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AUTONOMOUS LEARNING AND METACOGNITIVE STRATEGIES WITHIN ESP DISCOURSE

This article is aimed at regarding autonomous learning in terms of teachers' tasks, corresponding methods and effective ways of its fostering within ESP discourse taking into account metacognitive strategies concerning cognitive factors and characteristics associated with autonomous learning such as resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence being crucial for tertiary education students. Recent publications dwell on some specific aspects related to the issue under consideration: the findings of the research related to teachers' and students' perception of autonomous learning definition; general recommendations beneficial for autonomous learning such as clear performance standards set from the very start; appropriate feedback provided to students by informing them about the skills they have acquired and/or still need to improve.

One of the most important principles of learners' autonomy is the shift of attention from teaching to learning focusing on the student. Effective teaching strategies fostering autonomy include: creating productive learning climate correlated with emotional intelligence; establishing positive student relationships taking into account social-emotional development; providing students with appropriate choices increasing them in regular and online learning activities; encouraging comprehensive thinking. Autonomous learning regarded within ESP discourse turns out to be rather beneficial for tertiary education students.

For autonomous learning within ESP discourse educators should create courses providing students' opportunities for academic skills training; foster students' initiative; develop the students' ability to solve the problems; assess students' learning capabilities progress; choose and apply appropriate methods for the students to increase self-monitoring tendencies aimed at investing their time with the focus on the long term value activities.

Key-words: autonomous learning, discourse, cognitive process, metacognitive strategies, ESP.

Стаття присвячена автономному навчанню у межах дискурсу англійської мови фахового спрямування з точки зору завдань викладачів, відповідних методів та ефективних способів його застосування з урахуванням метакогнітивних стратегій, що стосуються когнітивних факторів та характеристик, пов'язаних з автономним навчанням, таких як винахідливість, ініціативність та наполегливість, які є визначальними для студентів вищої школи.

Ключові слова: автономне навчання, дискурс, когнітивний процес, метакогнітивні стратегії, англійська мова фахового спрямування.

Данная статья посвящена автономному обучению в рамках дискурса английского языка профессионального направления с точки зрения задач преподавателей, соответствующих методов и эффективных способов его применения с учетом метакогнитивные стратегии, касающихся когнитивных факторов и характеристик, связанных с автономным обучением, таких как изобретательность, инициативность и настойчивость, которые являются определяющими для студентов высшей школы.

Ключевые слова: автономное обучение, дискурс, когнитивный процесс, метакогнитивные стратегии, английский язык профессионального направления.

The problem being under consideration. The problem of autonomous learning has been in the focus of attention of many scholars [1-12] regarding it from different points of view. This article is dedicated to autonomous learning investigation within ESP discourse taking into account cognitive process and metacognitive strategies.

Review of the recent publications on the issue. Recent publications dwell on some specific aspects related to the issue under consideration. Barbara McCombs, PhD from University of Denver, enumerating general recommendations beneficial for autonomous learning mentions that clear performance standards must be set from the very start. For developing responsibility and a sense of ownership over the learning process students should be encouraged to assess their own learning progress. Besides, it is also necessary to provide students with the appropriate feedback by informing them about the skills they have acquired and/or still need to improve [6].

Khusnul Khotimah in her article 'Autonomous English learning: Teachers' and students' perceptions' [5] reveals the findings of the research done by the applied linguistics scholars of Mataram University, Indonesia, related to teachers' and students' perception of autonomous English learning definition.

Maria Tsedryk [11] underlines one of the important learner's autonomy principles i.e. the shift of attention from teaching to learning in terms of decision-making, arrangement of material and its various modifications. She also treats task-based language teaching as an effective tool for promoting learners' autonomy pointing out the structure of the lesson which can have different styles, angles and forms.

The aim of the paper. This article is aimed at regarding autonomous learning in terms of teachers' tasks, corresponding methods and effective ways of its fostering within ESP discourse taking into account metacognitive strategies concerning cognitive factors and characteristics associated with autonomous learning such as resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence being crucial for tertiary education students.

The body of the paper. The idea of autonomous English learning is not new, but it has become very popular only over the last decade. The term was first coined by researchers at the Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL), University of Nancy, France, in the 1970s in the context of involving more people into the process of education and lifelong learning, to work more independently irrespective of whether it is a class, a teacher or a textbook. One of the most important principles of learners' autonomy is the shift of attention from teaching to learning and, therefore, with focus on the student. This means that the structure of the lesson can have different styles, forms and angles, and the students can take part in decision-making, arrangement of material and various modifications of it [11].

It will be appropriate to mention the most critical milestones explaining how to develop learner autonomy. They are:

(1) Teach the students how to learn. Teach the students different learning skills and methods, practice the strategies explaining how they can work at home using the textbooks, listening and writing materials, multimedia and Information Technologies.

(2) Highlight the importance of self-evaluation. Teach the students how to clarify the goal and watch the feedback in the form of self-evaluation. Self-evaluation is closely related to monitoring as it refers both to identifying student problems and faults in the programs, syllabi and curricula.

(3) Make the students research and find the answers themselves.

Propose coherent models of research methods, e.g. how to work with questions and answers, with different types of contexts, teach them to think critically.

(4) Provide guidance to study and use English outside the classroom. Show students the ways to improve their English outside the classroom. It will be appropriate to present a list of different motivation tasks. The example of the list is as follows: 1. Read a book in English; 2. Watch a movie in English; 3. Listen to songs / an audiobook; 4. Create a facebook account; 5. Create a couchsurfing / penpal account; 6. Download an English-learning app; 7. Create a wordlist on Quizlet; 8. Teach English to someone (a family member or a friend); 9. Switch the mobile in English for a week; 10. Make a post in Instagram in English; 11. Find and watch an English-speaking Youtube blogger; 12. Talk to a stranger in the street in English; 13. Keep a diary (for example a food diary) etc.

(5) Use task-based learning approach. Task-based language teaching is an effective tool of promoting learner autonomy as the students choose and select the materials themselves [11].

It is very often that English for Specific Purposes (ESP) teachers doubt whether English teachers as well as specialists in the profession should teach an ESP. Many of them think that it is enough to master General English (GE) and the specialists with good knowledge of General English would teach ESP successfully. ESP is a methodology which includes the combination of different specific strategies such as programme designing and course developing, customized to the needs of the learners. Today English has become subject to needs and demands of people other than language teachers. Dovey [4] states specific courses which prepare students for the professional activity are quite different from those of discipline-based courses. In such a way needs analysis and motivation are the indispensable tools for teaching ESP. It should be also kept in mind that ESP could easily be analysed taking into consideration the types of texts the students need to get acquainted with and discourse analysis methods to analyse the main structure of texts in different academic environments [3].

One of the critical components of ESP pedagogical circle together with such categories as active learning, active listening, active speaking, collaborative learning etc. is learner autonomy. It can be defined as the ability to control one's learning. Learner autonomy is also much related to the term called 'learner-centered' which is defined by Aebersold [1, p. 37] in such a way: 'Giving students some control over their learning process has many benefits: it makes them feel confident; it puts some of the decision making in their hands; it puts the responsibility for learning in their hands; and over the long term it builds independence and self-reliance so that they can read on their own without being dependent on teacher direction and supervision. It activates the students' own learning spirals.

It is interesting to mention the findings of the research done by the applied linguistics scholars of Mataram University related to teachers' and students' perception of autonomous English learning definition. Teachers' perceptions on autonomous learning were indicated within the three definition statements and showed the results that half of the teachers (50%) could define autonomous learning correctly, but, many of them (39%) were incorrect, and few (11%) could not distinguish the three statements. These data reflect the thought that though half of the teachers understood the concept, another half still thought that autonomous learning is the situation in which students learn English without teacher's aid with full responsibility in the learning when initiating and evaluating processes in learning are teachers' duty. Totally, it is 80% of teachers with more or less appropriate perception of autonomous learning definition. In this case, initiating means students' self-enactment and ability to achieve their learning goals and evaluation means students' skills to reflect their learning goals. As we see from the results of the finding, these two notions are not held by the teachers.

The finding also reveals that 44% of the students showed correct definition of autonomous learning of English, 35% of them could not give the definition of the term correctly, and 16% of them were at a loss not knowing whether the definition was proper. These data give the result that 56% of the students had no clear idea about autonomous learning of English definition [5]. In the ESP discourse process a significant attention is devoted to metacognitive strategies which are related to autonomous learning and analysed by different researchers in the attempt to give a coherent definition of the term in question. According to C. Block [2] 'metacognition can be defined as a reader's awareness of (1) what he or she is thinking about while reading, (2) what thinking processes he or she initiates to overcome literacy challenges, and (3) how a reader selects specific thinking processes to make meaning before, during, and

after reading' [2, p. 91]. We should distinguish metacognitive and cognitive strategies within ESP discourse. Cognitive strategies differ from metacognitive ones in that they are housed within one subject area (e.g., EFL), while metacognitive strategies embrace a number of subject zones [10]. Cognitive strategies are, for example, making a decision, translating, summarizing, linking with prior knowledge or experience, applying grammar rules and guessing meaning from texts. Metacognition refers to awareness and analysis of cognitive strategies [7, p. 4].

Having got acquainted with empirical studies and experiences received from the intermediate-level students in ESP courses worldwide it is possible to create sort of matrix out of statements incorporated in the students' feedback on the issue in question, namely, the efficiency of metacognitive and cognitive strategies:

1. I think my brain is more active in reading now.
2. After previewing I can decide how I will deal with any particular text.
3. The strategies you applied made me conscious and active. I know now how to deal with the text.
4. We start thinking about the topics which help us to understand the contents of articles.
5. We can improve our reading speed by predicting the following contents.
6. We can associate the knowledge we have concerning the topics.
7. Finding key words in any text was an interesting technique.
8. I think it is easier to ask questions when I read something I have prior knowledge of.
9. Now, I have a critical reading and I can use my background knowledge.
10. Using algorithms helps me grasp scientific facts.
11. If you give me words that I can use I am sure I am in the right track [7, p. 4].

Michael K. Ponton, Professor of Education from School of Education at Regent University, USA and Nancy E. Rhea, Assistant Professor from Department of Curriculum and Instruction at University of Mississippi, USA, in their article 'Autonomous Learning from a Social Cognitive Perspective' define autonomous learning as 'the agentive exhibition of resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence in self-directed learning' [9, p. 38] and as 'an intentional activity in which learning is pursued based upon individual preferences' [9, p. 47]. Dwelling on salient aspects of autonomous learning theory, the authors provide a heuristic position enabling a person to discover or learn something for themselves that guides adult learning. They regard autonomous learning in the framework of Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), a psychological theory about learning through observation which recognizes that human behavior is intentional and is influenced by the environment and cognitive processes.

Since 'cognitive and affective factors provide the impetus for autonomous learning' [9, p. 45] and supply the student with new information, thus influencing future behavior, 'fostering personal initiative encourages the development of a high level of personal responsibility not only to solve the problems associated with one's learning, but also to create goals, plan learning activities, and persevere to personal levels of success' [9, p. 46]. Consequently, according to the authors, the task of the teacher is to:

- create courses providing students' opportunities for academic skills training;
- foster students' initiative in creating challenging goals for desirable specific outcomes;
- develop the students' ability to solve the problems interfering with desired learning level;
- assess students' learning capabilities progress;
- choose and apply appropriate methods for the students to increase self-monitoring tendencies aimed at investing their time with the focus on the long term value activities.

Regarding autonomous learning from the point of view of the holistic nature of individual student learning including the corresponding practices and developmentally appropriate ways, Barbara McCombs, PhD from University of Denver, indicates resources and tools for inspiring students' natural curiosity and eagerness to learn as well as creativity and autonomous lifelong learning. 'Research has shown that motivation is related to whether or not students have opportunities to be autonomous and to make important academic choices' [6, p. 3]. The author points out the following effective teaching strategies fostering autonomy:

- creating productive learning climate by listening to each learner's voice;
- establishing positive student relationships considering social-emotional development;
- providing students with appropriate choices increasing them in regular and online learning activities;
- helping students make their own choices;
- developing a learning strategy model for the students to friendly emulate;
- taking into account emotional intelligence;
- encouraging comprehensive thinking.

Maarten Vansteenkiste, Joke Simons, and Willy Lens (University of Leuven), Kennon M. Sheldon (University of Missouri-Columbia) and Edward L. Deci (University of Rochester) tested E. L. Deci and R. M. Ryan's self-determination theory hypotheses according to which intrinsic i.e. community, personal growth, health (vs. extrinsic i.e. money, image) goals and autonomy-supportive (vs. controlling) learning climates would improve students' learning, performance, and persistence. In their article 'Motivating Learning, Performance, and Persistence: The Synergistic Effects of Intrinsic Goal Contents and Autonomy-Supportive Contexts' they argue that 'teachers' use of intrinsic goals for framing learning activities and their providing autonomy-supportive learning climates have significant effects for students becoming more fully dedicated and more genuinely engaged in learning activities' [12, p. 259] in the designed optimal learning environments.

The article 'The Relationship between Resourcefulness and Persistence in Adult Autonomous Learning' by Michael K. Ponton, M. Gail Derrick and Paul B. Carr is dedicated to the methods for measuring 'behavioral intentions that are coincident with specific cognitive strategies within the domain of adult autonomous learning' [8, p. 118] since activity choices such as time investment, outcome assessment etc. are implemented through active self-monitoring related to self-image, future learning activities depend on. According to the authors this may help educators in fostering students' autonomous learning tendencies being characteristic of cognitive process, thus, reinforcing students' self-identification as continual, lifelong learners by choosing learning activities over non-learning ones.

Conclusions. General recommendations advantageous for autonomous learning which should be incorporated into ESP course are the following: clear performance standards set from the very start; appropriate feedback provided to students by informing them about the skills they have acquired and/or still need to improve. Autonomous learning regarded within ESP discourse in terms of teachers' tasks, corresponding methods and effective ways of its fostering turns out to be rather beneficial taking into account metacognitive strategies concerning cognitive factors and characteristics associated with autonomous learning such as resourcefulness, initiative, and persistence being crucial for tertiary education students.

Effective teaching strategies fostering autonomy include: creating productive learning climate correlated with emotional intelligence; establishing positive student relationships taking into account social-emotional development; providing students with appropriate choices increasing them in regular and online learning activities; encouraging comprehensive thinking.

For autonomous learning within ESP discourse educators should create courses providing students' opportunities for academic skills training; foster students' initiative; develop the students' ability to solve the problems; assess students' learning capabilities progress; choose and apply appropriate methods for the students to increase self-monitoring tendencies aimed at investing their time with the focus on the long term value activities.

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