



## The main peculiarities of autonomous learning in foreign language acquisition

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### *Article history:*

Received March 2021  
Received in revised form  
20 March 2021  
Accepted 15 April 2021  
Available online  
20 May 2021

#### *Keywords:*

learning, autonomous,  
characteristics,  
research, concept,  
effectiveness,  
factor, process,  
teaching, background,  
theoretical, strategy,  
responsibility, method,  
learner, competence.

### ABSTRACT

This article defines the role of autonomous learning in teaching foreign language acquisition. As it's known, that the learner autonomy aims at providing language learners with the ability to take on more responsibility for their own learning. The author of the article explains the terms of "learner autonomy" and "autonomous learning" by theoretical approach. Moreover, the main characteristics and classifications of the learner autonomy in language learning are discussed constantly.

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## Хорижий тилларни ўрганишда мустақил таълимни асосий ўзига хос хусусиятлари

### АННОТАЦИЯ

#### *Калит сўзлар:*

ўрганиш, автоном,  
характеристикалар,  
тадқиқот, жараён,  
самарадорлик, омил,  
ўқитиш, маълумот,  
назарий, стратегия,  
жавобгарлик, усул,  
тушунча, ўрганувчи,

Мазкур мақолада чет тилларини эгаллашга ўргатишда мустақил таълимни роли ёритиб берилган. Маълумки, ўрганувчининг автономияси тил ўрганувчиларга ўзларининг ўқишлари учун кўпроқ маъсулиятни ўз зиммаларига олиш қобилиятини таъминлашга қаратилган. Мақола муаллифи "ўрганувчини мустақиллиги" ва "мустақил таълим" атамаларини назарий ёндашув билан тушунтиради. Бундан ташқари, тилни ўрганишда ўқувчининг автономиясининг асосий хусусиятлари ва таснифлари муҳокама қилинади.

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## Основные особенности автономного обучения иностранному языку

### АННОТАЦИЯ

#### **Ключевые слова:**

обучение,  
автономный,  
характеристики,  
исследование,  
эффективность,  
фактор, процесс,  
обучение,  
фон,  
теоретический,  
стратегия,  
ответственность,  
метод,  
концепция,  
учащийся,  
компетентность.

В этой статье определяется роль автономного обучения в обучении овладению иностранным языком. Как известно, автономия учащегося направлена на предоставление изучающим язык возможности брать на себя большую ответственность за собственное обучение. Автор статьи объясняет термины «автономия обучаемого» и «автономное обучение» теоретическим подходом. Кроме того, постоянно обсуждаются основные характеристики и классификации автономии учащегося в изучении языка.

Foreign language teaching is developing globally, as well as in our country. The effectiveness and efficiency of teaching the target language is demanded immensely. Therefore, teaching English language is an artistic talent for all pedagogues in the world and the demand for fast and creative techniques to utilize in the classroom increased tremendously in every society.

As it's known, learner autonomy and learner responsibility are the fundamental topics in foreign language acquisition. If the learners are not aware of their responsibilities or autonomous, they can never be successful in learning new things or they don't make any progress in learning. Being autonomous learner means doing or learning things for yourself, self-assess, self-monitoring or individual learning. Learner autonomy requires the learner's full involvement in planning, monitoring and evaluating his or her learning.

Some scholars, researchers worked on learner autonomy and autonomous learning in teaching foreign languages: such as Dam L. (1990), Little D. (1996), Littlewood W. (1999), Aoki N. (2002), Benson P. (2003), Benson P. (2006), Fisher D., Hafner C. & Young J. (2006), Oxford R. (2008), Balçıklanlı C. (2010), Borg S. & Al-Busaidi S. (2012), Feryok A. (2013), Shahsavari S. (2014).

First of all, we should identify "What is learner autonomy?", "What makes an autonomous learning?". We'll discuss the theoretical background of autonomous learning with different scholars' and researchers' ideas. Learner autonomy in language acquisition is interpreted in different ways such as "learner autonomy", "autonomous learning", 'learner independence', 'self-direction', 'independent learning' but all these items have been used to refer to similar concepts. The autonomy is rooted in the European continent. On the contrary, there are researchers claiming that the very idea of autonomy has deep historical roots in Eastern philosophies. Pierson (1996: 49-58) has shown that ideas of autonomy and self-education have roots in Chinese thought dating back to the Sung Dynasty. Riley (1988: 12-34) was one of the first researchers to raise the issue of the cultural appropriateness of the idea of autonomy in language learning. Benson (2001) states that Riley's concerns were associated with the fate of non-European students in European educational institutions that adopted autonomy among their goals. Studies

related to these concerns were conducted, and it was discovered that the national culture was found to be an important factor in the provision of a cultural setting for fostering autonomy.

According to Moore “Learner autonomy starts with the premise that an autonomous learner takes responsibility for his/her own learning”. Thanasoulas (2000) illustrates this: “It is noteworthy that autonomy can be thought of in terms of a departure from education as a social process, as well as in terms of redistribution of power attending the construction of knowledge and the roles of the participants in the learning process”. Little mentioned “Learner autonomy is a problematic term because it is widely confused with self-instruction. It is also a slippery concept because it is notoriously difficult to define precisely”. Holec defines learner autonomy as: ‘the ability to take charge of one’s own learning’, which he then specifies as ‘to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning,’ (1981: p.3). So we can define that autonomy as the freedom and ability, competence to manage one’s own learning, which entails the right to make decisions as well.

At present time teaching and learning foreign language classrooms the teacher’s role is to develop learner’s communicative competence and proficiency in the target language.

Learner’s in the autonomy classroom play three independent roles:

1. To develop language learner’s communicative skills step by step;
2. To develop an explicit analytical knowledge of the target language system;
3. To develop an explicit awareness of affective and meta cognitive aspects of language learning gradually.

As it’s shown that in order to develop autonomy skill one should develop their communicative skills too. Learners have to know formal and informal speech, writing and transferable skills which is very vital in FLT. For example: presentation skills, note taking skills, time management skills, decision making skills, IT skills, research skills and so on.

Holec (1981) assumed that the ability and responsibility in practicing autonomy can be operated from five main areas:

- setting the learning objectives;
- formulating content and material;
- choosing appropriate and suited methods and techniques;
- supervising procedures of learning;
- finally evaluating the whole learning process.

Reviewing the literature indicates that scholars such as Cotterall (1995), White (1995), Littlewood (1999), Little (2002), Schmenck (2005) and Vickers & Enn (2006) have enriched our understanding the concept of autonomy. They postulate promoting learner autonomy is a matter of helping learners to:

- develop a capacity for critical thinking, decision making, and independent action;
- take responsibility for learning and for using appropriate strategies;
- face heavy psychological demands to confront learner’s weaknesses and failures;
- discover their learning potential and give up total dependence on the teacher.

Dickinson’s classifications of learner autonomy are as follows:

- (1) autonomous learners understand what is being taught;
- (2) autonomous learners can formulate their learning objectives;
- (3) autonomous learners select and make use of appropriate learning strategies;
- (4) autonomous learners identify strategies that are not working for them;

(5) autonomous learners self-assess or monitor their learning (PP. 330–331)

We partially agree with Dickinson's idea because independent learner can easily identify what is being taught and what for. Such kind of learner always knows the appropriate strategy and at the same time how to use appropriate strategy in language teaching, in addition to, in this process the autonomy learner can easily make self-assessment, can give feedback, or peer assess their learning.

According to Reachard there are five principles for achieving autonomous learning:

- ✓Active involvement in student learning.
- ✓Providing options and resources.
- ✓Offering choices and decision-making opportunities.
- ✓Supporting learners.
- ✓Encouraging reflection.

From our point of view, during the classes teachers should encourage their learners to learn independently. The teacher should give less of an instructor and facilitate a lot. Language learners are discouraged from relying on the teacher as the main source of knowledge. With the help of it students develop their own learning strategies.

Benson (1997) distinguishes three broad ways of talking about learner autonomy in language education:

- a 'technical' perspective, emphasizing skills or strategies for unsupervised learning: specific kinds of activity or process such as the 'metacognitive', 'cognitive', 'social' and other strategies identified by Oxford (1990);
- a 'psychological' perspective, emphasizing broader attitudes and cognitive abilities which enable the learner to take responsibility for his/her own learning;
- a 'political' perspective, emphasizing empowerment or emancipation of learners by giving them control over their learning. (cited in Palfreyman & Smiths, 2003, p. 3)

As Omaggio (1978) states there seem to be seven main attributes characterizing autonomous learners:

1. Autonomous learners have insights into their learning styles and strategies;
2. take an active approach to the learning task at hand;
3. are willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs;
4. are good guessers;
5. attend to form as well as to content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy;
6. develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply; and 7. have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language. (cited in Thansoulas, 2000).

According to the characteristics of learner autonomy and the dynamic structure in different age stages, autonomous learning has broad sense and narrow sense. Generalized autonomous learning refers to the growth of knowledge, competence, skill, talent, or development of a person at any time and in any environment by any means, with the help of his own efforts

As a conclusion, students' autonomous learning ability has a direct impact on their learning effectiveness. Clear the autonomous learning ability of the connotation, structure and dynamic process in the learning activities, will help to improve the ability of autonomous learning, to help students achieve success in learning and life, it has practical

significance for the sustainable development with the development of the times, to cultivate talents.

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