THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS` SELF-REGULATION AS A MEANS TO FOSTER FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

EL DESARROLLO DE LA AUTORREGULACION POR LOS ESTUDIANTES COMO MEDIO PARA PROMOVER EL PROCESO DE ADQUISICION DE LENGUA EXTRANJERA

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Abstract

Teaching a foreign language to young adults outside its natural reach can only be effective if it relies on consciousness raising methods. The key element in conscious language acquisition is learners` self-regulation. However, both the theory and practice of foreign language teaching do not put enough emphasis on developing the corresponding self-regulatory skills of learners in the process of teaching foreign languages at university. The problem of applying the general theoretical knowledge of self regulatory mechanisms to foreign language acquisition by university students needs further investigation. Thus, the article focuses on the mechanisms of self-regulation that are more applicable to foreign language acquisition, as well as ways to implement methods of teaching in reliance on the corresponding self-regulation mechanisms, selecting and adjusting relevant diagnostic tools in order to measure the components of self-regulation and the effect of fostering self-regulation on the development of students` foreign language competencies. The methods of the study embrace psychological diagnostics adjusted to the process of language acquisition as well as statistical interpretation of the data. The article concludes that the experiment with University students helped ascertain and confirm the effectiveness of particular ways of teaching a foreign language (English) targeting students` self-regulation and, thus, optimizing and accelerating the process of foreign language acquisition.

Key Words: learners` self- regulation, teaching a foreign language, EFL, consciousness raising.

Resumen

Enseñarles un idioma extranjero a adultos jóvenes fuera del ambiente lingüístico natural solo puede ser efectivo si se basa en métodos de concienciación. El elemento clave en la adquisición consciente del lenguaje es la autorregulación por los estudiantes mismos. Sin embargo, tanto la teoría como la práctica de la enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros no ponen suficiente énfasis en el desarrollo de las correspondientes habilidades de autorregulación de los alumnos en el proceso de enseñanza de idiomas extranjeros en el ambiente académico. El proceso de aplicar los conocimientos teóricos generales de los mecanismos de autorregulación a la adquisición de idiomas extranjeros por parte de estudiantes universitarios requiere una mayor investigación. De este modo, el artículo se trata de los mecanismos de autorregulación que sean las más aplicables a la adquisición de idiomas extranjeros, así como en las formas de implementar métodos de enseñanza basados en los mecanismos de autorregulación correspondientes, seleccionando y ajustando herramientas diagnósticos relevantes para medir los componentes de la autorregulación, tanto como el efecto de fomentar la autorregulación en el desarrollo de las

competencias en idiomas extranjeros de los estudiantes. Los métodos del estudio abarcan diagnósticos psicológicos ajustados al proceso de adquisición del lenguaje, así como a la interpretación estadística de los datos. El artículo concluye que el experimento con estudiantes universitarios ayudó a determinar y confirmar la efectividad de formas particulares de enseñar una lengua extranjera (el inglés) enfocándose en la autorregulación de los estudiantes y, por lo tanto, optimizando y acelerando el proceso de adquisición de idiomas extranjeros.

Palabras clave: autorregulación por los alumnos, enseñanza de una lengua extranjera, EFL (inglés como lengua extranjera), métodos de concienciación.

1. INTRODUCTION

Conscious language acquisition is still considered to be possible, with few exceptions, only by means of teacher instruction rather than independently. Historically, attitudes to language teaching have changed from the teacher-centered approach to student-focused instruction taking into account students needs, motivation, age, psychological and cognitive abilities etc . However, with the latter prevailing in the present-day language teaching at universities and the increasing trends towards autonomous learning the integration of psychological and psycholinguistic techniques in classroom practices is still not paid enough attention to both in research and practice. Generally, most research splits into investigating various aspects of teaching in the classroom with the teacher`s role gradually shifting to an instructor and assistant and those of autonomous learning without teacher`s interference.

On the other hand observations and practical experience show that despite a variety of pedagogical tools provoking or intended to provoke students` consciousness students lack both the metacognitive knowledge and practical skills of boosting self-assessment, self-control, self-awareness, self-motivation, and other components of self-regulation. It also reveals that language teachers being aware of different active methods of teaching lack psychological and psycholinguistic knowledge, which prevents them from building up a system of teaching that will transform their students from dependent learners to active, confident and autonomous ones. This can also be achieved through integration of psychological measuring instruments into the teaching process, which can help monitor students skills and adjust the teaching forms and methods employed.

If we treat conscious learning as primarily combination of self-regulation and metacognition, we shall consider possibilities of boosting foreign language skills by targeting self-regulatory mechanisms in the traditional language teaching classroom, which consequently can lead to such a high degree of language acquisition skills development that it will enable learners to master a foreign language independently.

In this respect, our ideas are supported by research on applying and measuring self-regulation while learning particular sections of a foreign language, primarily, vocabulary and grammar, as well as those revealing direct influence of self-regulation on academic achievements. The purpose of our study is to comprehensively analyze self-regulation as a psychological concept, specifically, its mechanisms activated during language acquisition; consider psychological and cognitive abilities manifested in the process of language learning which are characteristic of young adults; provide for pedagogical means

of fostering self-regulation, and confirming the hypothesis of substantial improvement of foreign language teaching process and its results by targeting students` self-regulation.

As it has already been mentioned self-regulation in the context of language acquisition has been primarily studied within psychological disciplines, focusing on its structure, manifestation, diagnostics and overall assessment. Researchers focusing on language acquisition reveal narrow applications either related to one of its components, mainly, self-assessment and self-control or its mechanisms as related to particular types of speech activity or sections of the language. The review of theoretical background on self-regulation in the framework of language acquisition has not revealed a study that looks into mechanisms of self-regulation the actualization of which is critical in second language acquisition by university students and, as such, has the potential to optimize and activate the process of foreign language learning.

Thus, there are enough grounds to claim that elaborating pedagogical methods of teaching foreign languages based on the recent psychological findings on self-regulation can boost the so-called "traditional" foreign language teaching at university. Therefore, the research questions about the appropriateness and effectiveness of relying and purposefully stimulating learners` self-regulation in the course of foreign language teaching at university include:

1. What is the theoretical background of self-regulation as a psychological concept and what mechanisms and skills thereof are primarily activated in the process of foreign language acquisition?

2. How are these self-regulation skills and mechanisms affected by the conditions of teaching foreign languages to students at universities in their home countries?

3. What are characteristics of students` self-regulation determined by the psychological and cognitive features of their age?

4. What pedagogical means can be employed to boost learners` self-regulation taking into account the advantages and restraints of teaching foreign languages at university?

5. What means of diagnostics can be selected to measure self-regulation of learners in the process of teaching foreign languages at university?

6. Is their direct positive correlation between fostering students` self-regulation and boosting their foreign language competencies?

2. THERETICAL FRAMEWORK

Self-regulation has been thoroughly studied in psychological research related to personality, psyche, behavior etc. In language teaching and acquisition research these psychological findings have been extensively applied as well.

82

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Chiknaverova, K.   *Encuentro 27,* 2018, ISSN 1989-0796, pp. 80-95

The study presented focuses on the personality and activity approach having its origin in psychology and psycholinguistics as well as on learner-centered approach to foreign language teaching, which postulate that to influence, direct and monitor learners` self-regulation the researcher shall primarily focus on the learners` personality and its various aspects as well as nature and characteristics of their activity in the process of language learning treating the learner as an active subject of this process.

Taking into account this fundamental methodology we draw upon key aspects of contemporary theories of general issues of self regulation in the process of learning and learning foreign languages in particular; the research on cognitive and psychological characteristics of students age group and its influence on self-regulation; peculiarities of teaching foreign languages outside the countries they are spoken in, as well as studies revealing ways of transferring psychological diagnostics to the language classroom.

The primary supporting methodology of our research is general theoretical findings on self-regulation in the context of foreign language teaching (Martin 2004; McDonough 2001), which primarily imply that purposefully fostering self-regulation in the language classroom requires remodeling the traditional approaches and imposes additional requirements to teachers. Other theories mentioned are offered to complement these principal theories and the approaches we rely on in our research.

In our study we tried to reveal the structure of self-regulation, one of components of which is self-motivation. In this respect we rely on the theoretical background of motivation theory as well as influence of motivation on self-regulated learning and performance (Zimmerman 2008, 2011), alongside with general aspects of self-regulated learning in the classroom (Perry, Rahim 2011), and research on raising self-regulation by means of gradual shift from socially shared and co-regulated regulation to self-regulation (Hadwin, Jarela, Miller 2011; Murray 2014).

Our ultimate purpose being to prove the high degree of interrelation between the development of students` awareness of self-regulation and the development of the relevant skills and foreign language competencies in the process of foreign language teaching at university we rely on the theories confirming the positive correlation between self-regulation and general academic achievement (Zimmerman 2001). .

In most studies self-regulation is closely related to metacognition and autonomous learning. Metacognition is seen as booster of self-regulation which ultimately results in learners` readiness to autonomous learning (Alexander 2008; Benson 2011; Chiknaverova 2017; Dinsmore, Alexander, Loughlin 2008; Schunk 2008; Sperling, Howard, Staley 2004.). We rely on these findings in terms of what self-regulation is, its interrelation with motivation and metacognition and the difference between them. This research also serves as a solid ground for appropriateness of teaching self-regulatory skills and, in general, acts as a conceptual framework for studying self-regulation for educational purposes.

While developing the diagnostics of self-regulation in the context of foreign language acquisition, we use the data on ways of assessing and measuring self-regulation by employing various methods as seen through the perspective of the activity approach, generally, adopted in psychological and psycholinguistic research (Green, Robertson, Costs 2011; Turner 2006; Winne 2000).

Adjusting self-regulation capacity to different language sections, mainly, vocabulary and grammar (Mizumoto, Takeuchi 2012) is seen as alternative to traditional ways of quantifying language acquisition strategies. Such studies also provide solid reasoning for the validity of transferring the theoretical basis from psychology to the theory of foreign language teaching.

The methodological background of strategic language acquisition as well as investigation of psychological background of particular foreign language learning strategies, identification of self-regulatory mechanisms manifested while implementing particular strategies, their advantages and limitations (Oxford 1999, 2011; Rose 2012; Seker 2016) helped reveal mechanisms of self-regulation in the language classroom.

Investigation into self-regulation as perceived through the lens of teaching students (Lizzio, Wilson 2005) and different teaching formats (Grinsven, Tillema 2006) reveals ways to specify self-regulation in terms of students age and learning formats.

Following findings revealed by Winny, Perry (2000) and Zeidner (2000) we interpret self-regulation as psychical function consisting of interdependent and interrelated processes. The primary components of self-regulation include goal setting, strategic planning, monitoring and metacognition, action and volitional control, strategic tactics, time management, self-motivational beliefs (self-efficacy, outcome expectations, intrinsic interest, and goal orientation, etc.), evaluation and self-reflection, receiving and processing feedback. This theoretical understanding of self-regulation is further specified in the methods section of the article. Following A. Zverkov and E. Eidman` research we grouped the components of self-regulation into three basic groups (self-control, perseverance and self-possession) for the purposes of diagnostics.

3. METHODS, SAMPLE OR PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTION

To conduct the experiment, a sample of 177 students of the Russian State University for Humanities (Moscow, Russia) was selected. The general characteristics of the sample include:
- Students of the same year (1-2nd year bachelor degree students), age and gender;
- Groups with similar academic achievements, levels of the foreign language (English) and self-regulation;
- Russian is a native language for all learners;
- All students had been learning English for the same period of time by the moment the data was collected.

Methodology of statistical data processing applied after the data was collected was unified and the same for control and experimental groups.

84

To determine the pre-test and post-test level of learners` self-regulation from both experimental (EG) and control groups (CG) we used a volitional self-control test by A. Zverkov and E. Eidman.

In the course of the diagnostics, to confirm the hypothesis, the results were checked for a statistical significance level – all the results obtained were mathematically processed in the statistical program SPSS version 11.5 for Windows (Byuyul', 2002). To interpret the data we applied a method of nonparametric statistics: the test for Wilcoxon connected samples. The T-Wilcoxon criterion was used to evaluate the differences in experimental data obtained under two different conditions on the same sample of subjects. It allows us to identify not only the direction of changes, but also their intensity. It allows us to establish whether the shift in indicators in one direction is more intense than in the other. The T-criterion is based on the ranking of the absolute values of the difference between two sets of sample values before and after the experimental training (Yermolayev 2002).

Self-regulation is manifested through self-regulatory mechanisms. In our applied research we resorted to a fundamental psychological study by A. Zverkov and E. Eidman exploring the structure of self-regulation and the ways to measure and describe it. Further, we adjusted the findings to the process of acquiring a foreign language.

The Volitional Control Test makes it possible to obtain information on the self-regulatory awareness. It is aimed at a generalized assessment of the individual level of development of volitional regulation, which generally implies the measure of mastering one's own behavior in different situations - the ability to consciously control one's own actions, states and motivations. According to numerous experimental data, these features of self-regulation largely determine the individual style and specific manifestations of human activity. The first subscale characterizes the energy mobilization potential available for the completion of the action, the second describes the level of voluntary control of emotional reactions and states. In terms of traditional personality traits, subscales are called "perseverance" and "self-possession", respectively. There is a positive correlation with the "activity" scale which indicates the prevalence of active background in individuals with a high volitional self-control index, and with a scale of subjective control localization, which is quite natural, since self-monitoring is directly related to the subjective notions of controllability, in general and one`s own behavior, in particular. Moreover, a high level of volitional self-control is associated with low anxiety and lack of frustrated needs.

In our study a version with a dichotomous choice was applied: the subject has only two options for an answer: either "yes" or "no." The instructions specifically stipulate that in case of uncertainty in the answer, a subject can choose any alternative. Using the special key, the number of points received by the subject on each of the scales is calculated: on the scale of volitional self-control, on the sub-scale "perseverance", on the subscale "self-possession". When calculating total points, only matches with the key are taken into account (each such coincidence increases the total score by one). Those positions that do not coincide with the key are ignored and do not affect the value of the total score, which means that they do not bring negative points (the description of the scales and subscales, as well as the procedure

and guidelines for interpretation of the data are provided by the authors of the Volitional Self-Control Test) (Zverkov, Eidman).

In the framework of our research, it is critically important to consider the self-regulatory characteristics in an integrated manner, in particular in relation to the specifics of their manifestation when mastering a foreign language by university students.

4. PEDAGOGICAL ARSENAL AIMED AT BOOSTING SELF-REGULATION IN THE PROCESS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

Teaching foreign languages at university has specific features which shall be taken into account prior and during development of pedagogical means of fostering self–regulation. These features include formal conditions of teaching and learning related to the structure of the university, the content of education, the requirements to studies, students obligations, the number of credit hours, duration of teaching etc. It also involves social conditions such as integration of students within a group, and their relationship with the outsiders (student-student, teacher-student, student-group, group-teacher, group – university.). And, finally, didactic conditions which involve forms of teaching and control, as well as methods of teaching at university.

Another important factor that can not be ignored when adjusting psychological theories to the classroom teaching is students` general psychological and cognitive characteristics typical for the learners age. Introspection is considered to be the principal feature of this age group as well as self-consciousness associated with it. Another important characteristic is the integrity of affect and intellect. Students volitional sphere is the one that is actively being formed and developed as a separate psychical function. For the purposes of our research, it should also be mentioned that learners of this age are also characterized by broad interests and a desire to be more independent in life. The psychological characteristics are also related to the learners` motives and interest and their structure, the characteristics of behavioural regulation, as well as peculiarities of the cognitive processes. As for the cognitive abilities of this group, the most common characteristics are the generality of the thinking activity, independent thinking, flexibility of thinking processes, semantic memory.

The pedagogical potential employed to foster self-regulation in the process of foreign language acquisition includes experimental strategies, techniques, exercises and tasks. Instruction is carried out taking into account the prevention of perception errors, language and speech difficulties (including those associated with each of the types of speech activity, the general difficulties of mastering the language system under study, the individual features of learning a foreign language); the development of regulatory mechanisms of perception, memory, attention with the help of a previously developed classification of difficulties and typology of errors, taking into account the learners` potential needs and behavior.

Based on the analysis of the practice of teaching a foreign language at university, as well as a number of textbooks and teaching materials on the English language used in universities, it was revealed

that teaching a foreign language in most cases is limited: to translating lexis or finding equivalents in students` native language; defining terms; translating by applying relevant transformations; discussing concepts and categories of learners` own language and the language under study. The learning process is formalized, the semantic aspect of the analysis of linguistic phenomena is limited. As for communicative orientation, only formal communication tasks are presented. Terms, definitions and linguistic rules are learnt mainly mechanically due to the lack of semantization. This approach excludes application of strategies, or any individual trajectories. The relationship and the transition of one type of speech activity to another is not traced; there are no possibilities for self-correction, self-replenishment of knowledge; verification of the completed task.

Within the training provided for the purposes of our study the teacher selects and develops strategies, techniques, exercises and tasks integrating all types of speech activity (reading, writing, listening and speaking). The conditions the pedagogical arsenal is used in are as follows: the intensity of performing tasks varies; facilitation techniques are extensively applied; problem solving is stimulated by verbalization; criticality is widely encouraged; mechanisms for the regulation of operational, short-term, long-term memory are applied; comparative analysis of native and foreign languages is used at all stages; classroom work and extracurricular work are integrated.

Students are taught to actualize the positive experience of their foreign speech activity; to analyze and verbalize the system of expectations, associations with semantic and verbal forecasting, to establish the connection between the old and the new; to achieve the implementation of the ideas on the basis of the mechanism for completing the initiated; they are encouraged to develop individual learning strategies, as well as building up individual trajectories to prevent and overcome errors and difficulties; to increase their learning and acquisition capacity by changing activities and sequences of tasks.

Moreover, learners are encouraged to analyze the ongoing language acquisition process and its results, to investigate their own and others` achievements with the help of retrospective analysis methods. Teachers employ an individualized way of evaluating students` current work, provide for students ` developing common methods of action, developing skills of self-control, verbal assessment of their foreign language (for operational feedback); including the use of systematic emotional assessments to boost learners` self-esteem.

In the experimental learning we initiated, foreign speech activity is considered in the unity of its four types. Reading is developed as an independent type of speech activity, and as a basis for producing written and oral speech. In this regard, the mechanisms for the development of a particular type of speech activity are interrelated.

The strategies used by the teacher to develop foreign-language competencies based on the activation of students' self-regulation are represented by strategies of pedagogical influence and learning strategies. The strategies of pedagogical influence are, as a rule, not recognized by students. Introducing learning strategies the teacher boosts students` awareness.

87

THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS` SELF-REGULATION AS A MEANS TO FOSTER FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
Chiknaverova, K.   *Encuentro 27,* 2018, ISSN 1989-0796, pp. 80-95

In the process of teaching assignments (tasks) were formulated subject to the student's level of foreign language: in Russian; in English with translation and repetition; in English without translation with repetition; in English without translation and without repetition; in English with a variation of formulations.

Thus, when learning to speak, the following is employed: goal setting in the exchange of messages, opinions, ideas in initiative, reactive, reproductive speech; regulation of the student's own behavior and behavior of the interlocutor; the ability to self-regulate the formulation and retention of the sequence of statements in the memory; management of the motives of the utterance, the ability to develop and substantiate the need for an utterance. When teaching reading and listening, the intensity of attention of the listener / reader is under control of the learner due to his/her volitional efforts. When teaching writing, drawing up an internal plan involves editing, tactical regrouping, consolidation, expansion and reduction of units of the text.

Teacher`s support is possible due to preliminary work on the development of classification of difficulties and typology of errors of students arising while learning a foreign language. The support is designed to guide students on how to choose and apply a particular strategy of learning, both during familiarization and reflection, and training and application. A strategy is understood in our research as "any set of actions, steps, plans, routines used by a student to obtain, store, access and use information" (Wenden 1987).

In the framework of teaching a foreign language by boosting mechanisms of self-regulation, the strategy is selected according to the approach to the problem, the mode of action for achieving specific goals, and self-control. In our research we relied on the educational model, based on autonomy proposed by R. Oxford (Oxford, 2011). According to this model, it is necessary to consistently expose students to the strategies, to raise students` awareness of these strategies, to jointly discuss the advantages of this or that strategy, to self-assess and monitor their language competencies, to apply the acquired strategies to new assignments.

In our experiment, learning strategies are applied (as strategies for replenishing knowledge, developing skills, and abilities).Students use strategies of self-analysis, self-presentation, self-evaluation, self-control, stimulation of their own cognitive activity, completion of the initiated, and affective strategies. Examples of such strategies include: brainstorming, reverse brainstorming, overcoming the inertial effect of thinking (by Mendel), seeking an equal, self-questioning, keeping a diary of self-observation, drawing attention, fixing individual achievements, comparative evaluation, evaluation based on the proposed algorithm, those related to the management of their activity, involvement in the task implementation (during the response of others), imaginative representation, emotional stimulation etc.

Within the framework of the self-analysis strategy, for example, based on the results of a test, the student is able to independently track his/her progress, systematize errors, analyze the reasons for their occurrence and the possibility to eliminate them later. While implementing the strategy of self-

evaluation, the methods of comparison with the benchmark are applied, as well as tools and criteria for external evaluation. So, while performing productive foreign-language types of speech activity, knowing the benchmark and evaluation criteria provides for a rise in self-esteem, approximating it to an objective external evaluation. Self-evaluation tends to be adequate, when the effort expended corresponds to the external assessment grade, in the event of a failure (the efforts expended significantly exceed the performance), it is necessary for the learner to work on the corresponding problem areas, and take into account his/her abilities.

Self-control strategies are developed through methods of consolidating success during an oral public response, public speaking in the framework of the implementation of creative projects, when performing significant written tasks in a short time. Adopting the overcoming of the inertial effect of thinking strategy by Mendel students use the effect of the destruction of the stereotypes of the thinking process, the formation of the ability to see the new in the already known. Unlike the "Synectics", this method is intended for individual application and contains recommendations for the organization of the creative process for a long period, and not only for a limited period of time. Among such recommendations, we note the following: 1) to strive to present a particular phenomenon under study in an unexpected perspective; 2) to establish a semantic connection between a phenomenon given and the proposed one; 3) to ask as many questions as possible about the language phenomenon being studied, the rules (regarding their application, exceptions, possibilities for changes, etc.); 4) to postpone the task until the time when it can be the most optimal to complete it; 5) to apply methods of brainstorming, associations, using semantic analogies and secondary semantic nuances (Glebova, 2011).

In the event of a decline in performance, emotional stimulation is possible through the "seeking positive emotions, incentives" approach, which is not related to or indirectly related to the performance of an assignment. Self-stimulation is also achieved through the analysis of the appropriateness of foreign language learning activities, the recognition of one's own interest in both the professionally significant and the actual language part of the material under study, the forms, methods, personal involvement in the process of learning, the awareness of the potential for creativity, understanding of the interdisciplinary nature of the acquired knowledge and skills, the development of the ability to discern a model of real professional activity in the course of training.

In case of a decline in motivation, a student who applies self-stimulation techniques better realizes the reasons of the demotivation and eliminates them either by switching to other forms of work (e.g. from independent work to pairs, triads, group discussions); methods (from independent search for solutions to brainstorming); reception (e.g. from studying vocabulary on the basis of associations to the study of vocabulary on the basis of comparative analysis). The learner understands that the evaluation of his/her foreign-language speech activity at a certain stage is determined by his own efforts: by the amount of time spent to prepare, taking into account the individual characteristics and objective difficulties of the material at issue, or type of speech activity; the preferred strategy of learning etc.

The above strategies form sufficiently boost the level of self-regulation in the process of mastering a foreign language. The strategies can be traced at all levels: (1) the declarative level - the level of goals; (2) the level of methods employed to master a foreign language; (3) the level of evaluation of the learning outcomes of foreign-language speech activity.

When implementing these strategies self-regulation (1) can be traced at all levels of foreign language competencies; (2) strategies act as facilitation and the appropriation of knowledge; (3) the use of strategies ensures the implementation of two interrelated processes: a. activation of students' self-regulation; b. development of their language skills; (4) strategies accompany the entire learning process and are implemented in different forms and at all levels of teaching/learning a foreign language in the form of specific techniques; (5) ultimately, the strategies provide a high level of development of the foreign language competencies of university students on the basis of intensifying their self-regulation.

A special focus shall be on activities targeted at eliminating language and speech errors of students while doing the corresponding exercises. The ability to effectively eliminate them by students is one of the indicators of the level of development of students` self-regulation.

In addition to the traditional methods of assessment and evaluation, parallel evaluation is practiced, which includes the learners` self-evaluation and evaluation by the teacher. Forms of control are as follows: 1) educational commenting, which provides for students performing certain actions to comment on what they are instantly involved in and evaluate it; 2) self-testing; 4) delegating roles (assistant, consultant, rapporteur, opponent, etc.); 5) mutual verification of oral and written answers using sheets of mutual control.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is necessary to constantly receive information about the changes in levels of foreign language skills in the experimental and control groups. Thus, each group was constantly monitored by using methods of psychological diagnostics, which allowed to obtain the most reliable results. This approach makes it possible to track the effectiveness of learning at any stage due to the integration of sociometric methods and the teaching itself, which allows for changes in the teaching/learning process. Below we provide the average group self-regulation indicators and the level of foreign language skills in the experimental (EG) and control groups (CG). First of all, we will provide the average group self-regulation indicators in the experimental and control groups at the beginning of the training (fig. 1).The average group indices in the experimental and control groups are homogeneous before the training.

Parameter	CG (0,05)	EG	T-criterion
Self-control	15,76	15,91	0,579
Perseverance	8,55	8,68	0,912
Self-possession	7,26	7,3	0,226

Figure 1. Parameters of students` self-regulation in EG and CG prior to training.

The data obtained in experimental groups before and after the experimental training for dependent samples revealed significant shifts in students` self-regulation (perseverance, self-control, self-possession) (Fig. 2).

Parameter	Before	After	T-criterion
Self control	15,88	20,21	-61,7
Perseverance	8,68	12,24	-43,4
Self-possession	7,28	10,67	-15,7

Figure 2. Parameters of students` self-regulation in EG before and after training.

The comparative analysis of the indicators in the experimental and control samples after training using t-test for independent samples revealed significant differences in all parametres at the level of statistical significance $p \leq 0.01$, which indicates the effectiveness of experimental teaching aimed at achieving high level of self-control, development of the potential for completion of the initiated, goal-setting, anticipation of intentions, facilitation skills, choice of means of activity, self-evaluation.

Parameter	CG	EG	T-criterion
Self control	16,17	20,21	18,89
Perseverance	9,65	12,24	14,43-
Self-possession	8,25	10,67	22,14

Figure 3. The validity of differences in self-regulation of EG and CG students after training.

It can be seen that, as well as for the entire learning period, the results of the first test show an increase in all parameters of self-regulation. The intermediate test of the indices in the EG for the t-test for dependent samples revealed significant changes (self-possession indicators rose from 7,3 to 8,64 ; self control - from 15,91 to 16,9; perseverance - from 8,68 to 9,75).

At the initial stage, students face the greatest difficulties in mastering the foreign language; their style of learning activity is being stabilized; students master optimal strategies and methods of learning the foreign language. Self-control is developed at the highest pace. All other previously indicated trends persist. At this stage, the training methodology is adjusted in connection with the revealed dynamics.

At the final stage all trends are stabilized, the overall direction of the changes and their dynamics persist. It was revealed that self-regulation positively correlates with the level of foreign language competencies. Comparative analysis at the beginning of the training did not show statistically significant differences between the experimental and control samples (59,85 – in EG and 64,42 – in CG).

The comparative analysis of the indicators in the experimental sample for the t-test (for dependent samples) revealed significant changes in the proposed indicators at the beginning and end of the training. In the experimental sample, the proportional development of the foreign language competencies with positive dynamics is noted.

The comparative analysis of the indicators of foreign language competencies in the control samples revealed significant shifts in the first test. We measured the result of teaching foreign languages in competencies which form foreign language communicative competency. For the purpose of our research we identified the following competencies: linguistic, sociocultural, sociolinguistic, strategical and discursive. There was no statistically significant dynamics following the results of the second test. Although in the control sample there is also an increase in the indicators of foreign language competencies, the development of indicators for each component is neither stable nor consistent. There is a sharp increase (the first test results – 64,42-70,37), and then the absence of statistically significant changes in the level of foreign competence at the last stage of training (70,37 – 69,29). Despite the general increase of the level of foreign competencies in the control sample, the experimental sample showed higher levels and consistent growth, which is confirmed by a comparative analysis of the indicators presented above (the first test: 59,85 – 69,26; the second test: 69,26-76,76).

It can be seen from the data above that the activation of self-regulation is positively and at a statistically significant level correlated with the growth trend of foreign language competencies. Students continue to develop skills in forecasting, reconstructing language material, developing expectations based on their experience, at the same time due to the high level of development of foreign language competencies, in particular, the linguistic component, students do not need to further develop compensatory skills.

The number of students with a high level of foreign language competencies at the initial stage is 4% higher in the control groups, which indicates an even greater significance of the shifts after training. In EG after training there are 39% more students with high level of foreign language competencies than in the CG. And as for the number of students with low level of foreign language competencies the difference constitutes 34 %.

There is an increase in the level of self-control, perseverance, self possession accompanied by an increase in the level of recognition of lexical units, grammatical, morphological forms, syntactic constructions; their correct use; understanding of meaningful, conceptual, subtextual information; the formation of automatisms in the performance of logical and analytical operations; recognition of socio-cultural elements, sociolinguistic context, their correct use and creative transformation; the formation of the ability of morphological, syntactic reconstruction, structural, semantic, associative forecasting; developing an expectation system.

Thus, the performed diagnostics of students self regulation indicators in the process of studying a foreign language and the results of assessing the formation of foreign competencies through written and oral tests, conversations, and the recording of lessons allowed us to confirm the hypothesis of a

positive correlation between the processes of activating mechanisms of students' self regulation and the development of their foreign language competences.

Self-regulation of students in the process of foreign language acquisition positively correlates with the indicators of learning ability, anxiety, the overall effectiveness of training, the level of creativity in foreign speech. Students with average abilities can successfully master the strategies and tactics of training, develop certain personality traits that allow them to successfully learn, thus, overcoming the lack of knowledge and abilities. Such students can show results equal to the results demonstrated by more capable students, but with a low level of self-regulation.

The level of learning success (quality of learning) grows due to the development of successful self regulation strategies for students with low, average abilities, which explains the difference that can be traced between CG and EG.

Correlation analysis shows that when mechanisms of self-control are activated, the level of learning increases when the student realizes the difficulties inherent in him/her in mastering a foreign language, consciously working on strategies for overcoming them (using techniques that are optimal for his/her individual learning features (repetitive performance of the work already tested, translation in cases where only paraphrase or referencing is required; preparation for a specific task, while others do it without preparation, allocating more time for homework etc.).

Anxiety can act as a positive and negative factor when self regulation is paid specific attention to. Thus, a low level of anxiety does not create prerequisites for identifying problem areas in training and activating one of the components of self-regulation. While increased anxiety during a certain period can contribute to the success of training, although it happens at the expense of energy, time of the student and, ultimately, drains his physical and mental resources. The medium and medium-high levels of anxiety development most optimally affect the development of components of self-regulation.

6. CONCLUDING REMARKS

As a result of our study, we managed to confirm the hypothesis of direct positive correlation between fostering students` self-regulation and developing their foreign language competencies. The study revealed low, medium and high levels of self-regulation, which are manifested in different ways depending on personality of a particular student. Most often there are students with a medium level of development of self-regulation.

Having identical syllabus, training duration, conditions of adaptation to the study of foreign (English) language, undergraduate university students from experimental and control groups show statistically significant difference in their level of foreign language competencies in the post-teaching tests. Control groups also saw an increase in the indicators of foreign language competencies as from the first to the second semester; however, after the second semester during the remaining period of training there are no statistically significant changes. Moreover, the foreign language competencies are

not developed proportionally. There was a statistically significant discrepancy between the formation of all the components of different foreign language competencies in the control groups.

The results of statistical data processing allowed to prove that with the activation of students' self regulation mechanisms, the proportional development of all foreign language competencies is obvious; thereby, creating conditions for a predictable controlled process of development of students` foreign language skills at university. Thus, the diagnostic data confirmed the effectiveness of the implementation of the proposed approach and the practice of developing foreign language competencies based on the activation of students' self-regulation. The findings also propose that targeting learners` self-regulation can provide a more psychometrically solid measure of language learning progress than traditional instruments used in the classroom.

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94

THE DEVELOPMENT OF STUDENTS` SELF-REGULATION AS A MEANS TO FOSTER FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACQUISITION
Chiknaverova, K.   *Encuentro 27,* 2018, ISSN 1989-0796, pp. 80-95

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95

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