



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Developing the Autonomy of Economics Students in The Context of Learning a Foreign Language

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ABSTRACT

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In recent years, the need to develop student autonomy in foreign language teaching has become one of the most important postulates put forward by methodologists, and probably few teachers will doubt the need to develop students' ability to make independent decisions about the language learning process. The purpose of the study was to determine the attitudes of economics students to various types of autonomous behavior, as well as to establish the extent to which they themselves take such actions in the process of learning English. The article presents and analyzes the results of a questionnaire-based empirical study of the attitudes of economics students to various types of autonomous behavior, as well as the degree to which they themselves engage in them. Based on these findings, several solutions are proposed to help increase the readiness of economics students for autonomy in learning a foreign language. The results of the study show that three-quarters of the students surveyed have a positive attitude towards autonomy, and more than 60% claim to be engaged in autonomous activities, although, naturally, significant discrepancies between the different types of behavior are found in both cases.

INTRODUCTION

Autonomy is an extremely useful, if not essential, character trait that contributes to the person's effective functioning in various areas of personal and professional life. Despite the passage of time, the matter of autonomy in foreign language teaching not only does not lose its value but becomes increasingly relevant because it has largely become a requirement of modern times. One can hardly disagree that, given the increasing mobility of students and the opportunities provided by computer and information technologies, independence in foreign language learning, no matter how it is defined, is a value that allows students to act much more effectively in various contexts (Chong and Reinders, 2022).

The relevance of studying student autonomy stems not only from the broadly understood autonomous approach to foreign language learning but also from a broader process that has led to a rethinking of the roles of students and teachers in the classroom. This process is especially reflected by the communication approach, where the student becomes the central figure and subject of learning, and the role of the teacher is not only to transfer knowledge but also to create conditions that promote effective language acquisition (Chong and Reinders, 2022; Abadikhah et al., 2018).

Despite this, the development of autonomy is not a priority for many teachers, and students themselves are often reluctant to take responsibility for their own learning, limiting themselves to performing only the tasks demanded of them. Looking into our educational reality, it immediately becomes clear that the belief in the need to develop autonomous behavior is relatively little reflected in pedagogical practice. There are still few educators who involve students in planning their learning, consider their preferences when choosing teaching materials and methods, and allow them to

employ their individual learning styles and the most effective strategies. Although there are many reasons for this situation, one of the most important is probably the lack of knowledge about solutions that competently combine the development of independence with the achievement of learning goals set in the main training program and exam requirements (Nefedov, 2017).

These circumstances became the main motivation for the present survey-based study aimed at determining the attitudes of economics students to various types of autonomous behavior and establishing the extent to which they themselves take such actions in the process of learning English.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Autonomy is a concept that has been used in pedagogy since the second half of the 20th century. In this context, autonomy means the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning by setting goals, choosing learning content, methods, and techniques, and monitoring and evaluating one's own learning process (Liu et al., 2018).

Autonomous learning, in turn, is a type of learning in which the student's ability to act independently is given space and cultivated (Bahari, 2018). Autonomous learning is defined as a learning culture in which the connection with personal experience, learning motivations, and the development of self-learning skills (including taking responsibility for them) are crucial (Reinders and White, 2011). These expected learning outcomes are closely connected with student autonomy, which needs to be developed (Collentine, 2011).

In the case of foreign language learning, autonomy cannot take a "total" form, although some attempts to achieve it can be found, for example, in the provisions of Community Language Learning, an alternative method that focuses on emotions and their role in the process of learning a language, as well as on intrapersonal and interpersonal processes unfolding in a group of students (Ivanovska, 2015).

Autonomy is associated with independent thinking and action, freedom, and responsibility for one's own decisions (Najeeb, 2013). In teaching foreign languages, autonomy applies equally to the teacher, the student, and the learning process itself (Cakici, 2017).

As suggested by P. Benson, autonomy and its elements should be implemented in foreign language classes in three stages:

1. the planning stage, which consists of choosing educational goals, topics, and methods to address them;
2. the monitoring stage, during which the curriculum is followed and elements to assess the effectiveness of the activities carried out are introduced;
3. the evaluation stage, at which it is determined whether and to what extent the objectives have been achieved (Benson, 2007).

Wang (2011) highlights the following elements underlying the stages of implementing autonomy:

1. developing students' awareness;
2. changing behavior, i.e., learning about the concepts of motivation, learning strategies, group learning, and self-motivation;
3. transferring skills and knowledge and enabling students to have control over their own training.

Lengkanawati (2017) and Llaven-Nucamendi (2014) understand autonomy as responsibility for one's own learning and therefore emphasize motivation (primarily intrinsic), learning strategies, group relationships, and self-esteem.

Researchers distinguish several types of actions that contribute to the development of autonomy:

- providing students with the opportunity to express their own opinion and solve problems on their own (Hui-ju, 2015),
- engaging students in making decisions about the topics, methods, and assessment of the work performed in class (Jitpaisarnwattana, 2018),
- communicating with students, giving them information on assessment criteria and strengths and weaknesses in their work, and expressing recognition of their efforts and the difficulties experienced (Zou, 2011),

- motivating students by raising their level of aspirations and showing the importance and usefulness of the offered and performed activities (Fallah and Abdolrezapour, 2015).

Researchers also believe that the ability to evaluate one's abilities and set realistic goals should be one of the pillars of learning foreign languages (Kabir, 2015).

RESEARCH METHODS

To achieve the set research goal, a quantitative and qualitative study was conducted using the questionnaire method.

The empirical study aimed to identify the attitudes of economics students to various types of autonomous behavior, as well as to find out the degree to which they themselves engage in such behaviors.

The survey covered 260 economics students in three-year undergraduate English programs, of whom 136 were in the 1st year of study, 61 in the 2nd year, and 63 in the 3rd year. The sample consisted of 224 full-time students and 36 part-time students.

The questionnaire presented to students consisted of two parts. In the first part, the respondents were asked to use a 1 to 5 scale (1 — Completely agree, 2 — Agree, 3 — Not sure, 4 — Disagree, 5 — Completely disagree) to rate their agreement with 20 statements focused on their attitude to student autonomy. Agreement with a statement was seen as an indication of a positive attitude.

The second part of the questionnaire asked the respondents to determine whether each of the 20 proposed statements reflected their typical behavior when learning the English language, but this time on a two-point scale (true/false). Each described action illustrated the more general statements from the first part of the questionnaire. However, to avoid repetition, this equivalence was often ambiguous; the statements were given in a different order, and a positive response did not always mean that the given behavior was more autonomous. For the sake of clarity, in this article, statements from the first and second parts of the questionnaire relating to the same sphere of behavior have the same numbering.

Both sets of statements were prepared based on the analysis of characteristics of autonomous behavior found in scientific literature and existing autonomous learning tools.

Below we present a copy of the questionnaire, which differs slightly from the version given to students in that the statements from Part II are matched with the statements from Part I, and the answers from Part II, indicative of autonomous behavior, are highlighted in bold.

Questionnaire on attitudes to autonomy and autonomous behavior

I. Please read the following statements and mark how much you agree with them using the following scale: (1) Completely agree, (2) Agree, (3) Not sure, (4) Disagree, (5) Completely disagree. Circle the corresponding number next to each statement:

1.	It is important to study the language on your own, without the teacher's supervision (doing additional exercises, reading for pleasure, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
2.	The teacher should be primarily an adviser and assistant.	1	2	3	4	5
3.	Language learners should be able to recognize their needs and set their own goals.	1	2	3	4	5
4.	Students should independently choose language materials and exercises beyond the tasks given by the teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
5.	It is important to constantly look for language learning methods that will make this process more enjoyable and effective.	1	2	3	4	5
6.	Learners should evaluate the effectiveness of their language learning process and make appropriate changes as needed.	1	2	3	4	5
7.	It is important for language learners to be able to identify the conditions in which they learn best.	1	2	3	4	5
8.	It is easier to learn the language when you know your strengths and weaknesses.	1	2	3	4	5
9.	Students should try to solve their own language problems.	1	2	3	4	5
10.	Students should be able to decide what is most important in the class.	1	2	3	4	5
11.	Working in pairs and small groups plays an important role in mastering the language, even if the teacher does not always listen to what we are talking about.	1	2	3	4	5

12.	It is extremely important for students to be able to use the teacher's feedback constructively (e.g., to correct errors).	1	2	3	4	5
13.	Students need to spot their own mistakes as much as possible.	1	2	3	4	5
14.	You shouldn't get upset by failures when learning a language but treat it as a useful new experience.	1	2	3	4	5
15.	It is important for language learners to be confident in their abilities.	1	2	3	4	5
16.	Success in language learning is possible only when learning it is enjoyable.	1	2	3	4	5
17.	It is important to learn the language even when you don't have to (e.g., during the holidays).	1	2	3	4	5
18.	It is important for students to learn about the culture of the country of the target language.	1	2	3	4	5
19.	You need to use all possible contacts with native speakers or other people fluent in the language to test your skills and learn something new.	1	2	3	4	5
20.	Students should be able to evaluate their progress in language learning.	1	2	3	4	5

II. Please read the following statements and decide whether they are true or false about how you learn English:

1.	I often use additional grammar books, dictionaries, and other materials when faced with difficulties in learning the language.	True	False
2.	I find it easier to learn when the teacher provides a detailed learning plan and tells me what to do.	True	False
3.	I plan my studies in advance and know what I want to achieve in a certain period of time.	True	False
4.	I feel more confident when the teacher tells me which books, audio recordings, or dictionaries to use.	True	False
5.	I try different ways of learning to find the ones that work best for me (like taking notes when I need to understand something by ear, making plans for essays, etc.).	True	False
6.	I know what I need to work on in English	True	False
7.	I know what time of day and where I study most effectively.	True	False
8.	I can fairly objectively rate my progress in at least one language skill or component (e.g., listening, reading, grammar, etc.).	True	False
9.	When I don't understand a word or I don't know how to say something, I usually ask the teacher for help.	True	False
10.	I don't make great strides in learning English because teachers are often unprepared and the classes are boring.	True	False
11.	I don't like working in small groups because you don't learn anything that way.	True	False
12.	I like it when the teacher tells me what I'm doing wrong because that's how I can improve in this area.	True	False
13.	When I make a mistake, I prefer to be able to correct it on my own.	True	False
14.	When I get a bad grade for a test I was preparing for, I don't feel like studying anymore.	True	False
15.	I feel uncomfortable having to give presentations in front of the whole class in English.	True	False
16.	I rarely work on the language unless it's part of my homework.	True	False
17.	I study English mainly when an important test is coming.	True	False
18.	I try to keep up with the latest events in English-speaking countries.	True	False
19.	I try to look for opportunities to use the language outside of classes as much as possible.	True	False
20.	I like it when the teacher gives us a lot of tests because they make me work systematically and give me an idea of how well I've learned something.	True	False

The collected data were subjected to quantitative analysis, and the interpretation of the results provided a more thorough assessment of respondents' attitudes and autonomous behavior and made it possible to discover relationships between them. In the first part of the questionnaire, mean scores were calculated for individual statements both for each year of study and for the whole sample. The percentage of respondents who chose specific answer options was also calculated. In the second part of the questionnaire, the percentages of respondents who highlighted autonomous and non-autonomous behaviors were calculated both for specific years of study and for the entire sample. The next stage in the analysis was to compare the declared autonomy attitudes with the declared behaviors to detect differences.

RESULTS

The results of the first part of the questionnaire, which focused on students' attitudes to autonomy in foreign language learning, are analyzed in Table 1.

Table 1. Declared attitudes to autonomy in foreign language learning

№	Question	Mean			
		I (136)	II (61)	III (63)	Total (260)
1.	Independent learning...	1.71	1.81	1.72	1.73
2.	Teacher as a consultant and assistant...	3.23	3.15	3.68	3.32
3.	Identifying needs and setting goals...	1.93	1.88	1.85	1.90
4.	Independently choosing language materials and exercises...	2.29	2.24	2.33	2.29
5.	Looking for effective techniques...	1.76	1.52	2.07	1.77
6.	Evaluating the effectiveness of the learning process and making changes...	1.89	1.84	1.97	1.91
7.	Identifying conditions conducive to learning...	1.57	1.56	1.74	1.60
8.	Knowing the strengths and weaknesses...	1.87	1.81	1.86	1.86
9.	Solving language problems independently...	2.98	2.53	1.96	2.88
10.	Being able to decide what is most important in the lesson...	2.80	2.81	2.84	2.80
11.	The advantages of working in pairs and small groups...	2.09	2.04	1.99	2.05
12.	Using information about the language...	1.86	1.63	1.78	1.80
13.	Finding your own mistakes...	2.19	1.83	2.17	2.09
14.	Failures should lead to reflection, not despondency...	2.06	1.81	1.75	1.93
15.	Believing in yourself...	1.45	1.53	1.50	1.49
16.	Learning a language should be enjoyable...	2.16	2.33	2.47	2.27
17.	We have to learn the language even if we don't need it...	1.97	1.86	2.11	1.97
18.	We need to learn the culture of the country of the target language...	2.30	2.17	2.04	2.21
19.	Finding language contacts outside the classroom...	1.48	1.32	1.47	1.44
20.	Being able to evaluate your own progress...	2.03	1.91	2.05	2.00
Total		2.08	1.98	2.07	2.06

Source: own research

As can be seen from the analysis of average responses for each year of study and for the entire study sample in Table 1, the respondents show a relatively positive attitude towards autonomy. This is confirmed both by the average of all statements, which equals 2.06, generally corresponding to the answer "Agree," and by answers to individual questions. For more clarity, statements with average scores above 2.5 and with less than 50% of positive opinions are highlighted in the table in bold. There are only three such cases, and they concern the role of the teacher as an assistant and consultant, the independent solution of language problems, and the ability to determine the most important things in the lesson. Negative opinions prevail only in the first case. Interestingly, all three statements relate to some degree to the behavior of teachers during classes. Certainly, this may indicate rather traditional views of respondents about what effective teaching should be like, yet it is just as likely that these responses simply reflect a negative assessment of teachers' behavior.

As demonstrated in Table 1, the declared attitude towards autonomy depends little on the year of study. This conclusion is supported both by the comparison of the mean responses across all statements, which differ only slightly from the mean for the whole sample, and by the fact that the same three statements received the fewest positive ratings across all three years (2, 9, and 10), and

in only three cases did the differences between the years exceed 0.5 (2, 5, and 9). Notably, these differences are found in two of the three statements where positive opinions are less than 50% (2 and 9). Students in the 3rd year are the most skeptical of the feasibility of faculty accepting the role of counselors and assistants, which may stem from their deeper familiarity with the realities of higher education. At the same time, they attach great importance to the ability to independently solve language problems, which may be the result of a deeper understanding of the essence of foreign language learning, as well as the need to study the language independently more due to a decrease in the number of practical classes in English. The third statement with a significant difference between the years of study is the one about the search for effective teaching methods. The highest number of positive answers can be seen among 2nd-year students, who might have only recently understood how they should learn the language at this level, while the lowest rating was given by 3rd-year students. This result is somewhat contrary to the above suggestion, but it may also indicate students' attachment to certain teaching methods and reluctance to change them.

The indicators of autonomous behavior declared by students in each year of study are presented in percentages in Table 2.

Table 2. Autonomous behavior depending on age

№	Question	1st year		2nd year		3rd year	
		+A %	-A %	+A %	-A %	+A %	-A %
1.	Independent learning...	86.8	13.2	88.5	11.5	92.1	7.9
2.	Teacher as a consultant and assistant...	8.1	91.9	6.6	93.4	9.5	90.5
3.	Identifying needs and setting goals...	47.8	52.2	44.3	53.7	38.1	61.9
4.	Independently choosing language materials and exercises...	8.1	91.9	11.5	88.5	19.0	81.0
5.	Looking for effective techniques...	71.3	28.7	80.3	19.7	77.8	22.2
6.	Evaluating the effectiveness of the learning process and making changes...	92.6	7.4	91.8	8.2	96.8	3.2
7.	Identifying conditions conducive to learning...	72.1	27.9	78.7	21.3	76.2	23.8
8.	Knowing the strengths and weaknesses...	68.4	31.6	82.0	18.0	87.3	12.7
9.	Solving language problems independently...	66.1	33.9	50.8	49.2	74.6	25.4
10.	Being able to decide what is most important in the lesson...	82.4	17.6	85.2	14.8	82.5	17.5
11.	The advantages of working in pairs and small groups...	75.0	25.0	91.8	8.2	84.1	15.9
12.	Using information about the language...	96.3	3.7	93.4	6.6	98.4	1.6
13.	Finding your own mistakes...	95.6	4.4	91.8	8.2	95.2	4.8
14.	Failures should lead to reflection, not despondency...	48.5	51.5	55.7	44.3	55.6	44.4
15.	Believing in yourself...	26.5	73.9	27.9	72.1	28.6	71.4
16.	Learning a language should be enjoyable...	36.0	64.0	49.2	50.8	60.3	39.7
17.	We have to learn the language even if we don't need it...	39.0	61.0	45.9	54.1	50.8	49.2
18.	We need to learn the culture of the country of the target language...	30.1	69.9	39.3	60.7	36.5	63.5
19.	Finding language contacts outside the classroom...	66.2	33.8	80.3	19.7	77.8	22.2
20.	Being able to evaluate your own progress...	39.0	61.0	29.5	70.5	39.7	60.3
Total		57.8	42.2	61.2	38.7	64.0	36.0

Source: own research

Bolded statements indicate a difference of 10% or more between the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years of study. The aggregate of positive and negative responses to all statements shows that the share of students demonstrating autonomous behavior is higher by 3.4% in the 2nd year compared to the 1st and by 2.8% in the 3rd year compared to the 2nd. In 11 cases, the largest percentage of autonomous behavior was declared by 3rd-year students, with 12 cases showing an increase compared to the 2nd year, and decreases not exceeding 6.2%. Comparing the declared behavior of 1st and 2nd-year students, in most cases (13), the level of autonomy is higher in 2nd-year students, although sometimes there is a rather significant decrease (statements 9 and 20).

The greatest differences between students in different years of study can be seen in statement 4, where more than twice as many 3rd-year students as 1st-years declare that they independently choose language materials and exercises, and in statement 8, where the percentage of students claiming to be able to identify their strengths and weaknesses is increased from 68.4% in the 1st year to 82.0% in the 2nd year and to 87.3% in the 3rd year. The same applies to question 16 concerning language work outside of homework, which shows an increase of 13.2% in the 2nd year and of as much as 24.3% in the 3rd year compared to the 1st year, and to question 17, in which, compared to 1st-years, 6.9% more 2nd-year students and as much as 11.8% more 3rd-year students study English not just before an important test.

There are also significant differences in statements 11 and 19, albeit with some decrease in the 3rd year, and 9, where in the 1st year (66.1%) there are more students trying to solve language problems on their own compared to the 2nd year (50.8%), although this share is still less than in the 3rd year (74.6%).

Although the presence of greater or smaller differences between individual statements rules out any sustained trends toward more autonomous behaviors in later years of study, there is a clear upward trend, most notable when comparing 3rd-year students to their younger peers. As mentioned above, this situation may be due to improved language proficiency and a better understanding of the essence of effective learning, as well as a gradual reduction in the number of hours allocated for practical language learning, which forces at least some students to work independently. The increase in autonomy could also be somewhat associated with the more serious methodical training received by older students.

A comparison of students declared attitudes towards autonomy (response rate for each point on the Likert scale for statements from the first part of the questionnaire) with their reported autonomous behavior (the percentage of yes/no answers on autonomous actions in the second part of the questionnaire) is provided in Table 3.

The answers "Completely agree" (1) and "Agree" (2) in the first part indicate a positive attitude towards autonomy, while the answer "True" in the second part is equivalent to performing autonomous actions (+A). Cases where the difference between the overall response rate of "Fully agree" (1) and "Agree" (2) is at least 10% greater than the response rate of "True" (+A) are highlighted in bold.

Table 3. Attitudes to autonomy and autonomous behavior

№	Question	Attitude					Behavior	
		1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	+A (%)	-A (%)
1.	Independent learning...	47.3	41.2	4.6	5.0	1.9	88.5	11.5
2.	Teacher as a consultant and assistant...	3.5	19.2	26.2	43.8	7.3	8.1	91.9
3.	Identifying needs and setting goals...	27.7	58.1	11.9	1.5	0.8	44.6	55.4
4.	Independently choosing language materials and exercises...	18.1	46.2	25.8	8.8	1.2	11.5	88.5
5.	Looking for effective techniques...	42.7	41.9	11.5	3.5	0.4	75.0	25.0

6.	Evaluating the effectiveness of the learning process and making changes...	23.1	64.6	10.8	1.2	0.4	93.5	6.5
7.	Identifying conditions conducive to learning...	48.1	44.2	6.9	0.8	0.0	74.6	25.4
8.	Knowing the strengths and weaknesses...	40.0	40.8	13.1	5.8	0.4	76.2	23.8
9.	Solving language problems independently...	6.9	31.2	34.6	21.9	5.4	65.0	35.0
10.	Being able to decide what is most important in the lesson...	6.5	31.2	39.2	21.9	1.2	83.1	16.9
11.	The advantages of working in pairs and small groups...	26.5	51.2	14.2	7.3	0.8	81.2	18.8
12.	Using information about the language...	30.4	60.4	8.5	0.8	0.0	96.2	3.8
13.	Finding your own mistakes...	22.7	53.8	15.4	7.7	0.4	94.6	5.4
14.	Failures should lead to reflection, not despondency...	33.1	48.1	12.3	5.4	1.2	51.9	48.1
15.	Believing in yourself...	54.6	42.7	1.9	0.8	0.0	27.3	72.7
16.	Learning a language should be enjoyable...	33.5	30.4	20.4	13.8	1.5	45.0	55.0
17.	We have to learn the language even if we don't need it...	26.2	56.5	11.5	5.4	0.4	43.5	56.5
18.	We need to learn the culture of the country of the target language...	18.5	50.8	22.3	8.1	0.4	33.8	66.2
19.	Finding language contacts outside the classroom...	60.4	35.0	4.6	0.0	0.0	72.3	27.7
20.	Being able to evaluate your own progress...	15.8	69.2	13.8	1.2	0.0	36.9	63.1
Total		29.3	45.8	15.5	8.2	1.2	60.1	39.9

Source: own research

As can be seen from the summation of answers to all statements, the students were 15% more likely to declare a positive attitude towards autonomy than to take specific actions to develop it. Analyzing individual statements, 11 statements have a pronounced imbalance between attitudes towards specific forms of autonomous behavior and doing specific actions of this kind, which indicates that students' beliefs are often not reflected in practice. This is especially noticeable in confidence in one's abilities (70% difference), independence in choosing language materials and exercises (52.8% difference), the ability to evaluate one's progress (48.1% difference), identifying needs and setting goals (41.2% difference), the need to learn a language even without external pressure (39.2% difference), the importance of learning the culture of the country of the target language (35.5% difference), and the ability to skillfully use failures when learning the language (29.3% difference). However, in some cases, the share of students declaring a positive attitude towards autonomy is lower than that of students who report practicing autonomous activities in this sphere. This can be seen in statements regarding the ability to decide what is most important in the lesson (45.4% difference), to independently solve language tasks (26.9% difference), and to find one's own mistakes (18.1% difference), as well as, to a much lesser extent, in statements about assessing the effectiveness of the learning process (5.8% difference), using information about the language (5.4% difference), and working in pairs and small groups (3.5% difference). This could be the result of respondents not fully realizing the value of the actions they are taking, although it may also be a product of insufficient equivalence of statements in the two parts of the questionnaire or problems with their interpretation. The analysis of differences in the declared attitudes towards autonomy and autonomous behavior in different years of study shows that the imbalance described above is observed in all students surveyed. However, while the differences observed in 1st- and 2nd-year students are close to those found in the entire sample and amount to 15.5% and 15.9%, respectively, among 3rd-year students, it is 5% lower, totaling 9.8%. This may indicate that 3rd-year students are better at converting their beliefs into specific behaviors, which may be due to their need to work more independently. No less interesting is the fact that 3rd-year respondents report independent activities more often than they

declare a positive attitude towards them. This finding may indicate some unconscious manifestation of autonomous behavior that contributes to more effective learning.

DISCUSSION

According to the results, three-quarters of the surveyed students demonstrate a positive attitude towards autonomy, and more than 60% claim to be engaged in autonomous behaviors, although, naturally, significant discrepancies between different spheres of behavior are found in both cases.

These figures, however, should not inspire excessive optimism. Despite their significance, it should be borne in mind that these are the result of a survey, in which participants' desire to paint themselves in the best light often produces not entirely objective representations of reality. Therefore, it is very likely that not all students behave autonomously when learning English.

Another problem is that positive attitudes toward autonomy often do not translate into specific behaviors that, despite certain differences, are observed in students in all years of study.

A reasonable question here is what can be done to make students aware of the importance of autonomy. Admittedly, opportunities to influence modern students are quite scarce. In a sense, today's students are a product of the existing educational reality, and their beliefs and views, formed as a result of thousands of hours spent at different levels of education, are extremely difficult to change.

Such a change would require appropriate efforts from the very start of elementary school so that by the time they graduate middle school and high school, future students are mostly ready for the autonomy they will need in higher education and then, becoming specialists, take an autonomous approach in their work.

Of course, this is not to say that there is no reason to take steps to increase the autonomy of current foreign language students. There are many ways to achieve this goal, for example, by actively involving students in the selection and application of educational content, encouraging them to complete individual and group projects, and giving them the opportunity to learn about their own learning styles and strategies.

As discussed above, there are several important reasons why the common belief in the need to develop student autonomy is rarely implemented in practice in foreign language teaching. One source of difficulty in achieving independence is undoubtedly the reluctance of many students to take more control over the language acquisition process, both in and outside the classroom. Huei-Ju (2018) (Huei-Ju, 2018) suggests that this reluctance may be due to fear of independent decision-making and responsibility, doubts about the competence of teachers trying to entrust students with important tasks, expectations of routine behavior arising from previous pedagogical experience, or low self-esteem.

Equally influential are the institutional limitations that make many educators, perhaps even contrary to their beliefs, hesitant to develop independent behavior among students. Sometimes it is difficult to combine the curriculum, the achievement of the intended learning goals, or preparation for various types of exams with involving students in planning topics and the course of the lesson, encouraging them to set their own goals, and, finally, the unavoidable "phase of anarchy" (Bekleyen and Selimoğlu, 2016) before students become more autonomous.

Despite the undeniable importance of the above difficulties, no less important, if not more so, are the problems of introducing autonomous approaches associated with the teacher, their pedagogical training, and openness to new ideas. A teacher who does not know the essence of an autonomous approach and, perhaps even more importantly, is only slightly autonomous and reflective themselves, will hardly be able to effectively develop the autonomy of their students. As noted by Alrabai (2017), the commonly mentioned lack of readiness for independent work (not to mention autonomy) in students should, in fact, be considered in the framework of the lack of such readiness on the part of the teacher.

As shown by Tanyeli & Kuter (2013), to develop autonomous attitudes in their students, the teacher has to be ready to take on several clearly defined roles. First of all, such a teacher must see themselves as a student, which means being able to identify contexts in which the student can act autonomously;

to see the interdependencies between their own experience as a student and as a teacher and their current preferences and preferred teaching activities; and to reflect on and evaluate these activities to determine how well they translate into the development of autonomous behavior in students. This kind of teacher should also believe that each student is able to learn independently under favorable conditions. Independence cannot be taught, but the educational process can be organized in such a way that students can become more independent. Ultimately, the faculty member must be willing to develop student autonomy and accept the implications of this for their own teaching.

Arias (2015) notes that encouraging autonomous behavior implies the need to maintain a balance between meeting students' needs and ensuring that they gain the required knowledge and skills, a willingness to involve students in decision-making processes regarding what is happening in the classroom, a willingness to engage them in assessing their own progress, and the ability to minimize the risk arising from giving students some responsibility for the learning process.

CONCLUSION

Over the past decades, autonomy has played a decisive role in teaching foreign languages, as evidenced by the vast body of research on this topic. Autonomy in teaching foreign languages is not a new concept, but its meaning is constantly evolving. The perception of its importance can be changed by several factors, including digital mobility, curricula, and labor market expectations.

Undoubtedly, autonomy needs to be constantly fostered by students themselves. Ideally, these efforts should be supported by teachers who, knowing students' personalities, could give them advice on how to study effectively, where to get inspiration, and where to look for materials to work on language skills independently. In the long run, the development of an autonomous attitude towards the process of learning a foreign language means that students will look for opportunities to optimize their work after graduation, thereby improving the quality of their work.

Although it is unlikely that students will ever be able to act completely autonomously, if only due to institutional limitations and their own personal qualities, the ability of students to take joint responsibility for the course of the educational process seems to be an indispensable condition for increasing its effectiveness, and this holds true not only for foreign language teaching.

The results of this study can serve as a practical guide for all participants in the educational process. The tool used in the study to evaluate autonomous foreign language learning can be used to develop and popularize this type of learning among economics students.

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