobzeva highlights the following features of the edutainment: the presence of two-way interrelated activities of the subjects of the educational process (subject-subject communication); the presence of goals in the organization of the learning process; availability of comfortable conditions; the guarantee of achieving a specific result; complex application of didactic, technological means of training and control.

The task on the technology of edutainment should correspond to three pedagogical principles: the principle of connection of the theory with practice, the principle of consistency and the principle of accessibility.

To achieve the principle of connection between theory and practice, it is recommended to study practice-oriented oral topics, to ensure the dialogue of communication, include extracurricular activities, perform works using literature in a foreign language, organize analysis of not only the general professional, but also the communicative competence of students. Problem-search and research tasks are an effective means of connecting theory with practice. Theoretical problems can be supplemented by examples from reality.

The principle of consistency requires that knowledge be brought to the level of consistency in the students' view, so one should return to the material studied and study new topics based on it.

The principle of accessibility assumes that the complexity of the tasks corresponds to the age, skills and abilities of students. The presentation of the material should go from simple to more complex.

The principle of constructivism, according to which a student extracts knowledge from already known material, is widely used in edutainment. A student's knowledge, experience, problem solving, and understanding of the situation – this is how the student sees the world. Learning modifies, rebuilds and complements this material. Constructivism attaches new importance to testing the changed view of the subject of education. A necessary important condition is that students understand or misunderstand the topic of study; therefore self-assessment and reflection are important skills. If the student does not understand why it is necessary to remember or teach something, the transition of the learning result to real life may not occur: the student will not be able to apply it in practice in solving problems.

Findings

A feature of edutainment technology is the introduction of modern forms of entertainment in the system of traditional lectures, lessons, classes, seminars and workshops, as without television programs, computer and video games, movies, music, websites, multimedia programs, etc. it is impossible to imagine modern education and communication. The classes and events in the format of edutainment technology can take place in a cafe, park, museum, office, gallery, club, where you can obtain information on any educational topic in a relaxed atmosphere [10, p. 193].

Edutainment differs from the traditional learning paradigm in that in this case the subject takes an active part in the learning process. He is an active consumer: he expresses personal preferences, shows subjective reaction to the experience. Thus, in the interaction of an informative and entertain-

ing object and the active learning of the subject we get the knowledge, abilities, skills, individual experience, subjective emotion, i.e. "edutainment" [17, p. 68]. "The above concepts describe education, which differs from the traditional educational paradigm characterized by "fundamentality", "adherence to the classics" and "prescription to conservatism" [17, p.68].

The direction of edutainment can be divided into two large categories. First, it is a way to transfer information and skills to learning objects with insufficient motivation. Secondly, it is a learning process, understood as entertainment, in which knowledge and skills can be obtained from sources that are not originally intended as educational materials. Thus, the former implies passive perception of the information, the latter implies an active process of knowledge extraction [2, p. 63].

The first category includes specially designed computer games, entertainment and educational television programs, pedagogical programs as part of the educational process. These projects are commercial and non-commercial. The commercial sphere is dominated by products for children [2].

The second category includes the inclusion of information materials in events that serve to entertain the public. For example, historical reconstructions represent at the same time thrilling and exciting spectacles and a source of knowledge on history, literature and applied skills [2, p. 63].

Edutainment tools for education can be divided into traditional and modern. Traditional means include books or comics, music, films, educational games, television programmes, radio programmes and free lectures. Modern means of edutainment are divided into electronic systems (electronic textbooks, network options for museum exhibitions), personal computer systems (computer or video games, electronic simulators, electronic encyclopedias) and web technologies (e-mail, WebQuests, wikis, blogs, chat rooms, video conferences).

In European and American schools, free activities, or "open space activities", are popular. During free classes, the teacher and students conduct a dialogue that requires a lot of activity of students. A teacher can make lists of topics and give them to a class divided into groups. Students can join any group and participate in dialogues, and at the end of the lesson conclusions are drawn based on what has been said.

Edutainment has a great potential in eliminating the unequal distribution of information that has arisen as a result of the uneven development of information technologies, both around the world and within one country. Edutainment tools can be accessible and equally understood by different segments of the population. As cognitive knowledge and media literacy increase, low-level learners can move on to learning that is appropriate for a more advanced audience.

One of the tasks of edutainment is to increase motivation. Motivation consists of a complex set of

external and internal factors. Internal motivation encourages one to engage in activities for the sake of the activity itself, for the enjoyment of performing activities or satisfying curiosity, while external motivation includes the desire to meet standards, recognition, evaluation and rewards. It is believed that students with strong internal motivation work longer and harder, and actively apply various strategies for learning. Internal motivation comes from many factors: interesting and meaningful assignments and materials, providing teacher support and constructive criticism, researching many sources of information, ongoing work to achieve a deeper understanding of the subject, awakening students' interest through fascinating assignments and materials, and understanding the nature of learning in general.

Results and Discussion

One of the most studied means of edutainment is the game. Edutainment and linguistic game have the same goals – to entertain and teach, but the actions in edutainment have no less clear structure and are not related to the rules of a particular game. When applying edutainment students do not always need to explain their conditional roles and rules, instead they enjoy their actions. The following characteristics are common to the game and the edutainment.

- Entertainment. Pleasant pastime and joy are the main reason for students to conduct activities and enjoy it. Game feed material should not use entertainment as the main goal, but it can be used to practice knowledge in a fun and easy way.

- Game. A game can be defined as a free activity of a person or a group of people limited by time. The theme of the game appears based on the interests of the players. The meaning of the game appears during the game or is present outside the game (for example, it is set by the goal). The game differs from everyday life by its rules and in-game features (competitive element, identification by roles).

- Gaining experience. The game is considered to be a part of experimental pedagogy. The personal experience of the student is a good basis for possible changes in his personality and the consolidation of new skills and abilities.

- Meaning in life. The game is a unique social activity necessary for the development of the student, his socialization.

- Social role. In a game or other interactive entertainment, the player assumes a role governed by a set of rules. The individual experience of the players is different, even if they have the same roles.

- Simulation. The basis of the simulation is to create a model that represents real life (a problem) and is able to respond to the behavior of players and organizers of the game. During the game its participants can meet with situations that are extremely rare in real life.

- Knowledge and self-knowledge. Games and activities based on entertainment education allow

teachers to get to know their students better. They also imply a teacher's feedback on the behavior of the game participants [7].

Game-based learning is an approach based on the use of electronic games. Electronic games are gaining popularity because they can be successfully used to facilitate learning the content of the program and basic skills and to master the language. They can be extremely entertaining for the user because they are characterized by expressive narration transmitted through multimedia texts, audio, video and animation. They also include elements aimed at learning how to solve problems, thus ensuring the cooperation of students.

Interactive fiction is a text-based electronic game in which the reader participates in the story, becoming the protagonist and influencing the development of the plot through choices that he repeatedly makes in the process of interactive reading.

Students must be trained before performing interactive reading. Tasks before reading should familiarize students with the vocabulary used in the text, and teach with the basic set of commands used in the software. During the interactive reading work in pairs is possible: it is assumed that students will discuss the content of the story in a foreign language and make decisions together. After performing an interactive reading, you can take up the development of writing or subsequent reading.

At the moment there are many texts for interactive reading, so you need to choose the text that corresponds to the level of language skills of students. On some sites there is a possibility to create texts for interactive reading, which can be used by both teachers and students.

Treasure Hunt is a competition between groups of students for knowledge of the native city or city of the country of the studied language (in this case, preliminary preparation is assumed: collection of information from Internet sites, reading newspapers, studying maps). The teacher asks students questions such as "Where can I listen to music on Friday evening?", "Where can I find reviews of movies going to the cinema?". The team that gives the most detailed and accurate answers wins, for language errors, points are deducted. You can also give other tasks, for example, "Your group has five hundred dollars. Think of what you will do this weekend." In this case, the winning team is chosen by the students' vote. This task encourages the initiative of students, their activity. The assignment may include a discussion not only of the places of rest, but also of the types of rest themselves, recommendations of the students. Students can enjoy working with maps and photos, the competition, the opportunity to express their opinions and demonstrate their erudition. This game can be role-playing or thematic, for example, groups of students will represent the

guide and tourists looking for information about the cultural attractions of the city.

We held a game "Treasure Hunt" in a foreign language class with students of the Faculty of Philology and Journalism of Orenburg State University. Let's represent the algorithm of work. The teacher hangs on the board a tourist map of London in English. The teacher tells the students that this map shows the main attractions of London. The teacher divides the class into two teams. Each team is invited to organize a tourist route, which includes a visit to a government building, a park, a famous monument and a museum. Five minutes are given to develop and prepare the description of a route. After that, the captains of the teams talk about moving around the city, using the prepositions of the place and direction and the names of the roads. The captains of the teams try to present their route so that it looks attractive to tourists. After the captain's speech is complete, members of his team can add something. The teacher assesses the accuracy and depth of the answer, as well as the logical construction of the route.

Conclusion

The communicative approach should be carried out within the framework of student-centered education. This means that in addition to foreign language communicative competence, "edutainment" technology contributes to the formation of certain personal and professional qualities of students (tolerance, communication, ability to overcome the psychological barrier in foreign language communication) through the presence of personal meaning in the study of the subject.

With a student-centered approach to learning, the role of the teacher is presented as supportive rather than authoritarian. In addition to the vertical type of communication (teacher-student), it is also useful to use the horizontal type of communication (student-student), since it helps to get rid of internal and external fears, complexes of students when communicating in a foreign language. It should not be forgotten that teamwork skills are an important component of foreign language communicative competence.

The teacher should encourage students' initiative and independent work. When choosing topics for independent research, it is necessary to take into account the interests and preferences of students. Offering tasks for self-fulfillment, the teacher must ensure that each student works at a pace that is feasible for him. You cannot leave a student without a guide, as there is a lot of conflicting information and different points of view on the same problem. It is recommended to offer a list of sources of information, but leave the freedom to create and form their own opinions.

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Информация об авторе

Сапух Татьяна Викторовна
(Россия, г. Оренбург)

Доцент, кандидат педагогических наук
доцент кафедры английской филологии и методики
преподавания английского языка
Оренбургский государственный университет
E-mail: tatsap@mail.ru

Information about the author

Sapuh Tatyana Viktorovna
(Russia, Orenburg)

Associate Professor, PhD in Pedagogical Sciences
Associate Professor of the Department of English
Philology and Methods of Teaching English
Orenburg State University
E-mail: tatsap@mail.ru

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