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## DEVELOPMENT OF THE SELF-EDUCATIONAL ACTIVITY AND SELF-EDUCATIONAL COMPETENCE OF STUDENTS IN THE CONTEXT OF DISTANCE LEARNING

### DESARROLLO DE LA ACTIVIDAD AUTOEDUCATIVA Y LA COMPETENCIA AUTOEDUCATIVA DE LOS ESTUDIANTES EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA EDUCACIÓN A DISTANCIA

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#### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze opportunities for the development of the self-educational activity and self-educational competence of students as part of distance learning in a foreign language in a non-linguistic university. The paper defines the advantages of self-education for future specialists in the framework of distance learning, gives a characteristic of the structure of students' self-educational competence in the context of distance learning, and establishes the features of self-educational activity as part of distance learning in a foreign language in a non-linguistic university. It is concluded that the formation of students' readiness for self-education in distance learning contributes to their recognition of the need for constant self-development and self-improvement to achieve professional and life success. The self-educational competence in studying a foreign language in the context of distance learning in students of non-linguistic universities involves the ability to independently study a foreign language and the possession of self-education skills and provides students; the potential readiness and ability to maintain and improve the level of foreign language proficiency in the process of self-education.

#### Keywords:

Distance learning, Self-education, Self-educational competence, Students, Foreign language.

#### RESUMEN

El propósito de este estudio es analizar las oportunidades para el desarrollo de la actividad autodidacta y la competencia autodidacta de los estudiantes como parte de la educación a distancia en una lengua extranjera en una universidad no lingüística. El documento define las ventajas de la autoeducación para los futuros especialistas en el marco de la educación a distancia, da una característica de la estructura de la competencia autodidacta de los estudiantes en el contexto de la educación a distancia y establece las características de la actividad autodidacta como parte de aprendizaje a distancia en una lengua extranjera en una universidad no lingüística. Se concluye que la formación de la preparación de los estudiantes para la autoformación en la educación a distancia contribuye a su reconocimiento de la necesidad de un constante desarrollo y superación personal para lograr el éxito profesional y de vida. La competencia autodidacta en el estudio de una lengua extranjera en el contexto de la educación a distancia en estudiantes de universidades no lingüísticas implica la capacidad de estudiar de forma independiente una lengua extranjera y la posesión de habilidades de autoeducación y proporciona a los estudiantes; la disposición potencial y la capacidad para mantener y mejorar el nivel de dominio de la lengua extranjera en el proceso de autoeducación.

#### Palabras clave:

Educación a distancia, Autoformación, Competencia autodidacta, Estudiantes, Lengua extranjera.

## INTRODUCTION

In today's information society, requirements for the professional qualities of specialists are growing dynamically (Semenova et al., 2023). In this context, self-education is one of the leading preconditions for the successful development of the human community and the world as a whole, as well as for the life success of each individual (Gorlova et al., 2023). During university studies, future specialists under the supervision of their teachers accumulate the knowledge required for future professional practice, yet they also need to maintain and improve the level of obtained knowledge on their own (Baideldinova et al., 2021). Because of this, the main emphasis in the content of contemporary higher education is placed on the development of students' self-education (Eskerkhanova et al., 2023).

Self-education gains particular importance in the context of distance learning (DL) (Borodina et al., 2023). The recent COVID-19 pandemic, which deprived students of the ability to attend classes in person, actualized the need for the development of self-educational activity, and, accordingly, the ability to self-education, which in the conditions of DL has become one of the ways to obtain the information needed (Bazaeva, 2021).

Most students are not ready or capable of efficiently organizing self-education. Therefore, of critical nature is the problem of developing the self-educational competence (SEC) of students in the conditions of DL (Avdeeva et al., 2022). The solution to this problem, in turn, will promote the improvement of specialist training in the sense of graduates' competitiveness in the labor market (Pivneva et al., 2022).

There is a considerable body of research focused on the analysis of self-education and self-educational activity. Ovezova et al. (2021), define self-education as the independent learning activity of a person aimed at achieving certain personally important educational goals, satisfying general cultural needs and cognitive interests in any field of activity, raising the level of professional qualification, etc.

Authors believe self-education to consist in independent purposeful educational activity rooted in intrinsic personal motives and carried out without a supervisor. The student independently defines their goal and way to achieve it, as well as the timing and methods of study and the sources of knowledge, that is, acts as the initiator.

Researchers distinguish the following specific characteristics of students' self-education:

- Self-education is always associated with a productive learning process or life self-determination. This allows for defining the primary methods of methodical influence on students' self-education: improvement of the learning process, its intensification, and diverse activities to enhance the professional orientation of specialist training;
- Students' self-education depends on the stability of cognitive interests and practical activity in which they wish to succeed. This supports the need for preparation for self-education, as well as for the use of collective forms and methods of pedagogical guidance of students' self-educational activities;
- Students' self-education performs several functions: it contributes to the assimilation and deepening of learning outcomes and the satisfaction of cognitive interests and serves as a means of training for the future profession and self-assertion in the eyes of peers and teachers;
- The various challenges arising in the case of a lacking culture of intellectual labor and poor general preparedness of students for independent activity are always accompanied by students' inability to work independently.

Self-education is the highest form of satisfaction of a person's cognitive needs. Interaction between self-education and learning activity includes several levels:

- the preparatory level of self-education (orientation) - the student learns new information that has orientating content; cognitive activity is introductory and orientating in nature;
- the level of organized self-education – the student studies the system of knowledge and skills as their cognitive interest and mild need for knowledge develop;
- the level of developed self-education – systemic assimilation of knowledge and skills by the students driven by interest and need for learning;
- the level at which the consistency and motive of self-education are grounded in cognitive interests and educational needs.

In the works of Eskerkhanova et al. (2023); and . Semenova (2023), self-education is seen as a form of learning in which students are primarily responsible for the planning, execution, and evaluation of their learning experience. Therefore, it is proposed to consider self-education as a specific type of activity, which is carried out by an individual voluntarily to meet their cognitive needs or improve personal qualities and abilities (Pivneva et al., 2022).

This understanding of self-education highlights its activity component, which is realized in accordance with the person's intent (i.e. the goals of self-education are defined

by the person and perceived as their own). Thus, the essence of self-education lies in that the person acts as the subject of their activity to achieve internalized goals that comprise the main motive for self-education.

As proposed by Efremkina et al. (2021), self-educational activity in the context of DL is a complex of purposeful efforts and activities aimed at achieving changes in the personality precisely with the help of the developed relevant skills and efforts of the subject. The student becomes an active and independent learning unit, while the teacher remains a tutor, mentor, and supervisor, who functions as a manager in self-educational activity rather than only as a carrier and provider of knowledge (Bakasheva & Gamidov, 2019). Bilyalova et al. (2020), assert that self-education as the foundation of DL assumes students' self-motivation with respect to their learning, as well as a certain level of a person's self-organization.

Given changes in the goals of professional training of specialists, Ovezova & Vagner (2021), argue that self-educational activity in the conditions of DL is constituted by independent purposeful practice-oriented learning activity to expand the existing and obtain new knowledge and competencies, the process of self-improvement of a future specialist's personality. Thus, quality long-term acquisition and structurization of knowledge as part of DL occurs as a result of students' self-education.

The purpose of this study is to analyze opportunities for the development of self-educational activity and SEC of students as part of DL in a foreign language in a non-linguistic university.

The research objectives are as follows:

1. To determine the advantages of future specialists' self-education in the conditions of DL;
2. To characterize the structure of students' SEC in the context of DL;
3. To determine the features of self-educational activities in the conditions of DL in a foreign language at a non-linguistic university.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Due to the novelty of the phenomenon under study and the exploratory nature of the research goal, a qualitative approach to research was adopted.

To achieve the goal set in the study, we determined a tentative set of theoretical research methods:

- theoretical generalization in substantiating the advantages of self-education of future specialists in DL conditions;

- structural-logical analysis and synthesis in establishing the structure of students' SEC.

At the first stage of the research, we selected the sources of information necessary to implement the purpose of the study: articles published in the journals indexed in Scopus and Web of Science concerning self-educational activity in DL conditions. During the formation of the source base for the study, the search for scientific research on the Internet was carried out by the keywords "self-education", "self-educational activity", "self-educational competence", and "distance learning" in English and Russian.

The second stage of the study involved the analysis of the collected information and the interpretation of the results.

RESULTS and discussion

At present, there is a need for new approaches to the organization of the learning process. This especially concerns the independent work and self-educational activities of students. The use of the resource of self-education opens up additional advantages for future professionals, which are outlined in Table 1.

Table 1. Benefits of self-education of future specialists in the conditions of DL.

| No. | Benefits of self-education  | Sources  |
|-----|---|--|
| 1   | Independence develops cognitive interest, intelligence, creativity  | (Pivneva et al., 2022)                             |
| 2   | Purposeful self-educational activities contribute to the development of general culture   | (Bakasheva & Gamidov, 2019)                        |
| 3   | The interrelation of activity, cognition, and culture equips future specialists with a set of cognitive and practical ways and means of their use in life practice              | (Efremova et al., 2022; Eskerkhanova et al., 2023) |
| 4   | Self-educational activity satisfies the needs of those who delve into the process of learning and those who seek to "see" the result of their own practical actions immediately | (Ovezova & Vagner, 2021)                           |

Note: compiled by the authors based on literature review.

Analysis of various interpretations of the concepts of self-education and competence leads us to define SEC as an integrated characteristic of the personality that includes knowledge, skills, methods, and experience of self-education and manifests in the need for, ability, and readiness to realize this type of activity aimed at achieving personal, professional, and social self-realization.

Proceeding from the analysis of scientific sources (Bilyalova et al., 2020; Ovezova & Vagner, 2021), we distinguish four components in the structure of SEC of students in the context of DL (see Table 2).

Table 2. Structure of students' SEC in DL conditions.

| No. | SEC component           | Content of the component   |
|-----|-------------------------|--|
| 1   | motivation-value        | indicates the formation of the student's need for constant self-development and self-improvement, sustained interest providing a positive attitude toward self-education activities, the desire for continuous self-education, and awareness of its personal and social significance |
| 2   | cognitive-communicative | characterizes the level of the student's knowledge of the essence, forms, techniques, and methods of self-education, the level of mastery of general, subject, and professional knowledge, the ability to continuous personal self-education through the use of modern ICTs          |
| 3   | operational activity    | assumes mastery of a set of design, organizational, and communicative skills, the ability to independently organize self-educational activities, independently work with information, conduct research, carry out interdisciplinary projects, etc.                                   |
| 4   | personal reflection     | involves students' analysis and self-assessment of their readiness for self-education, an adequate assessment of their achievements, and the need for reflection on self-education   |

Note: compiled by the authors based on literature review.

Self-educational activity is the key one in the system of future specialists' training by means of DL tools, because this process is organized for the subjective development of a student and covers the consecutive collection, processing, and interpretation of professionally significant information, and is concomitant to the educational activity within the framework of DL (Gladilina et al., 2022). The individual-personal process of transforming information into knowledge (self-education) is becoming the leading type of activity in modern information society (Pisarevskiy et al., 2022).

The organization of effective education and self-education is greatly determined by the methods of self-education in the information environment. The didactic means of implementation of these methods include the possibility of storing, processing, and transferring information of any type and volume and access to various sources of information (Medeshova et al., 2022), organization of Internet conferences, and the possibility of using modern software for professional purposes (Tolmachev et al., 2022). One such method of self-educational activity is modern information tools – Internet services, which combine many world information resources.

Specialist students' self-education using DL is also organized with the use of electronic learning courses, textbooks, training manuals, training software, virtual practical laboratory classes, posters, network projects, teleconferences, and more (Kubrak et al., 2023). The learning process is realized using computer technology and

videoconferencing, the various ways of obtaining learning materials via web sources and email, and discussions in online forums. Thus, in the system of professional training of specialists using DL, the use of the Internet fosters the atmosphere of students' continuous self-education and their transformation into the actual subjects of learning and communication (Efremova et al., 2022; Rahman, 2023).

The issue of raising the efficiency of higher education consists in the search for solutions to the contradiction between the growing volume of educational information and the tendency to reduce the standard time for studying this information (Gasparian et al., 2022). In this respect, distance self-education presents quite an efficient tool. Therefore, to solve the outlined problem, it is proposed:

- to plan the educational process based on the rational use of the opportunities of the Internet, which allows each student to study at their own optimal pace according to individual learning trajectories;
- to utilize information technology (development of DL software) to control the quality of self-educational work.

In this way, characterizing the self-educational activity of specialist students as a type of activity aimed at the realization of personal needs for socialization, improvement of the level of education, and satisfaction from independently obtained knowledge, it is worth noting the accessible practice-oriented information resources of the Internet in the self-educational activity of students.

The research results suggest that SEC in a foreign language in the context of DL assumes the potential readiness and ability of the student to maintain and improve their proficiency in the foreign language in the process of self-education. More specifically, the student should be prepared and able to: independently recognize new information, possess the skills and abilities necessary for further successful professional activity; independently develop personal strategies for finding and assimilating the necessary information and forming relevant knowledge and skills; follow the developed plans and control the achievement of the planned result.

It is believed that self-educational activity in a foreign language includes motivational competence (ability to carry out self-motivation, self-assessment, and self-control of one's cognitive activity); methodological competence (ability to organize and regulate self-educational activity, knowledge of the methods of independent work); communicative competence (speech skills and abilities); and professional and situational competence (ability to apply the results of self-education in specific situations of

professional practice). This characteristic partially agrees with the results of our study.

Consequently, the invariant part of SEC includes the ability to independently learn a foreign language, and the variant part includes the ability to use the possibilities of a foreign language for further professional growth.

The specifics of learning a foreign language in non-linguistic universities lie in the profession-oriented approach, under which students form the skills of foreign language communication in specific professional, business, and scientific spheres and situations, taking into account the features of professional thinking. Vocationally-oriented training involves learning a foreign language as a means of mastering a specialty and as a means of professional communication.

The goal of professionally-oriented language teaching is not as much the assimilation of speech material, grammar rules, formation of speech skills, and development of professional speech knowledge as it is the formation of foreign language professional communication competence and the development of both abstract and professional thinking in students.

The development of self-education in students in the process of DL raises the efficiency of learning and resolves several issues in foreign language teaching. On the one hand, DL stimulates the activity and cognitive interest of students, and on the other – it fosters interest in self-education.

The most efficient form of self-education in the context of DL is via online services. The advantages of the Internet and multimedia technologies include high student motivation for self-education in the study of a foreign language, individualization of the learning process, wide time frames for work, the replenishment of vocabulary with the modern lexicon, and the formation of motivation for self-education.

Given that at non-linguistic universities foreign languages are studied for only 2-3 years, there is approximately a 3-year gap between learning a foreign language and putting it to use in professional practice. If students do not continue to improve their foreign language proficiency during that time (not only in the conditions of DL) and use it in professional communication, the obtained knowledge of a foreign language will become passive. Self-education in a foreign language is a unique opportunity to continue studying the language and perfect its professional use.

Furthermore, of importance in the process of DL are such skills of self-education as self-knowledge, self-analysis, self-control, and self-organization (Ovezova & Vagner, 2021).

Self-knowledge consists in the assessment of one's abilities, understanding one's potential to improve the processes of memorization, concentration, etc. If the student can self-evaluate their perceptual abilities, their memory, attention, and thinking capabilities, they will understand what measures to take to accelerate the learning process.

To make the DL process effective, the student needs to analyze their behavior and actions to identify the most frequent mistakes, to rethink and optimize the process of knowledge acquisition and assimilation. This calls for the skills of self-analysis along with self-control, i.e. the ability to check one's work for errors. Self-analysis and self-control are especially important when there is no direct contact with the teacher, which is very important in the process of DL.

The skills of self-organization are applied by the student in their independent work when they need to schedule their studies, i.e. to determine the amount of material to cover in a certain period of time. In the learning process, time management is what enables students to achieve their goals. It is important to note here that the lack of self-education skills can lead the student to not have great results in learning. Furthermore, minding that the share of independent work in the course of DL is much greater than in full-time and part-time learning, it can be argued that without motivation for learning and the result, the student will not be able to study and obtain a decent level of training. Accordingly, aside from self-education skills, DL makes it critical for the student to be motivated, as motivation determines the consistency and efficiency of DL. The lack of self-education skills, in turn, can lead to poor academic performance.

## CONCLUSIONS

The potential of the electronic information and educational environment creates the necessary conditions for designing an individual trajectory of self-education and creating an electronic record of accumulated knowledge, increases the level of emotional reception of information, provides for students' self-control of the results of their learning activities, activates their independent cognitive initiative, and stimulates motivation for self-education.

The elements of self-educational activity as an objectively necessary one (not only in DL conditions) should be brought into the educational process of the university to develop students' readiness for continuous self-education. Participants in the educational process should not interpret this as imposing additional extracurricular work, because the point of it is to change the nature of learning

activities, reorienting the educational process to the requirements of the present day.

According to the results of the study, we can state that the formation of students' readiness to self-education in DL conditions ensures their awareness of the need for continuous self-development and self-improvement to achieve professional and life success. SEC in a foreign language in the conditions of DL for the students of non-linguistic universities involves the ability to independently learn a foreign language and mastery of the skills of self-education.

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