# EDUCATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR PERSONALIZED UTONOMOUS LANGUAGE LEARNING INTENSIFICATION AT UNIVERSITIES OF CANADA AND THE USA

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*The paper presents the review of modern educational strategies of personalized learning fostering at universities of Canada and the USA. The development of personalized learning strategies is a complex, multifaceted pedagogical task aimed at implementing strategies for the effective organization of independent self-educational activities for students. Based on scientific literature and educational documentation analysis, it was outlined that portfolios, self-assessment, and self-study centres are considered the most efficient for personalized learning implementation, specifically for foreign language learning. Among the most efficient pedagogical practices, we singled out centres for self-access, self-assessment checklists, peer learning and feedback, pedagogical dialogue. By discourse and content analysis of foreign scientific sources, the specificity of interpretation of concepts "individualization", "personalization", "differentiation" is revealed. The personalized learning strategies are implemented through individualized, self-instructed, self-directed, self-regulated, student-centred, and independent learning. Studying the foreign experience of personalized learning implementation allows outlining the range of interpretations of this concept, analyzing the genesis of the concept of "personalized learning", and determining didactic conditions and approaches to personalization at universities. The primary purpose of personalized learning is to facilitate language learning through personal learning styles, needs and interests. The most effective way of encouraging teachers to implement personalized instructions is to experience personalized learning and share*

*the positive experience with students. It is determined that personalized learning takes into account each student's educational needs, personal goals, and objectives through a specially organized form of teaching that contributes to the development of lifelong learning.*

*Key words: personalized learning, learner autonomy, language learning, self-assessment, interactive assessment.*

*У статті представлений огляд сучасних освітніх стратегій для форму-вання вмінь індивідуалізованого автономного навчання в університетах Канади та США. Розробка навчальних стратегій для автономної індивідуа-лізації – це складне багатогранне педагогічне завдання, яке спрямоване на реалізацію ефективної організації самостійної самоосвітньої діяльності студентів. На основі аналізу літератури та навчальної документації було визначено, що портфоліо, самооцінюваіання та центри самонавчання вважаю-ться найбільш ефективними для реалізації індивідуалізованого навчання, особливо для вивчення іноземних мов. На основі здійсненого аналізу зарубіжних наукових джерел виявлено специфіку трактування зарубіжними дослідниками понять «індивідуалізація», «персоналізація», «диференціація». Дослідження зарубіжного досвіду впровадження індивідуалізації навчання в освітній прос-тір дало можливість окреслити коло трактувань зазначеного поняття, про-аналізувати ґенезу розвитку поняття «індивідуалізація навчання», визначити дидактичні умови та підходи до впровадження індивідуалізації. Встановлено плюралізм підходів до перекладу понять «індивідуалізація навчання» та «нав-чальна автономія», які функціонують у наукових працях зарубіжних дослідни-ків. Визначено, що індивідуалізація полягає в задоволенні особливих освітніх потреб кожного студента шляхом спеціально організованої форми навчання і передбачає повне самоуправління студентами своїм навчанням відповідно до особистої мети й завдань.*

*Ключові слова: індивідуалізоване навчання, навчальна автономія, вивчення іноземної мови, самооцінювання, інтерактивне оцінювання.*

**Introduction.** In today's digitally-oriented society, traditional and centralized learning, implemented through a closed and vocational-oriented curriculum, does not meet all the educational needs of students. Moreover, uniformity of learning does little to help those who want to learn but are forced to adapt to different ways of processing and receiving information and to suggested learning styles, strategies and educational challenges. Therefore, it becomes crucial to determine the didactic framework for developing student educational independence in terms of life-long learning.

The rapid integration of science and technology intensifies the need for a comprehensive long-term perspective assessment of the quality of individualization in the system of higher vocational education. The analysis of the foreign experience shows significant attention to the personalization of the educational process, which is associated with mastering professional competencies and the need to develop such soft skills as autonomous life-long learning.

Nowadays, one of the educational trends is the individualization of learning, which is transformed from a didactic principle into a holistic system that defines the purpose and objectives of each aspect of the learning process. Successful learning activities depend not only on the level of knowledge but also on a set of individual characteristics, aptitudes, interests, and life experiences. Thus, there is a need to adapt the educational process to the learning style of a student. Such transformation determines the nature of the interaction of participants and the reorganization of the educational process. The scholars substantiate the correlation of individual initial style and pedagogical action, which is possible only by introducing a personalized autonomous learning system.

According to Benson and Chik (2010), Bray and McClaskey (2014), and Reich0 (2002), the origin of discussions about the feasibility and sensibility of educational autonomy and learner personalization was initiated during the European political transformations of the 1960s, which declared and supported the development of individual freedom. At that time, new educational concepts emerged, such as adult education (Knowels, 1962), the concept of learner autonomy (Holec, 1981), autonomous learning strategy, independence and interdependence (Little, 2017) within autonomous learning. The views on the development of personalized autonomous learning concept focused on two ideas:

- autonomous learning as a means of non-formal learning following the principles of freedom and respect for the individual in a democratic society;

- autonomous learning as an effective means of mastering the skills of self-education.

Having analyzed the pedagogical research on the problems of learning personalization, we drew attention to specific differences in the understanding and interpretation of the term "personalization". Thus, some researchers consider individual learning through three related concepts: personalization, differentiation and individualization. In order to find out the reason for the discrepancies, we consider it appropriate to consider these concepts in more detail.

According to the definition proposed by American educational practitioners and founders of the online platform for teachers on personalized learning Bray, McClaskey (2014), individualization is a flexible type of learning that can be adapted to the individual educational needs of students. The purpose of learning remains the same for everyone, but students can study the material at different rates, applying different strategies according to their needs and abilities. This approach is also used for students with disabilities. Differentiation is a type of learning focused on individual learning styles. The purpose of learning is also the same for all students, but the methods or approaches to teaching and learning change depending on the psychological and cognitive characteristics of the student group organized by typical learning style. Personalization combines two previous approaches: learning is carried out according to students needs and possibilities, but the goal is personalized and learning content and resources. Personalization is almost impossible to provide within the formal education system. The solution to the problem is possible through the use of digital educational technologies and non-formal learning.

The paper aims to analyze and describe teaching strategies for developing personalized autonomous learning skills and the organization of the process provided at Canadian and American universities.

**Methodology.** This study was descriptive and interpretative. By employing a theoretical framework for the study, we attempt to identify the most relevant and significant research. To reach the goal of the study, some interrelated research methods were used: general-analytical (analysis, synthesis, specification and generalization of theoretical statements, comparison, systematization of sources); specific scientific ( the method of terminological analysis, which made it possible to reveal the essence of the basic concepts of research; analysis of the content, forms and methods). In addition, we applied system-functional analysis to identify the components of the didactic system of foreign language personalized teaching and determine their essential characteristics. Finally, the interpretative nature of the study supports the key idea to review and analyze the educational practices on personalized learning implementation.

**Results and discussion.** The American and Canadian research on learning personalization provides various interpretations and definitions used to define the concept of "learning personalization" or "autonomous learning": individualization, self-directed learning, self-regulated learning, student-centred learning and resource-based learning. These concepts are related to individualization in language learning, but they are not the same. We offer a brief explanation of the definitions of these concepts.

*Individualized learning.* The concept of "individualization" arose in the early 1970s due to the behavioural theory of learning crisis. Dickinson (1995) argues that the concept of "individualization" is neutral regarding who is responsible for learning. According to the scientist, the teacher is involved but does not control the learning process directly. Candy (1991) defines individual learning as a learning process that can be adapted to a particular person, taking into account that individual's psychological and personal characteristics. Individualization reflects an idea that all students are different and that it is appropriate to allow students freedom in choosing the content, pace and learning strategies. However, Dam (2018) considers individualization as an unsatisfactory attempt to organize the learning process. According to him, in practice, individualization tends to be overly focused on materials and resources, and students will not be able to control their learning precisely because of personal characteristics fully. Thus, individualization can be seen as an approach to teaching and learning that considers student differences but remains in control with the teacher.

*Self-instructed learning.* Dickinson (1995) defines self-instructed learning as learning with others or alone without the teacher's direct control. O'Connor et al. (2014) support Dickinson's view and note that a teacher, being a consultant or facilitator, can indirectly make all the critical decisions about what will be studied, how it will be studied and evaluated. However, a teacher lets students choose the way of learning. It implies that in self-instructed learning, a student learns without a direct teacher's influence, so the efficiency can only be achieved in a high level of autonomous learning skills. Learning effectiveness is significantly reduced if a student does not know how to plan or identify personal needs and match them with a learning strategy.

*Self-directed learning*. As defined by Candy (1991), self-directed learning combines two processes: learning that is controlled by students and takes place within formal learning, and self-taught or self-directed learning that takes place in an informal education system. The researcher also identifies two personal attributes associated with self-directed learning: self-management, which is the ability to self-manage learning in a limited context, and personal independence, which is freedom in a broader sense. Little (2015). has a different view and believes that self-directed learning is synonymous with autonomy, as Holec (1981) defined. Little views self-directed learning as strategic and positive traits of the learner who takes responsibility freely and readily (Little, 2015). Considering such learning in terms of motivation and internal orientation to the learning process is close to learner autonomy because it implies self-initiation, goal development, and resource search. Although, a teacher defines the content and tasks types. That is why some researchers do not consider self-directed learning synonymous with autonomy.

*Self-regulated learning*. According to Zimmerman (2001), self-regulation is generated by deciding to achieve a goal. The researcher suggests that self-regulated learning involves regulating three general aspects of learning: active control of material and resources, control and change of motivation and control of various cognitive learning strategies. Therefore, self-regulated learning belongs to students' integrated and constructive process and denotes control over metacognitive, motivational and behavioural actions to achieve the goal in a particular environment. In the context of language learning, Breen and Mann (1997) defined student independence as the ability to assume personal or "self-regulated" responsibility for learning and active participation in the planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of learning.

*Student-centred learning*. Student-centred education is a standard paradigm in the global educational space that combines individualization, self-management, self-learning, autonomy and independence. This approach focuses on three fundamental assumptions of the learner. First, each student is seen as a unique subject of learning. Second, each student has unlimited potential that will unfold under professional management. Finally, every student has an innate wish to develop. The task of the student-centred education system is to reveal and support this desire. The methodlogy focused on this type of teaching encourages teachers to abandon traditional roles as controllers of student learning. However, according to McKean (2014), student-centred education promotes independence while maintaining certain levels and forms of control by the teacher. The main focus is on ensuring that students are actively involved in lesson design, finding sources of information and creating a learning product.

*Independent learning*. A teacher or a student can initiate independent learning. However, independent learning does not necessarily mean that students have made a conscious decision to study. Instead, students simply receive individual assignments and work independently in a formal or informal format. It can be an individual task to create a collaborative educational product that is responsible for their part. A teacher usually offers teaching materials.

Despite the difference in forms and methods of the strategies mentioned above, we could identify their common key idea: to provide students with freedom of choice and equip them with knowledge and skills to make their learning sustainable and

relevant. Having analyzed the research findings on independent learning (Mousavi, 2017; Kristmanson, Lafargue, Culligan, 2013; Johns, Wolking, 2017), we singled out the most successful and efficient ways of personalized learning intensification and realization.

In the USA and Canada, language learning centres with independent access to resources have been established to actualize the personalization and independence of students. From the standpoint of personalization, these centres meet the different educational needs and interests of students. However, they only provide access to training materials and do not teach autonomous learning skills. They are, in fact, a practical tool for achieving the goal of self-study, and their effectiveness is enhanced by working with a teacher or counsellor (Little, 2015). The proliferation of self-access centres in the 1990s was motivated by a complex combination of economic, technological and educational challenges. Self-access centres for learning are parts of language laboratories at universities or colleges and serve as counselling centres that provide advice on learning. It is not an approach to learning but a form of learning that contributes to the personalization of independent learning. Learning resources are grouped by topic and level; consultants help choose the resource and strategy for working with it. They do not control the learning process or outcomes. Thus, students initiate learning, determine needs and goals, perform learning activities themselves. On the one hand, students learn to be responsible and stimulate intrinsic motivation, but on the other hand, there is no planning, monitoring, independent choice of resources and regularity, so learning in self-access centres is not fully autonomous. However, encouraging students to be more autonomous.

Sometimes language learning centres with independent access are criticized for their organization and operation. Thus, Reich (2002) believed that they inhibited the development of students' creativity. Tasks and activities that students perform in language centres of individual self-access offer materials for developing receptive speech skills of listening and reading. The researcher argues that students should be encouraged to perform more interactive and creative tasks to ensure more significant variability in opportunities. For example, involve students in writing reviews and literature reviews, movies, events attended, or planning and conducting a personal event in a foreign language. To do this, you must have the skills of individual learning. Therefore, the researcher provides recommendations for the development of educational materials and the role of teachers in this. Materials should be interactive, one that encourages feedback. Teachers can support students in setting a goal based on an analysis of their needs and in assessing their progress. In order to create a favourable environment in the centres of individual self-access, five principles for the centre's activity have been developed by Dingle and McKenzie (2001), providing a natural choice of learning strategy, materials and means of assessing learning through questionnaires and student surveys; development of a flexible learning scheme that allows students to adjust their action plan according to opportunities and circumstances independently; provide counselling on the analysis of previous experiences or the conversion of negative experiences into productive ones.

Educational practitioners O'Connor, Chrome, Farrar (2014) emphasize the critical role of teaching materials within the self-accessible language learning centre.

According to them, educational materials perform affective and cognitive functions.

The first is to increase students' motivation to learn and turn it into a positive experience, while the second function is implemented by providing access to linguistic information and instructions for completing tasks.

Teaching foreign language communication requires assistance and support from an expert in this field, whose role can be performed by a teacher, a consultant or a native speaker. Without professional-pedagogical assistance, the student's knowledge and skills lack awareness. Counselling services are offered in the centres of individual self-access to education. Dingle and McKenzie (2001) explain the functions of consultants as follows:

- clarification of goals and expectations;
- adjustment of the curriculum to opportunities and previous students' experience;
- identification and analysis of needs;
- encouraging students to evaluate informational resources;
- identification and evaluation of learning strategies;
- planning;
- developing strategies for self-monitoring and evaluating outcomes.

Counsellors perform these functions at the request of students. However, we would like to highlight that the counsellor first assists with the principles and strategies of self-learning and then advises on language issues.

For effective counselling, Cotterall and Crabbe (2008) proposed a problem-solving scheme that counsellors or teachers can apply. As this scheme was suggested for learning a foreign language, counselling can be conducted in a foreign language if students have the appropriate level of knowledge. The scheme consists of several stages:

1. Initial dialogue to identify needs and difficulties.

2. Defining strategies and finding solutions.

3. Creating learning opportunities to encourage students to use the proposed strategies.

4. Observation of students during the tasks.

5. Evaluation of students' learning behaviour in using strategies and providing feedback to correct the choice of strategies.

6. Final pedagogical dialogue to provide advice and predict alternative ways to solve problems that may arise during individual work.

Therefore, we can claim that language counselling in self-access centres helps develop personalized learning skills. In particular, such support is a powerful tool for developing awareness of learning strategies and management of self-study.

The most popular forms of personalized learning implementation at universities are collaborative learning, portfolio, self-evaluation and peer-evaluation. Collaborative learning is a form of learning in small groups focused on creating a learning product or sharing information. Little (2015) claims that interaction is a basis for future personalization. According to him, the involvement of students in interaction with peers to solve problems contributes to the development of individual learning skills because this form of learning involves a specific part of individual tasks and the responsibility of each student for their work in the implementation of a standard educa-

tional product. An interesting learning strategy can be suggested as a task for students, who are good at the material, to teach other students and perform peer learning.

Apart from the educational context, another dimension of the learning process should be considered, such as the traditional and alternative assessment strategies. Self-assessment is an independent judgment of a student about his knowledge or achievements, which usually has a more formative focus to improve the student's awareness of strengths and progress in the learning process. Regarding personalized learning, we define assessment as a reflection of collaborative active learning results, involving both students and teachers in determining the context of learning and assessment criteria. Researchers claim that it is difficult to assess the level of personalized learning skills formation because the process implicates cognitive skills and personal transformations that cannot be assessed. Such assessment means that students and teachers reflect on the experience gained in learning and teaching the language.

In this case, it is necessary to use self-assessment, a didactic and formative process that promotes personalized learning, reveals learning strategies, demonstrates the level of language competence and dynamics of independence.

Whether it is possible to assess the quality of personalized learning is disputable because establishing "standards" of personalized learning leads to the paradox of "forced" independence. Among the most efficient activities for self-assessment skills formation, we consider practices focused on explaining to students the meaning and principles of individualization, identifying prior experience, and developing criteria. Such practices are part of the transformation process essential for the successful implementation of personalized learning. Thus, to create a tool for measuring the level of personalization of language learning, it is necessary to integrate various aspects of the learning process and take into account their relationships, in particular: cognitive and metacognitive dimensions; affective factors and motivation, behavioural cognition styles and their influence on the decision-making process, cooperation and interaction in the social dimension of the educational process.

An ideal model of personalized learning assessment is an effective teaching strategy when students are informed about how they will be assessed and involved in the assessment. This type of assessment is defined as interactive assessment (Hamp-Lyons, Tavares, 2011). It is an assessment system that emphasizes the formal use of possible final assessment by involving students in reflections on their learning during the assessment. Intervention or interaction during assessment stimulates and challenges students to achieve better results than their actual ability. Interactive assessment occurs when the teacher understands the student's needs through guidelines, additional questions, feedback and other forms of interaction to use assessment itself as a learning tool. We perceive interactive assessment as an effective form for the formation of self-assessment skills and critical reflection with further focus on the sustainability of the results of this process.

One of the awarding tools for self-assessment is a portfolio. Analyzing the value and expediency of the language portfolio, it should be noted that, in addition to the development of reflection skills and individual self-study, the tool positively affects students' self-efficacy, which in turn enhances the need for continuous self-development. Bandura (1996), in the theory of self-efficacy, hypothesizes that self-effi-

cacy (i.e. their judgments about the ability to perform specific tasks) is determined by four factors: previous learning positive effect, quality of learning, support and encouragement from others, and physiological reactions (anxiety level). In addition, research on self-efficacy has shown that self-efficacy influences student personal traits, such as task choices, perseverance, effort, and achievement. The portfolio will help address the first two of the four factors perceived as determinants of self-efficacy: students' views on previous effectiveness and quality of learning (Pettis, 2014). Using the portfolio, students can review the results of their previous experience from a more positive view and identify ways to reproduce the positive aspects of this experience. This process can eventually lead to increased self-efficacy, inner motivation and self-regulation. According to Bandura (1996), such an increase in self-efficacy will lead to awareness of the essence of "self-regulation", which affects students' perceived independence and self-motivation.

**Conclusions.** The considered forms and methods of personalized education focus on providing students with the opportunity to take an active part in learning and control the educational process to improve both language competence and individual learning skills. However, analysis of educational practices at Canadian and American universities demonstrates that students need the training to develop their independence in learning. In particular, it seems likely that the development of personalized learning skills depends on how students perceive the essence of such learning and their ability to use metacognitive strategies in the educational task. With this in mind, it is recommended to apply specific pedagogical practices for reflection skills development: portfolio, self-assessment checklists, peer learning and feedback, pedagogical dialogue.

Furthermore, to obtain an integrated result from increasing academic success in the educational component, foreign language in particular, and the formation of personalized learning skills should be synchronously combined with strategies of individual learning and language learning. Therefore, the main requirement for the tasks is the delegation of part of the responsibility from the teacher to the students, starting with the curricula planning and ending with the evaluation of the results. After all, acceptance of responsibility and the right to make decisions in learning are fundamental for the successful implementation of developing individual learning skills (Scharle & Szabo, 2000). It is necessary to take into account the change in the role of the teacher from the one who transfers knowledge to the one who directs and supports. This transformation can be realized if the teacher himself has personalised learning skills, helps establish the values and needs of language learning, and combines strategies for learning the discipline and skills of personalized learning.

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