



## **DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATIONAL SKILLS BASED ON HEUTAGOGY AS A MEANS OF OVERCOMING ACADEMIC STAGNATION IN STUDENTS STUDYING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

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### **Abstract**

Students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) often face the phenomenon of academic stagnation due to various factors, such as low academic engagement, insufficient development of independent learning skills, and a lack of necessary educational competencies. In modern pedagogy, one of the promising approaches to solving this problem is heutagogy – the concept of self-determined learning. This approach is aimed at developing the autonomy of students, the formation of key educational skills and the introduction of reflective practices in the educational process. The article discusses practical strategies for the implementation of heutagogic approaches that contribute to the development of students' educational skills, overcoming academic stagnation and the formation of competencies necessary for lifelong learning.

**Keywords:** Heutagogy, educational skills, English language learners, student autonomy, self-directed learning, metacognition, reflective practice, digital learning, problem-solving, academic engagement.

### **Introduction**

Academic stagnation among students studying English as a foreign language is a common problem in modern educational practice. It is often caused by a lack of learning engagement, low motivation and a lack of effective learning strategies. Many learners find themselves unable to go beyond basic comprehension and language



skills, which over time leads to a decline in academic performance and a weakening of confidence in their own abilities.

Traditional pedagogical models, based mainly on the leading role of the teacher and rote memorization of educational material, are often not able to meet the diverse educational needs of students and form independent learning skills. In contrast, heutagogy, or self-defined learning, is a learner-centered learning paradigm. Within the framework of this model, special attention is paid to the development of autonomy, the formation of learning abilities and the development of reflective practice.

The heutagogic approach assumes that students independently determine educational goals, choose learning resources and evaluate their own progress. Focusing on metacognitive processes and adaptability allows students to identify knowledge gaps, develop effective strategies to fill them, and actively engage with learning content. As a result, learning ceases to be a passive process of assimilation of knowledge, which often leads to academic stagnation.

The modern educational paradigm is increasingly focused not only on the formation of individual competencies, but also on the development of transferable skills, such as problem-solving, critical thinking and the ability to collaborate, which are important for both academic and professional activities. The use of heutagogic strategies in teaching English contributes to maintaining sustainable learning engagement and creating conditions for continuous educational development.

The purpose of this article is to consider the possibilities of applying the heutagogic approach to the development of the educational skills of students learning English, as well as to identify practical mechanisms for strengthening the autonomy of students and their involvement in order to overcome academic stagnation.

### **Theoretical foundations of the study**

Heutagogy, or self-determined learning, is considered as an innovative educational approach aimed at developing the independence of students, the formation of their educational opportunities and the development of reflective thinking. The concept of heutagogy was proposed by S. Hayes and K. Kenyon (2000), who defined it as an educational model in which students actively participate in the formation of their own educational process, independently determining learning goals, choosing tools and evaluating the results achieved.



This approach differs significantly from traditional learning models, since it focuses not only on the formation of competencies, but also on the development of educational capabilities (capability), which contributes to the formation of adaptability and readiness for lifelong learning.

Candy (1991) also emphasizes the importance of independent learning, considering it as a key factor in the development of skills that go beyond the academic environment. According to the researcher, the development of metacognitive awareness and reflective strategies is the basis for the formation of students' independence when performing complex educational tasks.

In the context of teaching English, Clegg (2003) notes that the development of educational opportunities, including problem-solving, decision-making and communication skills, is an important condition for preventing academic stagnation. Students with these skills are able to effectively transfer knowledge to a variety of academic and professional contexts.

Biggs (1996) emphasizes the importance of the principle of constructive alignment, according to which learning outcomes, learning activities and assessment methods should be interrelated. This approach contributes to the formation of sustainable learning engagement, the development of critical thinking and the improvement of educational skills.

Empirical research and international reports also confirm the effectiveness of student-centered approaches. According to UNESCO (2015), the use of interactive learning methods, group work and digital technologies contributes to increasing student motivation and engagement. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2018) in its research emphasizes the importance of individual educational trajectories, feedback systems and reflective practices for the development of student autonomy.

Thus, heutagogy provides a comprehensive theoretical framework for overcoming the academic stagnation of students. The combination of autonomy, metacognitive strategies, collaborative learning, and the integration of digital technologies makes it possible to form key educational skills, maintain learning motivation, and ensure sustainable academic development.



### **Practical aspects of the implementation of hetagogy**

Effective implementation of the hetagogic approach in teaching English requires the use of practical strategies aimed at developing the autonomy of students, their reflective abilities and educational opportunities.

One of the key elements is the development of learning activities focused on the learner. Such tasks provide students with the opportunity to independently determine educational goals, choose educational resources and ways to assess learning outcomes. Students' participation in the planning of the educational process contributes to the formation of responsibility for their own learning, increasing motivation and reducing the manifestations of academic stagnation.

Metacognitive strategies play an important role in this process, which allow students to plan, control and evaluate their own learning activities. For example, students can analyze strategies that help them understand complex texts, effectively complete written assignments, and search for necessary educational resources.

Reflective practice contributes to the development of students' awareness and the formation of adaptive educational strategies. Regular reflection stimulates the active participation of students in the educational process and contributes to the continuous improvement of their educational skills.

Digital technologies play an important role in the implementation of the heutagogic approach, providing flexible and personalized educational trajectories. The use of online language learning platforms, multimedia resources, and collaboration tools allows students to develop reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in a freer, more interactive educational environment. Such technologies also provide prompt feedback and create conditions for interaction between students and teachers.

An additional factor in the development of educational opportunities is project and joint activities. Working in groups contributes to the development of communication skills, intercultural interaction, collective problem-solving and reasoned expression of one's own ideas. These skills are essential for successful academic and professional activities of students.

Structured peer review and self-assessment techniques, such as reflective diaries, portfolios, and study journals, promote the development of metacognitive skills. Analyzing their own work and the work of classmates, students identify strengths and weaknesses, which contributes to the development of self-regulation and educational autonomy.



Problem-oriented learning based on real life situations is also an effective tool. As part of such assignments, students can explore the social issues of their community, prepare presentations, and work in teams. Such activities simultaneously develop language skills, analytical thinking, and problem-solving abilities.

Despite the increasing role of student autonomy, pedagogical support remains important. In the initial stages, the teacher provides instructions, demonstrates models for completing tasks and provides support, gradually reducing the degree of control as students develop independence.

Long-term application of these practices contributes to the formation of transferable skills, such as critical thinking, communication and self-regulation, which can be successfully applied both in academic and professional activities. Focusing on the development of educational opportunities, and not just on the assimilation of content, allows students to overcome academic stagnation and confidently cope with linguistic, cognitive and social challenges.

## **Conclusion**

The hetagogic approach is an effective educational strategy for overcoming the academic stagnation of students studying English as a foreign language. The basis of this approach is the development of student autonomy, reflective practice and educational opportunities.

Student-centered tasks allow students to independently define educational goals, select resources, and measure their own progress, which contributes to the formation of responsibility for learning outcomes and increases learning engagement. Metacognitive strategies, which include planning, monitoring, and reflection, help students identify the strengths and weaknesses of their learning and improve the strategies they use.

The integration of digital technologies and project activities contributes to the development of communication skills, critical thinking and the ability to solve problems together. Methods of mutual assessment and self-assessment strengthen reflective practice and contribute to the formation of self-regulation.

Effective implementation of heutagogic approaches requires professional training of teachers and a gradual transition from pedagogical guidance to independent learning of students. Curriculum developers and educational policies aimed at creating flexible, learning-centered educational environments also play an important role.



In this way, heutagogy helps to overcome the limitations of traditional educational models, which are focused primarily on the reproduction of knowledge, and forms students' skills necessary for lifelong learning. The use of heutagogic strategies allows students to actively participate in the educational process, develop transferable competencies and achieve sustainable academic and professional results.

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