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**Sociolinguistic Parallels  
between the Ex-Soviet Republics and the Regions of Spain**

**Sociolingvistiskās paralēles  
starp bijušās Padomju Savienības republikām un Spānijas reģioniem**

**Keywords:** sociolinguistics, language policy, local languages, minority languages.

**Summary**

In this study we tried to look at the consequences of language policies towards the minority languages in the 14 non-Russian speaking republics of the Soviet Union and in the three non-Spanish speaking regions of Spain. Despite some obvious differences in historical, geographical, political and cultural contexts of these two countries/regions, we could still trace certain similarities. We could find a lot of parallels, between the sociolinguistic situations of minority languages in Catalonia, Galicia and Basque Country and in the 14 republics of the former Soviet Union.

Although the USSR never had an open policy of language suppression and the rights of minority languages were always theoretically recognized and supported, the practical consequence of decades of Soviet rule were that many republics largely lost their local languages and the use of them in many spheres of life was largely replaced by Russian.

On the other hand, in Spain there was a direct hispanification policy during the years of Franco's regime from 1936 to 1975. The use of minority languages was banned. The present situation, nearly 40 years after the end of Franco's regime, is that the usage of local languages is being revived, in some regions more successfully than in others.

We can also note that some of the Spanish regions (like Catalonia) retained their language despite the 40 years of hispanification, while some of the Soviet republics have all but lost their languages and largely adopted Russian in many spheres of life even despite the "promotion" of the local languages by the Soviet state. Therefore we might conclude that although language policy of a government is important, there are other important factors contributing to the preservation or extinction of the minority languages.

Māra ROZENBERGA

**Equivalents of the Verb *to be* in Spanish  
and Other Romance Languages. Challenges Linked to the  
Acquisition of the Spanish Language  
and Comparison with the Languages of Other Origins**

**Darbības vārda *būt* ekvivalenti spāņu un citās romāņu valodās.  
Problēmas spāņu valodas apguvē un salīdzinājums  
ar citas cilmes valodām**

**Keywords:** *to be* equivalents in Spanish and other Romance languages, romanization, Latin, influence of the native language, stereotypes of the language.

**Summary**

The key **aim** of the article is to view the verb *to be* and the origin of its equivalents in Spanish and other Romance languages as well as to consider the problems linked to their acquisition, analysing several textbooks and students' surveys (A1, A1+ levels) regarding the theme of our interest; to find out how the native language and the knowledge of other languages influence the language learning, at the same time providing 1) a short insight into the process of romanization, paying attention to the areas which had been completely romanized as well as the areas which had only partly been subjected to this process; 2) to study the corresponding equivalents of the verb *to be* in the Latin language and analyse the changes concerning the formation and development of new states and their national languages in the course of history.

Though Latin is a dead language as nowadays nobody speaks it, nevertheless taking into consideration the extensive process of romanization as well as its impact in the states which had not been subjected to romanization, we cannot imagine a single language without it: Latin has left permanent traces in law, religion, medicine, botany, pharmacology and many other spheres of science as well as in daily communication.

Introductory part of the article gives a short insight into the process of romanization and its impact on the group of Romance and other languages.

Chapters "Equivalents of the verb *to be* in the Latin language" and "The applied equivalents of *to be* nowadays and their interpretation" are devoted to the insight into the equivalents used in Latin and their further development in Romance languages.

Chapters "Difficulties while studying the equivalents of *to be* in Spanish and other languages" and "The influence of the native language and the knowledge of other languages on the acquisition of the Spanish language" deal with the overcoming of the language stereotypes.

The final chapters "The analyses of some chapters of the Spanish textbooks" and "The results of intermediate and written tests of the semester" are devoted to the solution of the problems and conclusions.

Rūta ĶEMERE

**Succession Principle  
of Internationally Recognised German Diplomas *DSD I* and *DSD II*  
as a Strong Base for a Consecutive and Qualitative  
German Acquisition in Schools of Latvia**

**Starptautiski atzīto vācu valodas diplomu *DSD I* un *DSD II*  
pēctecības princips – pamats secīgai un kvalitatīvai  
vācu valodas apguvei Latvijas skolās**

**Keywords:** multicultural society, multilingual didactics, complex language acquisition, schools with language specialization, German diploma examination.

**Summary**

**Aim** of the article: to assess the *DSD I* examination as a novelty and an integral part in the complex acquisition of foreign languages in schools with German specialization in Latvia.

In a multicultural society, which increasingly becomes the most characteristic European feature in globalization conditions, one of the most essential types of communication, uniting different groups of culture, is the language. The variety of cultures and wealth of languages are important European resources whose acquisition influences significantly both the procedure of social processes in Europe in general and every individual's life activities. Representatives of all generations are certain that skills of several foreign languages guarantee possibilities of career development and improve the quality of life. Acquisition of several languages as a goal and tool is particularly important among the school youth whose self-realization process has just started. Therefore in the current society's learning phase positive tendencies should be emphasised in the acquisition of modern languages at school. One type of schools in Latvia which offer a qualitative acquisition of several languages is schools with specialization in German, which obtained a new status in 1993 – German Diploma Schools (*DSD*). In Latvia, the internationally recognized German Diploma Examination has been taken for more than 20 years and lots of young people from Latvia have been enrolled in higher educational establishments in Germany, Austria, etc. without any extra examinations in German schools, because the requirements to the results in the *DSD II* examination according to the "Common European Framework of References for Languages" are high (B2/C1). In a few schools in Latvia also the *DSD I* examination has already been taken for three years which checks the compliance level of pupils' German skills to A2/B1, which provides an opportunity to study at the colleges mentioned above. Both the *DSD I* and *DSD II* diplomas are also an advantage when applying for a job.

When learning several languages in one educational establishment, the succession and intensity of language acquisition are important, as well as the approbation and gradual introduction of modern teaching methods which are based on multilingual didactics. The *DSD I* examination is the first important German

competence level, which motivates pupils for the next and most difficult step in German acquisition – the *DSD II* examination.

Baiba KAČANOVA

## **Lexical Approach in Teaching English as a Foreign Language**

### **Leksiskā pieeja angļu valodas kā svešvalodas apguvē**

**Keywords:** vocabulary, lexis, lexical approach, collocation, foreign language, English.

#### **Summary**

The theme discussed in this publication is lexical approach in teaching English as a foreign language. The paper deals with different stages of the lexical approach, starting with the beginning of the lexical approach (Lewis 1993), its further development to the present day and the “place” of lexical approach in the learning process nowadays. According to the lexical approach, vocabulary has the main role in the learning process. It is considered that teaching vocabulary should be paid more attention to, especially to teaching collocations and fixed phrases, which ensure better speech fluency of the language learner. By using examples the important of the role of the vocabulary in communication is shown. If a language speaker uses an inaccurate grammar structure, in most cases the content of the delivered message does not change, but if an incorrect word is chosen, it can cause misunderstanding in communication or a lack of a word can hold back the conversation or even interrupt the conversation.

Scientists’ and teachers’ experience and attitude to implementation of the lexical approach to learning process are summarized and analyzed in the paper. Michael Lewis idea of the lexical approach has its followers and critics. Analyzing contradictory positions, it was concluded that the idea of the lexical approach is highly evaluated but main criticism is that materials on the lexical approach are too theoretical. It is recommended to work on developing methodological materials or teaching aids which are developed based on the lexical approach. It is significant that teachers are informed about possibilities of implementation of the lexical approach in the learning process. Finally, suggestions how to introduce the lexical approach into the learning process are given at the end of the article.

Inese VEISBUKA

## **Dictation as a Means for Improving the Orthographic Competence in Learning French as a Foreign Language**

### **Diktāts ortogrāfiskās kompetences uzlabošanai franču valodas kā svešvalodas apguvē**

**Keywords:** orthographic competence, dictation, French as a foreign language, guidelines, sample curriculum, communicative approach.

#### **Summary**

The **aim** of the paper is to look at the role of the dictation in orthographic competence improvement of learning French as a foreign language. For this purpose, first of all an insight is given into the depiction of the orthographic competence in *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*, into the subject *Foreign Language* standard and sample curricula, the problematic issues are analysed and suggestions are made for learning French orthography. Then it presents views on the orthography role in the various methods to the present day and analyses teachers' opinions on the use of dictations in acquisition of the language writing system in the context of communicative approach. The conclusion deals with different types of dictations.

*Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* describes spelling skills as one of the constituent parts of linguistic competences, however, the orthographic competence level is rapidly decreasing both in the French-speaking environment and outside it; the reason for this is seen in modern technology development as well as in the French orthographic system complexity. The problems are also related to the lack of orthography component in French as a foreign language textbooks and the teachers' incompetence in this matter caused by the dominant position of didactics lasting for years. Compliance with the norms of orthography promotes more successful communication; therefore orthographic competence development should be paid more attention to in the initial stage of learning French as a foreign language, just after acquisition of phonetics and phonology. Dictation can be one of the ways to improve spelling competence. Although it is little used in communicative approach and is primarily related to the aptitude test, there are also types of dictations focusing on cooperative learning, direct communication and the learner's active participation, thus conforming to the communicative approach postulates. Dictations can be used to improve memory, to stimulate research on language, to promote the learner's autonomy.

Daiva JAKAVONYTĖ-STAŠKUVIENĖ

**Results of Social Communication Text Comprehension  
and Textual Performance in Class 2  
(Lithuanian experience)**

**Sociālās komunikācijas tekstu izpratnes un tekstuālās darbības rezultāti 2. klasē  
(Lietuvas pieredze)**

**Keywords:** text comprehension, reading, answers to questions, non-fiction texts.

**Summary**

Although the quality of student progress is a priority of the Lithuanian educational policy, sadly enough Lithuanian language skills among pupils in primary schools have been deteriorating over the last decade. This can be seen in the results and conclusions of PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study) 2011. The conclusions focus on a modern language teaching methodology to make the content more lifelike, work more on the development of students' reading abilities, choose activities and tasks of interest to both boys and girls; increase students' responsibility for learning.

The object of the research is the results of student comprehension of non-fiction texts and reflection of activity. The **aim** of the research is to investigate the results of non-fiction text comprehension and reflection of activity among second formers.

Research objectives:

- Analysis of student answers to non-fiction text comprehension questions.
- Discussion of student answers to activity reflection questions.
- Determination of the coherence between activity reflection questions and answers and the activity results (non-fiction text comprehension competences).

Organisation of work. To investigate the development of the competences of fiction and non-fiction text comprehension and reflection of activity among second formers a methodology was prepared (based on the Lithuanian textbook "*Kelionė po lietuvių kalbos pasaulį*" (Jakavonytė-Staškuvienė, Kalesnikienė 2012). In class, students read and analysed a fiction or a non-fiction text; later answered in writing related text comprehension questions developing knowledge, comprehension, conclusion, interpretation and assessment competences; analysed the activity (answering the activity reflection questions); and assessed the reading process and the results.

As there is a great difference in the results depending on where students come from, the methodology was tested with children studying in various locations: in a city (17 students), a regional centre (32 students) and in the countryside (21 students).

The research was carried out from January to March 2013. Due to the length requirements, the article analyses only the findings from one class, where students read, analysed non-fiction text comprehension activities, and reflected on them.

On the basis of the constructivist and socio-cultural theory and the analysis of empirical research data it can be concluded that if children are given a non-fiction text that interests them and a text-related practical assignment, good text comprehension and activity reflection results may be achieved as early as the second form. It is also worth pointing out that all students gave an answer to all the questions (no questions were left blank), which demonstrates high student motivation. The second formers performed well in those questions where information could be found directly in the text. Whereas the most challenging task was to draw conclusions when children had to list all the cake making steps in their sequential order. Students were capable of giving correct and coherent replies to specific activity reflection questions. The majority of students gave a positive evaluation of reading the recipe and making a cake (social activity) during class. A great many of second formers identified the easiest and the hardest question correctly/coherently. The analysis of the research results proves that a well-organised teaching process in class can improve text comprehension competences among second formers. To improve the desired results more focus should be placed not only on individual reading practice but also on text related activities, including answering text comprehension questions in writing; and on the analysis of the reading process as well as the achieved result (answers to the questions). Second formers are capable of successful performance when specific activity related questions are asked.

Vaiva SCHOROŠKIENĖ, Jolanta ABRAMAUSKIENĖ

**On Language Skills Development  
and Music Inter Subject Integration Models  
in Primary School Students' Textbooks**

**Модели междисциплинарной интеграции  
уроков родного языка и музыки  
в учебниках Литвы для начальных классов**

**Dzimtās valodas un mūzikas starpdisciplinārās integrācijas modeļi  
Lietuvas sākumskolas mācību grāmatās**

**Keywords:** language skills development, music education, inter subject integration, textbooks.

**Summary**

The article analyses the native language and music inter subject integration in Lithuanian primary school students' textbooks. On the basis of the textbooks analyses which are in use in the first and second primary school forms in Lithuania. 3 inter subject (language and music) integration models as well as integration axes theoretical models fundamentals, their advantages and disadvantages have been pointed out in the present - day language skills development didactics context.

The first model – inter subject integration of the native language and music as separate subjects which is based on the specific connection between language skills development and musical education. First and second formers' textbooks comprise the topics which are defined as 3 integration axes: sound variety, sound peculiarities and speech and musical language characteristics.

The second model – inter subject integration in which are of the subjects (the native language and music) is treated as an artistic subject. In this case the native language skills development is analyzed in a wider self – expression, creativity and cultural, artistic skills development context. Artistic development subjects and the native language skills development are closely related with fiction as oral art. In the analyzed textbooks the proposed topics have been defined as 3 integration axes: human communication forms, creation: creation and author ship's conception, and fiction works comprehension.

Not only is the native language the aim of learning but also a means of learning other subjects. That is why the native language is naturally related to other subject's skills development. The proposed topics in the analyzed textbooks are defined into 3 integration axes: sign conception, communication norms and rules, and common competence. This model emphasizes social and communicative skills development, problem solving and acquired knowledge skills application.

The analysis of teaching aids, methodical and scientific literature show that all three the native language and music inter subject integration models are based on the context broadening principle: the analyzed speech expression is presented to the primary school student in a broader easier comprehensible context than it is usual to these age group children. We try to stimulate primary school students' ability to estimate a certain phenomenon on the basis of his experience. Wider experience encourages students to take an active part in the teaching process aspiring for broader comprehension. The main advantages: this subject integration encourages authentic everyday students' speech activity, intensifies students' communication and metacommunication. The main disadvantages: inter subject integration demands for different subject teachers'.

Ingēra TOMME-JUKĒVICA

**Second Language Phonological System Acquisition  
at Preschool Age:  
an Insight into Contemporary Research**

**Otrās valodas fonoloģiskās sistēmas apguve pirmsskolas vecumā:  
ieskats mūsdienu pētījumos**

**Key words:** child's second language, foreign accent, phonological system acquisition, models of speech perception, Speech Learning Model.

## Summary

As in the Latvian linguistics bilingual children's language research is still at an early stage and there is a lack of detailed study on their second language (L2) speech development, it is necessary to identify the factors that could affect the Latvian language pronunciation of Russophone preschoolers as the L2. Therefore, there is a need for the L2 phonological acquisition system identification as a whole. Based on these assumptions the **aim** of the paper is to provide the theoretical basis of the L2 phonological acquisition system and find out the factors that affect the development of the L2 speech as well as get to the back of the widespread speech perception models in the L2 phonology studies of children's language.

It was observed that the literature related to the L2 pronunciation points to a considerable amount of studies focusing on different factors that might affect the degree of the L2 pronunciation – age of onset of L2 learning, formal instruction, native language (L1)/L2 use, language learning aptitude, length of residence, and motivation. There are roughly four kinds of approaches to explain the reasons why children are better acquirers of the L2 pronunciation than adults: neurological, socio-affective, input, and habit formation. Two general hypotheses have shaped most of the L2 phonological acquisition research: the CPH and an alternative hypothesis (or hypotheses) to the CPH. Researchers (Lenneberg 1967; Scovel 2000), who recognize “critical period” of language acquisition, claim that starting age of L2 learning is the main determinant for foreign accent. Other researchers (Flege 1995; Best 1995; Kuhl 1993) are focusing on the phonological system of the learner's L1 and its interference and influence on the L2. They have proposed the models of speech perception that make claims about the nature of the stored representations of the L1 phonetic categories, show how it affects the perception of native and non-native (L2) phonetic sounds and help to explain the varied issues concerning second language phonological system acquisition.

The present research findings indicate that the usage of the theoretical framework of the Speech Learning Model (Flege 1995) can be applied when investigating the Russophone children's perceptual and production difficulties encountered in the acquisition of Latvian language as the second language. The evidence also suggests that while studying the Russophone children's L2 speech phonological development in the learning process, one should take into account the peculiarities of children's age, socio-emotional state, the Latvian language input quantity and quality as the L2, the L1 (the Russian language) phonological system and its impact on the L2 (the Latvian language). On the basis of the study results some examples of children's L2 speech as well as methodological recommendations for the Latvian language teachers for pronunciation improvement of preschoolers' second language speech are provided. Consideration must be given to more phonological transfer (interference) emphasis on respect. The teachers are encouraged to teach children to receive certain L2 sound contrasts to create more accurate L2 sounds perception of contrasts, which, in turn, would allow producing more individual sounds and helping improve the L2 pronunciation. Currently, this aspect has not been sufficiently addressed.

Dina BETHERE, Inese ROSTE-PLOSTNIECE, Kaiva ŽĪMANTE

## **Researching Language Competency of Children with Severe Mental Disorders**

**Valodas kompetences izpēte  
bērniem ar smagiem garīgās attīstības traucējumiem**

**Keywords:** language competency, mental disorders, system of indicators.

### **Summary**

Language competency is a multidimensional system of abilities and skills which does not have a universally accepted definition. In pedagogy, this area is constantly topical as language competency is one of the most important factors for providing educational opportunities for children.

Today, in correlation with the social integration trends, the focus is also on effective implementation of special education programmes for children with severe mental disorders. In this context, the need for developing the language teaching programmes that correspond to children's abilities is increasing, which, in turn, is not possible without an adequate language competency research system. Research in this area is difficult because of the diversity and individual specifics of the special needs of children. Scientific research analysis confirms that limitations in language development are one of the most typical features of developmental disorders.

The **goal** of the research presented in this publication is to develop a functional system of indicators for researching the language competency of children with severe mental disorders. The research is based on the language proficiency model elaborated by the American linguist L. F. Bachman. The model separates the language structure competency, which consists of grammatical and text-building competency and the pragmatic competency, which includes elocutive and socio-linguistic competence.

The following qualitative research methods are used for this study: content-analysis of documents reflecting development dynamics of children, and observation. The qualitative content-analysis of the documents, which was conducted with the intention to explore the typical manifestations of language competence of children with severe mental disabilities, confirms the disharmony of language development. Significant differences can be observed in the areas of grammatical and elocutive competence.

Accordingly, during the observation process, the functionality of the developed system of language competency indicators and its compliance with actual cases is investigated. Participants of this study: 13 learners who follow the basic education programme in a special education establishment, and three teachers. The observation results confirm that even-aged children with identical officially defined disability levels and similar learning history show absolutely different manifestations of language proficiency.

Overall, the research results prove that the developed system of indicators and its structure provides opportunities for describing the individual specifics of children's linguistic competency in a complex way. At the same time, this system of

indicators may serve as basis for further research initiatives – especially elaborating language teaching methods for children with severe mental disorders.

Maija ROČĀNE, Alīda SAMUSEVIČA

## **Functionality of Debating in the Language Learning Process**

### **Debašu funkcionalitāte valodu apguvē**

**Keywords:** debating, debating format, teaching method, lesson, interdisciplinary links, significant learning cooperative learning style.

### **Summary**

Teaching language is not only learning grammar rules, it is a much more complicated process in which the components go beyond the textbook knowledge. The **aim** of the publication is to highlight integration possibilities of the teaching method-debating into the language learning process. This method can be introduced in several subjects. However, the authors of the research focus on the use of this method in foreign language lessons.

The approach to the education process is changing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In order to implement a successful learning process, the change must occur in both students and teachers. Searching for new connections to teach the learning content productively in the lesson and beyond it, as well as finding creative solutions and using the knowledge and skills in unfamiliar situations are becoming topical nowadays.

The teacher is the main contributor to the implementation of productive learning. The teacher determines students' participation in the learning process, forms and methods of the learning process. Debating is a teaching method with a pedagogical potential and is fully consistent with the basic ideas of productive learning. Debating can be used in foreign language lessons as well as in other subjects in order to efficiently implement the learning content. While debating students acquire new knowledge independently and purposefully, and become motivated for the research process as well as acquiring presentation skills. Thus, debating develops a new way of thinking and raises students' belief in their own abilities. Interdisciplinary link and cooperative learning have also been updated. Students are "discoverers", because they are able to acquire knowledge without the teacher's help. Preparation process for the debating takes place not only in the lesson, but also goes beyond it, through the variety of cognitive capabilities, including electronic means of communication.

In order to bring the teaching method-debating into the lesson the teacher must be open to the interdisciplinary links as well as the cooperative learning style. A variety of debating formats is provided. However, there is a field for the individual format creation for the teacher. Thus, teachers' understanding of the teaching method-debating serves as one of the most important prerequisites for its introduction into the lesson. Through the process of implementation of debating in

the lesson, the interest in content-rich and evidence-based knowledge acquisition has been raised.

Марина НОВИК

## **Spelling Literacy of Russian Internet Users in Latvia**

**Орфографическая грамотность  
русских интернет-пользователей в Латвии**

**Krievu valodas pareizrakstība Latvijas interneta vietnēs**

**Keywords:** spelling, Russian Internet user in Latvia, spelling level, specifics of mistakes, mistake rates, written language and linguistic culture.

### **Summary**

Traditionally, spelling literacy is a topical issue in the linguodidactics both in the native and foreign language. However, in particular periods of time each scientist, whilst researching spelling literacy, finds more and more new options and topical aspects in this problem.

**Aim** of the research – to analyse written comments on the Internet of Latvia.

Object of the research – spelling literacy of Russians on the Internet in the process of daily communication. Analysis of the written speech on the Internet allows to assess the level of spelling literacy, types of mistakes and their number as objectively as it is possible and to define linguistic culture of the written communication.

The theoretical basis of the paper consists of the researches on the written communication on the Internet and the Russian language spelling system. To reach the set aim Internet users' spelling mistakes in their comments were analysed.

Communication on the Internet provides that a significant part of written comments is an immediate, very often emotional reaction to some announcement or news. The content dominates over the form in the comments. Participants of the communication do not pay attention to the orthography, punctuation or other norms.

Process of the research. The Internet users' of Latvia websites comments in Russian language were analysed. The most commonly used specific written texts on the Internet are: comments on the information, events etc., and notes in the blogs (journal of events on the Internet, diary), news, exchange of relics on the chats, forums. Comments on the information were in the focus of attention of the research.

Comments were selected by the method of random sampling, and text content analysis was used. In order to define, describe and analyse orthograms, the Russian language orthographic system was viewed.

A lot of spelling mistakes were found during the research. The analysis of these mistakes revealed the most common ones. The spelling mistakes of the Internet users in the written communication are defined by both the objective and subjective factors. Functionality peculiarities of the Russian language in Latvia are considered as objective factors – it has limited use. As subjective factors – personal factors: each

user individually determines at what level he can, considers as necessary and is able to follow the spelling rules.

Sandra SMILGA

## Open Educational Resources as Possible Independent Studies

### Atvērto mācību resursu izmantošanas iespējas patstāvīgajās studijās

**Keywords:** foreign language competence, open learning resources, independent studies.

#### Summary

Nowadays, for successful integration into the European labour market, it is necessary to learn several foreign languages, and depending on the profession different levels of language competence are required.

In some professions, language proficiency is required at a high level, but quite often the number of contact hours is not sufficient for students to learn a language under a teacher's guidance, particularly it concerns learning the second or third language at Universities or courses without prior knowledge. Today, it goes without saying that the students in the study process preparing for classes and workshops use open learning resources. But is it also practised when preparing for a foreign language class?

The **purpose** of the study is to explore how students' at School of Business Administration *Turiba* use web resources in preparation for Russian and German classes.

The research objectives:

- 1) to find out what Internet resources would be needed,
- 2) to analyze Internet-based learning materials,
- 3) to analyze the training materials developed in projects.

58 students from School of Business Administration *Turiba* were interviewed. The study found that the students surveyed do not purposefully use Internet resources for language learning (or use partially) as supporting material to consolidate the knowledge. Students use Internet resources for obtaining information in order to prepare for a presentation, but not with the intention to learn pronunciation, vocabulary or grammar.

For students, who start learning a second or third language without prior knowledge, in circumstances when the number of contact hours is insufficient, to achieve the desired result considerable attention should be paid to students' independent study promotion.