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**(IN)EFFECTIVE APPROACHES TO FOREIGN LANGUAGE
LEARNING: THE NECESSITY OF LEARNER AUTONOMY**

The twenty-first century has made language learning a practical necessity rather than a purely academic pursuit. English now serves as the global lingua franca in science, education, and business. Yet, despite abundant digital resources, many learners still struggle to achieve communicative competence. Holec (1981) defines autonomy as «the ability to take charge of one's own learning», involving goal-setting, strategy selection, and self-evaluation – now recognized as a cornerstone of effective

language education [3]. This study examines how autonomous learning enhances foreign language acquisition by contrasting effective and ineffective approaches.

Immersive learning offers natural exposure to the target language, allowing learners to internalize grammar and usage subconsciously. Research at Georgetown University (2016) shows that those immersed in authentic contexts develop linguistic competence more effectively than classroom-only learners [1]. Activities such as watching original films, listening to podcasts, and reading real texts promote independent meaning-making – an essential aspect of autonomy. Digital media also enable learners to personalize content to their interests and level, enhancing motivation and cognitive engagement.

Authentic communication is vital for developing linguistic fluency and sociocultural competence. Studies conducted at the University of Edinburgh (2018) confirm that interaction with native speakers enhances contextual understanding, compensatory strategies, and confidence in real communication [4]. Platforms such as Tandem, HelloTalk, and online discussion groups enable learners to take control of their communicative practice, transforming passive learning into active knowledge construction. Through self-initiated dialogue and reflection on mistakes, learners become more aware of their progress – an essential feature of autonomous learning.

Autonomy requires not only independence but also *self-regulation* – the capacity to plan, monitor, and evaluate one’s study process. Consistent short sessions (e.g., 30 minutes daily) have been shown to be more effective than infrequent, intensive study. Neurolinguistic research from the University of Groningen (2019) indicates that repetitive practice and «shadowing» techniques promote natural pronunciation and prosody [2].

Digital tools such as Duolingo, Memrise, or Anki enable learners to organize vocabulary acquisition, track progress, and maintain motivation through gamified feedback. Keeping a diary, setting measurable goals, and reflecting on achievements are further ways of cultivating responsibility and discipline – skills essential for successful autonomous learning.

While autonomy promotes engagement and persistence, several traditional methods continue to impede effective language acquisition. **Mechanical memorization** without context results in rapid forgetting and superficial knowledge retention. **Reliance on a single source** of input limits exposure to linguistic variation. **Irregular practice** disrupts cognitive reinforcement and habit formation. **Excessive focus on grammar** at early stages discourages communicative experimentation. **Fear of making mistakes** prevents learners from applying knowledge in real interaction. **Passive learning** fails to activate productive language skills. **Expectations of rapid results** undermine persistence and motivation, contradicting the

gradual nature of language mastery. Recognizing and avoiding these ineffective behaviours is a prerequisite for developing autonomy and long-term competence.

Foreign language learning is not a mechanical accumulation of knowledge but a **self-managed, reflective, and interactive process**. The transition from dependency on the teacher to autonomous learning represents a significant pedagogical shift in language education. Effective language learning depends on learners' willingness to take initiative, engage actively with authentic materials, and apply knowledge in meaningful contexts.

Developing autonomy means fostering responsibility, critical thinking, and intrinsic motivation – qualities that extend far beyond the classroom. As research consistently demonstrates, learners who exercise autonomy not only acquire linguistic competence more effectively but also sustain their learning over time. In this respect, promoting autonomous learning is not merely a recommendation – it is an educational necessity.

References

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