

DEVELOPING LEARNER AUTONOMY THROUGH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN ELT

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Abstract

The rapid advancement of digital technologies has significantly transformed contemporary English Language Teaching (ELT). Modern educational practices emphasize learner autonomy, self-regulated learning, and student-centered instruction as essential components of effective language education. This paper discusses the role of digital technologies in developing learner autonomy among foreign language learners. Particular attention is paid to theoretical perspectives on learner autonomy, digital learning environments, and self-regulated learning.

Keywords: learner autonomy, digital technologies, English Language Teaching, self-regulated learning, communicative competence, digital pedagogy, mobile learning.

Annotatsiya

Raqamli texnologiyalarning jadal rivojlanishi zamonaviy ingliz tilini o'qitish (English Language Teaching – ELT) jarayonini sezilarli darajada o'zgartirdi. Zamonaviy ta'lim paradigmalari samarali xorijiy til ta'limining muhim tarkibiy qismlari sifatida ta'lim oluvchilarning o'quv mustaqilligi, o'z-o'zini boshqarib o'rganish hamda ta'lim oluvchiga yo'naltirilgan yondashuvning ahamiyatini tobora ko'proq e'tirof etmoqda. Ushbu maqolada raqamli texnologiyalarning xorijiy til o'rganuvchilarda o'quv mustaqilligini rivojlantirishdagi o'rni yoritiladi. Shuningdek, o'quv mustaqilligining nazariy asoslari, raqamli ta'lim muhitlari hamda o'z-o'zini boshqarib o'rganish masalalariga alohida e'tibor qaratiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: ta'lim oluvchining mustaqilligi (learner autonomy), raqamli texnologiyalar, ingliz tilini o'qitish, o'z-o'zini boshqarib o'rganish, kommunikativ kompetensiya, raqamli pedagogika, mobil ta'lim.

Аннотация

Стремительное развитие цифровых технологий существенно преобразило современное преподавание английского языка (English Language Teaching, ELT). Современные образовательные парадигмы всё больше подчёркивают важность автономности обучающихся, саморегулируемого обучения и личностно-ориентированного подхода как ключевых компонентов эффективного иноязычного образования. В данной статье рассматривается роль цифровых технологий в развитии автономности обучающихся при изучении иностранных языков. Особое внимание уделяется теоретическим аспектам автономности обучающихся, цифровым образовательным средам и саморегулируемому обучению.

Ключевые слова: автономия обучающихся, цифровые технологии, преподавание английского языка, саморегулируемое обучение, коммуникативная компетенция, цифровая педагогика, мобильное обучение.

Introduction

Once digital development has permeated most education systems, new opportunities and challenges for language teaching and learning started emerging. Contemporary educational systems have prioritized the development of learner-centered approaches that encourage students to become active participants in their educational journeys. Within this context, learner autonomy is accepted as a key objective of modern foreign language education. Learner autonomy is widely regarded as the ability of learners to take responsibility for their own learning processes. Autonomous learners are capable of setting goals, selecting learning strategies, monitoring progress, and evaluating learning outcomes. With the advancement of digital technologies, opportunities for autonomous learning by providing access to online resources, mobile applications, virtual learning environments, and interactive educational platforms have seen an increase.

This study aims to examine the relationship between learner autonomy and digital technologies in ELT and to identify the pedagogical benefits and challenges associated with technology-enhanced autonomous learning.

The concept of learner autonomy was first systematically developed by Holec (1981), who defined it as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning.” According to Holec, learners should take responsibility for determining learning objectives, selecting methods, and evaluating educational outcomes. In our view, Holec’s concept has become even more relevant in the digital age where technology enables learners to manage many aspects of their educational experiences independently.

Little (1991) further developed the theory of learner autonomy by emphasizing reflection and learner responsibility. The researcher argues that autonomy is closely connected with critical thinking and conscious participation in educational decision-making. From our point of view, digital learning environments effectively support Little’s ideas because online learning systems often include reflective journals, electronic portfolios, and self-assessment tools that encourage students to evaluate their own progress.

Another author who has stressed autonomous learning is Dam (1995) who stresses that autonomy develops gradually through cooperation between teachers and learners. According to the researcher, teachers should support learners in assuming increasing responsibility for their educational activities. It is really the case because technology alone cannot guarantee autonomy. Effective autonomous learning requires pedagogical guidance alongside technological support.

The relationship between technology and language learning has been extensively examined by Warschauer (1996). The researcher argues that digital technologies facilitate communication, collaboration, and authentic language use, thereby creating favorable conditions for language acquisition. Similarly, Chapelle (2001) emphasizes that educational technologies should be integrated into language teaching through pedagogically meaningful practices rather than being used solely for technological innovation. These perspectives highlight the importance of balancing technological advancement with sound pedagogical principles.

There are clear benefits of digital technologies for those learners who are seeking independent language learning. Digital technologies provide learners with unprecedented opportunities for independent language learning. Online educational platforms, mobile applications, virtual classrooms, and learning management systems support individualized instruction and self-directed learning.

One of the most significant advantages of digital technologies is accessibility. Learners can access educational resources regardless of time and location. Furthermore, technology enables students to personalize learning experiences according to their proficiency levels, interests, and

learning objectives. Digital technologies also promote reflective learning through self-assessment tools, electronic portfolios, and progress-monitoring systems. Such tools encourage learners to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses and make informed decisions about their educational development. The integration of digital technologies into language education offers numerous other benefits as well. These include increased learner motivation, greater educational flexibility, enhanced communicative competence, and improved self-regulation skills that are increasingly important in contemporary society.

However, several challenges remain making language learning a tiring process. Some learners struggle with self-discipline, time management, and information overload. In addition, unequal access to digital resources may create educational disparities among students. Therefore, successful independent learning requires a balanced combination of technological support and pedagogical guidance.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis demonstrates that digital technologies play a crucial role in developing learner autonomy in ELT. Contemporary educational tools support self-regulated learning, reflective practice, communicative competence, and learner responsibility. Theoretical analysis offered by Holec, Little, Benson, Dam, Warschauer, Chapelle and others collectively confirm that pedagogical significance of autonomous learning in digital environments is essential in improving language proficiency.

The effective integration of digital technologies into language education can contribute significantly to the development of independent, motivated, and competent language learners capable of engaging in lifelong learning.

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