

## **AUTONOMOUS ENGLISH ACQUISITION IN BLENDED E-STUDIES FOR ADULTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: ACTIVE RESEARCH**

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**Abstract.** *Holistic approach is the main princip of sustainable development. Nevertheless investments of society in technological facilitation of learning mainly support developing of general skills. General and intellectual development of human's personality follows from that. This research aims to evaluate methodological factors of English acquisition in classroom and virtual learning environment for facilitation of autonomous its acquisition in adults' non-formal education. Hypothetically it is assumed that opportunities of learning environment of e-studies are insufficiently used for personal development in English acquisition programmes. The research presents an interpretation of learners' and their facilitators evaluation of learning opportunities in classroom and virtual learning environment collected by SOT analysis. The study highlights vertical and horisontal transformation of values.*

**Keywords:** *autonomous English acquisition, blended e-studies, system approach, vertical transformation of values, horizontal transformation of values.*

### **Introduction**

Autonomous English acquisition is considered in the research as a means of life long learning for sustainable development. The problem is that harmonic development of learner's personality fails to keep pace with increasing investments of the society in facilitation of developing of general learning skills and general development of learner's personality in classroom and virtual environment. The solution of the problem is seen in transformation of values towards autonomous English acquisition (EA) in blended e-studies.

The active research is a part of the study, where the questionnaire was created in the qualitative part of the research and adult learners' attitude towards autonomous EA in blended e-studies was inquired in the quantitative part of the research. It is find out that teachers and librarians prefer stable forms of learning process, but decision of unemployed participants of the EA programmes of non-formal education is not homogenous (Bojāre, Ignatjeva, 2014).

So the active research aims to evaluate methodological factors of English acquisition in classroom and virtual learning environment for facilitation of autonomous its acquisition in blended e-studies for adults. Hypothetically it is assumed that opportunities of classroom and virtual learning environment are insufficiently used for personal development in EA programmes of non-formal education.

The research presents an interpretation of learners' and their facilitators evaluation of learning opportunities in classroom and virtual learning environment. The active research is realysed in three cycles where the main

data are collected by the method of SOT (Strengths, Opportunities and Threats) analysis of factors detected in quantitative research. The results of the study highlight vertical and horizontal transformation of values.

### **Theoretical background**

Autonomous English acquisition (EA) in blended e-studies for adults is defined in this research as a structurally divisible and functionally holistic unstable form of learning process. The whole study is a transdisciplinary research where learner's autonomy is analysed from a philosophical, pedagogical and mathematical perspective by the means of holistic approach, theoretical modelling and synergetic scientific methodology.

Methodology of the research depends on paradigm shift from *multilingualism to plurilingualism* (European Council, 2003) and from humanistic to system paradigm in social researches (Давыдов, 2008). It follows from the general systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968). Philosophically Laszlo (2004) distinguishes psychological field and consciousness in organic model of the universe like Fromm (2002) distinguishes psychological in social sphere and in individual's relationships with the environment. In general, it is subjectivity in the objective and introducing of the third level of system in social researches follows from that.

Marulavska (2011) considers transdisciplinary dialogue as significant means for evolutionary increasing of pedagogical knowledge. It follows, firstly, from the necessity to overcome a reproductive approach to educational process and to create the atmosphere for self-realization, development, self-recognition. Secondly, the comprehension of the process of facilitation of self-organisation in the education can be understood from the point of view of dynamic complex systems.

A human can be distinguished as integrative part of mankind (Marulevska, 2011) that coexists with the environment in a complex way. Philosophical factor is significant for overcoming traditional function to teach social experience and for facilitation to overcome a crisis and finding a new way of living in the future. It means looking after new educational models by a theory of complex nonlinear systems or by the theory of synergetics (Marulevska, 2011).

Using synergetics in education as a method of organisation of the learning process, as education by means of synergetics and synergetics as a content is substantiated by Budanov (1996). Therefore open developing system is used in systemic approach of educational researches (Broks, 2000). Such self-organisational system develops with and in the environment.

Fromm (2002) speaks about previous natural unity between a human and the environment. Evolutionary his energy was directed from surviving in the natural environment towards social surviving and consciousness and developing

himself. It makes a vertical dimension of *personality's general development* (Špona, 2001: 41). Personality's harmonic development makes a horizontal dimension and consists of *will, emotions and intellect* (Špona, 2001:41).

Nowadays the human perceives the reality as its shadow after Fromm (2002). He turns to a virtual or antireality of the 21st century. Going through a zero point creates a crisis with a potential *energy of crisis* (Mann, 1996). A „negative” personality communicates with virtual society and projects himself virtually in a virtual environment. For education it means radically autonomous learning in general and autonomous English acquisition particularly. It also means reducing specialisation between teaching and learning by joining these functions in general learning skills.

So the task is to return to a positive person in the positive reality in a new quality by changing the direction of the development towards a qualitatively new level of the development. It means broadening traditional directed learning with autonomous learning in blended English acquisition. It is unstable phase of the process because possibilities of autonomous learning and virtual learning environment can be or not be used what depends on values of participants' of the learning process.

Researcher's aim is to inquiry self-defined system in congruity. He or she determines means of the research, its frame, input, output, components and the structure (Checkland, 1981). It means in this research, that the system vertically represents learner's individual microlevel, social institution – a macrolevel and the internet as learning environment belongs to mezolevel.

Transforming of vertical hierarchy of values is facilitated by interaction between the learner and virtual environment during social process of learning. It is expressed by students' attitude towards responsibility for learning on the base of technologically facilitated learning, learning in group and self-directed learning. The horizontal transformation is facilitated by the facilitator's depending on initial level of methodological factors by input in the way of inquiry of learners, communication and action. The output is broadening of initial level of methodological factors to stable values and acceptance of the new experience of learning (Bojāre, Ignatjeva, 2014).

### **Methodology**

The methodology of action research is used. Its basic principle defines that it *must be conducted with and not on, persons, where the „with” is now potentially a creative meeting of difference, rather than a potentially collaborative, but „safe” consensus*. An interesting feature of research is, that it shows participants of the research as they really are (Stronach I, MacLure M., 1997 as cited in Bleakley, Gale, 2006).

The whole study aims to facilitate vertical and horizontal transformation of values for promoting autonomous EA in virtual learning environment among

participants of EA programmes of non-formal education by depending on the strengths and opportunities of the factors and diminishing revealed threats. Learners' experience was inquired in the qualitative part of the research, their attitude – in the quantitative part, but evaluation methodological factors of EA in classroom and virtual learning environment for facilitation of autonomous its acquisition in blended e-studies for adults is the aim of the action research.

Hypothetically it is assumed that opportunities of classroom and virtual learning environment are insufficiently used for personal development in EA programmes of non-formal education. Transformation of their values towards using opportunities of autonomous leaning and virtual learning environment is facilitated by engaging the participants of the research in getting new comprehension about their English acquisition opportunities.

The participants were inquired by short form questionnaire (Bojāre, Ignatjeva, 2014) in the first cycle of action research. They analysed proposed methodological factors by a SOT (Strengths, Opportunities and Threats) analysis in the second cycle. These factors were exposed by factorial analysis during quantitative research. Weakness were removed also by factorial analysis in the previous part of the research. SOT analysis was done by facilitators in the third cycle.

The lists with strong sides of personal factor; the factor of involvement; the factor of organisation; the factor of evaluation; the factor of knowledge; the factor of skills and the factor of development were prepared and learners' were asked to think about opportunities to use these strengths in the classroom and virtual learning as values for themselves. They were also asked to write why these opportunities could not be used.

SOT analysis was realised in three steps: participants did that individually, in pairs and in groups. Each group thought about one factor. Educators were inquired in the same way, but they worked on all factors. It gave the opportunity to compare learners' and educators' opinions for better understanding each other and their efforts.

Fromm (2002) describes the reality as listening with ears and looking with eyes. Autonomous English acquisition in blended e-studies broaden learning opportunities to writing with hands and on the keyboard, listening with ears and phones, direct speaking and with microphones and so on. Recognition of threats facilitates realization of opportunities because of their value.

Outcomes are for a researcher, for participants and for educators (Coughlan, 2010). In this case the researcher have got additional confirmation of the validity of the instrument of the quantitative research and exposes the way of solution of the problem, participants of the research broaden their map of learning possibilities in real and virtual learning environment and facilitators are able to consider another ways to facilitate their learners depending on knowledge about them.

## Respondents

The action research was conducted in autumn and early winter, 2013. Its first cycle participants are (N<sub>1</sub>=46) learners of EA programmes of non-formal education organised for unemployed. Out of all respondents 59% have professional education, 9% - basic education, 17% - general secondary education, 13% - higher education, 2% - master's degree. 67% of them evaluate themselves as beginners and 33% - as independent users of the English language.

Thirty-two participants (N<sub>2</sub>=32) of 46 have taken part in the second cycle and three of four their facilitators (N<sub>3</sub>=3) took part in the third cycle of the action research. The choice of the participants depends on the results of the quantitative research. They show that the most abstained from virtual EA are the participants of EA programmes of non-formal education organised for unemployed. They make 61% of the distinguished group (Bojāre, Ignatjeva, 2014).

This group is not homogenous. Their decision depend on their education. One subgroup consist of the participants of EA programmes with professional education and another - of participants of EA programmes with general secondary, higher education and master's degree. The first subgroup has mostly negative attitude towards virtual EA. The second - negative attitude towards all proposed forms of learning process.

This subgroup in one's turn divides in two more subgroups depending on their language proficiency level: basic users and independent users. The first do not believe in any of proposed EA forms. The second subgroup is less loyal towards EA in virtual learning environment. In general, participants with positive attitude towards virtual learning environment show more interest about methodological factors of English acquisition.

## Results

In general, the result of evaluation of forms of organisation of the learning process is similar in the quantitative part of the research and in action research. Learners prefer facilitated self-regulated learning (SRL). Self-determined learning in group (self-deter. L); self-directed learning (SDL) in classroom environment and holistic EA in virtual learning environment (VL) follow to it. Learners' attitude towards methodological factors in all proposed forms of organisation learning process is shown in table 1. The results of the quantitative research and the results of the first cycle of the action research are joined there. The most comprehended factors are matched by „+” and less comprehended factors are matched by „-” with their evaluation below indicated points.

Table 1

**Learners' attitude towards methodological factors in different forms of organisation of the learning process**

No	Forms; Factors, their strong sides	SRL		SDL		Self-deter. L		VL	
1.	Personal (correction of learning process for reaching the goal, responsibility for learning process and positive emotions connected with learning English)			+	3,26		-;		
				3,7			3,53		
2.	Involvement (choosing strategies and methods for doing tasks; making tables about the acquired topics/ grammar rules; making mind maps about the acquired topics/ grammar rules)		-;		-;	-;	3,57		-;
			4,13		2,94	3,5			2,65
3.	Organisation (choosing the topics for learning; choosing the learning materials; dividing the learning content)		+					+	2,66
			4,38					1,85	
4.	Evaluation (defining qualitative criteria of the evaluation the result of learning; evaluation the result of learning; evaluation the quality of the learning process (activities))			-;	3,13				
				3,0					
5.	Knowledge (reading a text; answering the questions about the text; learning grammar rules)	+	4,28		+	+	3,76		
		4,4			3,31	4,2			
6.	Skills (working with the learning materials; acquiring the listening tasks; translation of the text)						+		+
							3,77		2,94
7.	Development (writing a letter; writing a composition; investigation of some topic)	-;	4,14					-;	2,76
		4,1						1,5	

They are different in both parts of the research. The absolute values and corresponding value of action research to extreme points of quantitative research show that the evaluation of classroom environment has decreased and the evaluation of virtual environment has increased. It is 3,68 and 2,79 points in average. The evaluation of self-determined learning in group has also decreased. It shows the vertical transformation of values towards recognising of virtual learning environment for English acquisition. This tendency is supported from outside by increasing opportunities of virtual learning.

Data obtained by SOT analysis show inside changes of values. They are interpreted on the base of the structure of personality's harmonic and general development (Špona, 2001). General development makes a vertical dimension

and its physical, psychological and social balance implies here physical in the form of content, resources and environment for facilitation of person's development in the process of EA; social is represented by educator's facilitation and collaboration with the group and individual is represented by learning method and the quality of learning process and result.

Harmonic development makes a horizontal dimension and the balance between person's will, emotions and intellect is implied here by self-determined learning, self-directed learning (SDL) and self-regulated learning (SRL). Opportunities and threats of seven factors established in the quantitative part of the research are inquired in both dimensions in the classroom and virtual environment. The structure of interpretation is shown in table 2.

Table 2

**The structure of interpretation of the data**

No	Dimension of personality's development	Opportunities	Threats
1.	General development: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. physical                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• content, resources;</li> <li>• environment.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. social                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educator;</li> <li>• group.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Individual                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning method;</li> <li>• quality of learning process and result.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>		
2.	Harmonic development: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. self-determined learning                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• independence in group;</li> <li>• collaboration in group.</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. self-directed learning (SDL)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• aim of learning, responsibility;</li> <li>• emotions.</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. self-regulated learning (SRL)                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• tasks;</li> <li>• self-control.</li> </ul> </li> </ol>		

Strong sides of each factor are determined in the quantitative part of the research (table 1). For example, for personal factor they are correction of learning process for reaching the goal, responsibility for learning process and positive emotions connected with learning English.

In general, participants of action research note the regularity of lessons, facilitator's explanations, group and pair work, facilitation of group, individual teaching methods and positive emotions in the classroom. Threats are directed learning, nonqualified facilitator, using of old teaching methods, learners' conversations, influence of other people, calls of mobile phones.

Facilitators mention that individual, pair and group work is possible in the classroom, but some learners are not able to do tasks or not to do them in time. Every learner should take responsibility about his/her result of learning.

EA programmes with the possibility of self-control and individual learning have good learning opportunities by the opinion participants of the research. Interruptions in the internet connection, wrong using of words, absence of pair and group work, computer obsession and health problems they mention as threats in virtual learning.

Facilitators say that learners can find what they really like and what is interesting for them in the internet. They can learn on their own temp.

Opportunities for harmonic personal development by learners' opinion are taking responsibility for their own learning and they like learning with facilitator and group and singing English songs in the classroom. The aim of learning and independence is necessary. The threat is one's laziness.

Facilitators think that everybody should take responsibility for reaching his/her learning goal, but not everyone wants to do that.

Learners see the opportunity to develop their will and responsibility, choose the goal and task in virtual English acquisition, but everyday duties and laziness can move off the goal. Educators stress learners' responsibility.

Conclusions are made on the base of the analysis of all results of the research.

### **Conclusions**

1. The aim of the active research to evaluate methodological factors of English acquisition in classroom and virtual learning environment for facilitation of autonomous its acquisition in blended e-studies for adults is reached and the hypothesis about insufficient using of opportunities of classroom and virtual learning environment for personal development in EA programmes of non-formal education is proved.
2. The validity of questionnaire is checked and it is useful for learners' investigation in non-formal education.
3. The vertical transformation of values towards recognising of virtual learning environment for English acquisition passes ahead of horizontal transformation of values because of investments of society in technological facilitation of learning.
4. Autonomous English acquisition as inside transformation of values is less expressed. Transformation of horizontal values depends more on general than on harmonic development of learner's personality. It is not enough facilitated by educators in EA programmes of non-formal education for unemployed.
5. Learners stress the opportunity to join entertainment with learning in virtual environment, but factors of involvement, organisation and evolution of own learning process make potential of opportunities for harmonic development

of their personalities and are recommended to facilitate in the process of EA.

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