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 **Peeragogy and paragogy as the newest approaches to education
(based on examples of some Internet-communities of English language learners and teachers)**

**Abstract**

The article is devoted to studying new approaches to education and self-education, known as "paragogy" and "peeragogy." The novelty of these trends is that learning is carried out entirely on the Internet and without explicit teachers. These pedagogical approaches can be successfully applied in any field of study, but the article focuses on studying foreign languages and foreign language teachers` professionalism rising.

**Key words:** Peeragogy, paragogy, peer learning, modern EFLT methods, Internet as a means of learning and teaching.

"Education is not just school affairs. School provides the key to education. Non-formal education is a whole life! Every person should never give up learning!" Soviet writer, critic and art historian Anatoly Lunacharsky affirms. (Зобова, Тарасова, Цыганок, 2013)

Indeed, in the modern context a person`s career at any field requires constant self-development and professional skills` improvement. Nowadays the problem of professional self-development is of greatest current interest. Specialists who are ready to study throughout their professional life are in demand at modern labor market. This fact is confirmed by the statistics: according to the National Center for Public Opinion Research, 8% of respondents were promoted through the ranks in 2014 due to self-education, i.e. attending trainings, courses, webinars. [1]

So, in 2011 Joseph Corneli and Charles Jeffrey Danoff worked out completely new approaches to self-education: peeragogy and paragogy which are both to solve the problem of self-development demand and constant lack of time to attend full-time courses.

The term «peeragogy» means any self-organized mutual learning due to the "peer-to-peer" form carried out entirely on the Internet. A teacher as an educator is either absent or performs the function of a mentor, expert and adviser of a learning community. Responsibility for learning lies on a student. Peergogy is a phenomenon not a theory; it is the way of studying online in special self-organized communities. [13]

The methodical basis of peeragogy is paragogy: “a theory of peer-based teaching and learning” (Corneli & Danoff, 2011) which solves the problem, associated with the analysis and the joint formation of online educational environment and creating, developing and functioning of e-learning communities.

We would like to point out that paragogy (παραγωγή) is a word of Greek origin meaning “production” helps us to wholly clarify the very approach to this way of learning. Paragogy is understood as the theory of “production” of educational activity in the context of a horizontal model of “peer-to-peer" which describes the principles of interaction between peers without explicit teachers that allows to organize mutual learning. Paragogy as the theory of mutual education and self-development solves the problem, connected with the formation of a collective analysis and educational environment. (Corneli & Danoff, 2011)

In other words, paragogy is a theory of education, and peeragogy is practice.

**The aim of our work is to study the process of self-organized peer-to-peer education of adults on the Internet as part of self-education. We set several tasks to be solved: 1) to disclose the principles of** paragogy **and 2) functioning of** peeragogy **on the example of online communities of students and teachers of English.**

We would like to highlight some history facts first. The earliest projects in paragogy were two online courses which Joseph Corneli and Charles Jeffery Danoff conducted in the Peer 2 Peer University (P2PU) in 2010. The first course was called “DIY Math” and was “designed with the aim to organize community based on mutual learning of mathematics of any complexity” [12]. The second course was called “Collaborative Lesson Planning” (“Joint planning sessions”) and was created to answer the question: “Can any publications and collaborative creating of online lesson plans improve the quality of the lessons?” [12]. “DIY Math” had no huge success as a course, but it was really helpful as on the basis of this experience the principles of paragogy and forms of educational activity were developed. [3]

There are 5 principles of paragogy (Corneli & Danoff, 2011) which in their turn are in fact the adapted principles of andragogy by M. S. Knowles (Knowles, 1980):

1. *Changing context as a decentered center*

From the point of view of creating some training activities in the context of mutual learning, the given principle emphasizes the importance of understanding the idea of ​​"shared context in motion", i.e. that context which defines and maintains different types of a student interaction and activity.

The participants of the learning process mediated by information and communication technologies carry out a common educational space on the Internet; to be exact they develop, supply and change the necessary learning content. The aim and the result of their common work are generation and assimilation of knowledge, shaping skills and experience.

1. *Meta-learning as a font of knowledge*

This principle implies that the learners are supposed “to learn about learning”, i.e., they are constantly trying to answer the questions What / How / When / Why do they really learn? Also, students learn how to support others in their learning efforts; predict their progress on the basis of what they have already assimilated and achieved.

1. *Peers are equals, but different*

This principle implies on the one hand, students' reflection on opposing points of view; and on the other – their essential right to choose their own way of studying. It means that every student is free to meet his/ her interests. For example, everyone may work either in a small team, or, on the contrary, in the larger open team. The choice varies, depending on the given answer to the question "How large is the variety of opinions with which we wish to encounter during our studies?"

*4) Learning is distributed and nonlinear*

This principle involves determining a student`s own pace and trajectory of his/her studies in the learning environment.

*5) Realize the dream if you can, then wake up!*

This principle requires the ability to set educational goals and then motivate oneself to achieve them and after having done all these items, one should necessarily evaluate the results and move on to achieve the next targets.

So, with the lapse of time paragogy as an educational theory and peeragogy as an educational practice have gained popularity, and nowadays we are glad to introduce you several projects which were/are maintained due to the aforementioned principles and ideas.

In accordance with the principles of paragogy one can distinguish three forms of educational activity and interaction between students [3]:

1. "Student to student" is a form of collaboration between students in social networks for accomplishing either homework or projects. For example, University students’ and senior pupil’ project "Welcome to the holiday!" [4] This project was implemented by the Southern Federal University.

The main goal of this project was to get acquainted with the national peculiarities of preparation and holding celebrations in the countries of a studied language (UK, USA, Germany, France), by: 1) creating any hypertext resource in the Internet supplied with text, audio, photo and video material, using modern ICT; 2) making friends with a foreign peer in virtual learning environment using modern social services and synchronous and asynchronous communication tools.

Secondary targets were the following:

1) Creation of hypertext educational resources in the Internet containing both oral (poetry, prose, congratulations, etc.) and musical works;

2) Deep immersion into the alive history and culture of the studied language (English, German or French), acquaintance with the national peculiarities of preparation to and carrying out holidays.

What is important, the mentor watched over the activity of each team. As a consultant he/she just pushed the students to the right direction, helping with ICT.

 We would like to note positive motivation of students who actively shared their ideas. As an example, one team even shot a video about the chosen holiday. [5] This result, of course, was both an educational and team-building success.

1. The second form is “mentor to student”, or students-mentor (as paragoge) interaction in a social network in order to communicate in a meaningful context. For example, the project «Learning through service» implemented by the Southern Federal University and the American University of Missouri and St. Louis in 2014/15, when Russian and American participants studied the material provided by their tutors, and discussed it using synchronous and asynchronous communication tools (e.g. Skype). [6] Also they created a discussion group in the social network Vkontakte where they talked both over the topics they`d studied during the week and absolutely abstract topics. The mentors (Russian and American ones) kept the track of every student`s involvement with the help of essays and online presentations.

This project aimed at promoting students’ patriotism and citizenship by studying their culture and the cultures of other countries.

It should be noted that the other part of the project was conducted in person, in close contact with tutors. Participants performed every piece of the acquired knowledge during online and live meetings in teams in two schools of Rostov-on-Don. These were very diverse projects: the first aimed at patriotic education of 15-16-year-old senior pupils, the other helps migrant 9-12-year-old children to adapt to Russian-speaking environment.

Turning back to the principles of paragogy, they are clearly reflected in this project. Probably one of the most striking examples is the fifth principle: “Realize the dream if you can, then wake up!” The tutors from both countries made the participants not rest on their laurels after every victory and not be depressed after their fails. They helped students follow the approved plan of actions and cope with it. Besides they developed a special calendar with dates of the events, purposes, means, expected results.

1. **The third form is “mentor to mentor”, it implies the communities in which colleagues collaborate on training. For example, the activities of the international Internet community of English teachers who use ICT in their work, Webheads in action. [14]**

**Webheads is a worldwide international online community of teachers with open access for everyone. Webheads in Action was founded in 1997-1978 by a team of enthusiasts all around the world: Vance Stevens (Abu Dhabi), Maggi Doty (Germany) and Michael Coghlan (Australia) to allow EFL teachers to study modern ICT and their implementation into teaching practice in collaborating learning with the colleagues. That is, again, the community had been created more than ten years before the terms “peeragogy” and “**paragogy” **appeared, but the principles had been already embodied in that project/learning community.**

**Over time, with the appearance of new participants, needs and technologies, the community has grown to an entire electronic village of TESOL (Electronic Village Online) with lots of master-classes and interesting discussions on the topics of ICT in EFLT and e-learning [10].**

**Members of the community are working together to search for and study educational resources, online tools and services, are leading discussions and organizing webinars, sharing their educational achievements. Their motivation is just a sincere interest towards new technologies and a wish to change the existing order of learning at school. The participants also wish to maintain their knowledge at a decent level and be tech-savvy.**

**Let`s consider this form of interaction more detailed, giving as an example TESOL's Internet community Electronic Village Online. [10] The so-called “Electronic Village” is a six-week session, which is held every year from mid-January to mid-February and organized for EFL teachers who want to learn more about the effective use of ICT in their teaching practice. This session includes a number of teams due to the interests, which vary and replenish with new ones from year to year. Thus, during the 2015 session the following groups worked: Using Moodle as a Bridge to Blended Learning, Creating eTextbooks, Dream Act: What Teachers Can Do, EVO Minecraft, MOOC, Flipped Learning, ICT4ELT, Moodle for Teachers, Teaching Pronunciation Differently and other.**

**Each team is guided by the moderators and co- moderators who are competent teachers. And each session has a clear structure and a certain “training plan” which includes recommended literature, schedule and topics of all the webinars etc.**

**It should be noted that anyone may become a moderator or his/her assistant.** Moderator`s function is to assist and help his/her colleagues. Moderators do not just notice whom and when to help, they also "look for any contextual features of the learning environment which block self-education. Some features may block the ability to change the environment in learner`s own interests. There are also the features that limit the possibility of asking for help" (Corneli & Danoff, 2011). Here manifests the first principle of paragogy.

The work of each group is divided into several stages. The first step is introduction, while which the third principle of paragogy takes place: “Peers are equals, but different” (Corneli & Danoff, 2011).

At the second stage, participants are actively engaged directly into the selected majors, working closely with each other and the moderators, cooperating, collaborating, co-creating and sharing.

The interaction of colleagues, whose number can be up to several hundred persons from all around the world, carries out in a synchronous and asynchronous mode in social networks (Google+, WizIQ, Edmodo, Yahoo groups), blogs (Edublogs), Wiki (PBWorks, Wikispaces), forums; with the assistance of the Internet technologies like Skype, Twitter, YouTube and others.

The key form of interaction performs webinar, which is online seminar, organized with the help of web-technologies in live mode with audio communication, text chat, slide presentation, file sharing, etc. During every webinar the participants share their experience, opinion, summarize the week tasks` conclusions, and of course get new bunch of tasks.

At this stage the first, the second and the fourth principles of paragogy are realized.

At the third stage, the reflection and the exchange of contacts take place (the fifth principle of paragogy). All participants are invited to take part in the annual international conference and exhibition TESOL International Convention and English Language Expo in the United States.

The result of this intensive six-week professional communication/development is not only new knowledge but also new professional contacts.

Summing up, it should be noted that peeragogy and paragogy as approaches to studying foreign languages, self-education and professional development solve the problem of creating educational content by equal participants (peers), that is necessary and sufficient for their self-education, in the context of joint educational and research activities, mediated by ICT and Internet-technologies.

Besides, peeragogy and paragogy provide new opportunities for efficient motivated effective foreign language learning and professional growth.

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