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ORGANIZATIONAL-PEDAGOGICAL CONDITIONS FOR MANAGING STUDENTS' INDEPENDENT LEARNING IN ENGLISH AT NON-PHILOLOGICAL HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS: A THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Independent learning (IL) occupies a central place in English language teaching (ELT) at non-philological higher education institutions, where classroom contact hours allotted to the foreign language are limited and English itself is a secondary, non-core subject. The effective functioning of independent learning in such institutions, however, depends not only on students' individual effort but on a set of organizational-pedagogical conditions that either support or hinder its management as a purposeful educational process. This article aims to identify and theoretically substantiate the organizational-pedagogical conditions necessary for managing students' independent learning in English at non-philological universities. The study is based on a theoretical-analytical method combining a systematic review of international and national pedagogical and educational-management literature with a comparative analysis of the regulatory-legal documents governing independent learning within Uzbekistan's credit-module system. On this basis, four interrelated groups of organizational-pedagogical conditions are identified and substantiated: normative-organizational, resource-methodological, pedagogical-didactic, and psychological-communicative. The analysis shows that the regulatory basis for independent learning in Uzbekistan's higher education system is already well developed, yet its practical, operational translation at the level of individual departments and disciplines — particularly in a non-core subject such as English — remains insufficiently theorized, which limits the extent to which independent learning can be managed as a coherent process rather than an informal extension of classroom instruction. The identified conditions provide a conceptual basis on which department administrators and English language instructors at non-philological institutions can analyze and strengthen the management

of independent learning, and they may also serve as a starting point for developing a corresponding system of measurable indicators in subsequent research.
Keywords
Independent learning, organizational-pedagogical conditions, learning management, English language teaching, non-philological higher education, learner autonomy, credit-module system.

INTRODUCTION

The transition of higher education toward learner-centered and competence-based models has placed increasing importance on students' capacity for independent learning (IL) as one of the key outcomes of university education. This tendency is especially pronounced in foreign language instruction, where communicative competence cannot be fully developed within the limited number of classroom hours alone and therefore depends substantially on learners' activity outside formal instruction. The significance of independent learning is even greater in non-philological (non-linguistic) higher education institutions — technical, agricultural, economic, and other specialized universities — where English is a compulsory but non-core discipline and the share of classroom hours devoted to it is comparatively small relative to core specialty subjects.

In the Republic of Uzbekistan, the importance of independent learning is reinforced by the credit-module system introduced into national higher education practice, under which a defined proportion of the total workload for every discipline, including English, is explicitly allocated to students' independent work (mustaqil ta'lim ishi). This regulatory recognition, however, does not by itself guarantee that independent learning functions as a genuinely managed pedagogical process. In practice, English language departments at non-philological universities often face the task of organizing independent learning without a clearly articulated set of conditions under which such learning can be planned, supported, and evaluated in a systematic way.

The problem addressed in this article can therefore be formulated as follows: despite an established regulatory basis for independent learning within the credit-module system, non-philological higher education institutions lack a sufficiently substantiated, discipline-specific understanding of the organizational-pedagogical conditions required to manage students' independent learning in English effectively, which weakens the practical,

operational link between normative requirements and their implementation at the departmental level.

The purpose of the study is to identify and theoretically substantiate the organizational-pedagogical conditions necessary for the effective management of students' independent learning in English at non-philological higher education institutions.

In accordance with this purpose, the following tasks were set: (1) to analyze theoretical approaches to independent learning, learner autonomy, and organizational-pedagogical conditions in the pedagogical and educational-management literature; (2) to examine the regulatory-legal basis governing independent learning within Uzbekistan's credit-module system and its implications for English language teaching in non-philological institutions; (3) to classify and substantiate the organizational-pedagogical conditions that most directly affect the management of independent learning in this context; and (4) to formulate conclusions relevant to further, empirically oriented research on the subject.

The scientific novelty of the study consists in specifying, for the non-philological ELT context, a discipline-specific system of organizational-pedagogical conditions for managing independent learning, grounded simultaneously in international pedagogical theory and in the regulatory-legal framework of Uzbekistan's higher education system — a combination that has not been systematically addressed in existing research. The practical significance lies in providing department heads and English language instructors at non-philological institutions with a conceptually grounded reference framework that can inform curriculum planning, methodological development, and subsequent empirical or diagnostic work.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The theoretical foundation of independent learning research rests on the concept of self-directed learning, defined by Knowles (1975) as a process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating goals, identifying resources, and evaluating outcomes. This understanding positions the learner as an active agent while implicitly requiring an external structure — resources, guidance, evaluation criteria — within which such initiative can be exercised productively. Zimmerman (1990) extended this line of thought through the concept of

self-regulated learning, emphasizing that learners' ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own study depends on cognitive, motivational, and behavioral components that can themselves be cultivated through appropriate instructional conditions.

Within language education specifically, the concept of learner autonomy, introduced by Holec (1981) and further developed by Little (1991), denotes the learner's capacity to take charge of his or her own learning. This body of theory established the now widely accepted view that autonomous or independent language learning does not develop spontaneously but must be fostered through a deliberate pedagogical process in which the teacher's role shifts from a source of knowledge to a facilitator and manager of learning conditions. Consistent with this, a recent scoping review of learner autonomy in English language teaching confirms that autonomy-supportive practice continues to be understood as a jointly constructed process requiring specific institutional and pedagogical scaffolding rather than as a fixed trait of the learner.

The organizational dimension of independent learning is illuminated by classical quality-management theory. Deming's (1986) conception of quality as an outcome of a well-managed, continuously improved process, together with Juran's (1988) 'quality trilogy' of planning, control, and improvement, provides a general logic that can be transferred to the management of independent learning: for independent study to yield the desired outcomes, its planning, monitoring, and evaluation must be treated as interconnected managerial functions rather than isolated actions. Applied to higher education more broadly, this management logic underlies contemporary approaches to key performance indicators and quality-assurance frameworks used to evaluate educational processes, including, increasingly, students' independent or self-directed learning activity.

A separate strand of research examines independent learning specifically within English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and blended-learning contexts close to those of non-philological universities. Comparative work on blended learning in vocational and specific-purpose English instruction indicates that the effectiveness of independent, technology-supported study depends heavily on the availability of professionally relevant materials and on the degree of structured guidance accompanying such study, rather than

on access to technology alone. Similarly, models of learner autonomy developed for technical English courses demonstrate that autonomy in a non-philological setting is best supported through staged, teacher-facilitated frameworks rather than through an abrupt reduction of instructional guidance.

Within the specific context of Uzbekistan, the regulatory basis for independent learning is established through the credit-module system, under which the workload of every academic discipline — including English as a non-core subject — is divided between classroom instruction and independent work, with the latter's volume and general organizational requirements defined at the level of state documents. National research on the credit-module system similarly emphasizes the centrality of independent, student-oriented learning within this framework, while comparative analyses of higher education quality assurance in Uzbekistan point to the need for more detailed, discipline-level indicators through which such normatively mandated independent learning can be evaluated in practice. International comparison is instructive here: in the German higher education system, where one ECTS credit corresponds to a defined number of hours of total student workload, a substantial share of that workload is formally allocated to Selbststudium (independent study), with dedicated institutional guidance on how such study should be structured and monitored — an explicitness that offers a useful point of reference for non-philological institutions elsewhere.

Taken together, the literature indicates that the effective management of independent learning depends on the interaction of several distinct types of conditions — regulatory, material-methodological, pedagogical, and psychological — yet these types are rarely analyzed together within a single, discipline-specific framework, and even more rarely in relation to English language teaching in a non-philological institutional context. This gap, situated at the intersection of educational-management theory, language-learner autonomy research, and the specific regulatory environment of Uzbekistan's higher education system, is addressed in the present article.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is theoretical-analytical in nature and relies on a combination of methods appropriate to conceptual, literature-based research. A systematic analysis of

international pedagogical and educational-management literature on independent learning, learner autonomy, and organizational-pedagogical conditions in higher education was conducted, together with a comparative analysis of national regulatory-legal documents governing the credit-module system and independent learning requirements in Uzbekistan, including the relevant Presidential decrees, the Law 'On Education,' the Cabinet of Ministers resolution on the credit-module system, and the corresponding state educational standard.

In addition, the study draws on a targeted review of research specifically addressing English language teaching in non-philological and technical-university contexts, as well as on comparative material concerning the German Selbststudium model, in order to identify organizational and pedagogical patterns that recur across different institutional settings. The synthesis of these sources followed the logic of classical management theory — distinguishing conditions relevant to planning and organization from those relevant to implementation and evaluation — which provided the analytical basis for classifying the organizational-pedagogical conditions presented in the following section.

Because the study is theoretical rather than empirical, its conclusions are formulated as a conceptually substantiated framework rather than as statistically validated findings; the framework is intended, among other purposes, to provide the conceptual basis for a subsequent empirical or diagnostic study capable of testing and refining it under actual institutional conditions.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The theoretical and regulatory-legal analysis undertaken above allows the organizational-pedagogical conditions for managing independent learning in ELT at non-philological universities to be grouped into four interrelated categories, presented below.

3.1. Normative-organizational conditions

This group concerns the regulatory and structural basis on which independent learning is organized at the institutional level. In Uzbekistan, this basis is established primarily through the Cabinet of Ministers resolution regulating the credit-module system, which defines the general norms for allocating student workload, including independent work, and through the corresponding state educational standard, which specifies the proportion

of theoretical, practical, and independent components of instruction. For independent learning in English to be effectively managed, these general norms must be translated into discipline-specific operational plans at the department level: a clearly documented place for independent learning within the working syllabus, explicit objectives for each independent-learning unit, and a transparent schedule specifying when and how independent work will be monitored and evaluated.

A further normative condition concerns coordination between departments. Because students at non-philological universities simultaneously face independent-learning requirements in their core specialty subjects, the absence of any coordination mechanism between the English language department and other academic units risks concentrating independent-learning deadlines within the same periods as major specialty assessments, which undermines the practical feasibility of an otherwise well-designed independent-learning plan, regardless of its formal regulatory correctness.

3.2. Resource-methodological conditions

This group reflects the availability and adequacy of materials and methodological support for independent learning. Research on blended and ESP-oriented instruction indicates that the effectiveness of independent language study depends substantially on the availability of professionally relevant materials connected to students' future specialty, rather than on generic general-English content, which tends to be perceived as less motivating in a non-philological context. Related conditions include the availability of self-access resources, whether printed or digital, clear written instructions accompanying each independent task, and model answers or assessment rubrics enabling students to evaluate their own work. Validated self-directed-learning instruments developed in comparable contexts further suggest that resource-methodological conditions are most effective when accompanied by explicit criteria that make the expected standard of independent work visible to students in advance, rather than left implicit.

3.3. Pedagogical-didactic conditions

This group concerns the instructional techniques through which instructors prepare, guide, and support students' independent activity, as distinct from the materials

themselves. Staged models of learner autonomy developed for technical English courses demonstrate that autonomy-oriented independent learning functions most effectively when preceded by explicit in-class preparation — equipping students with the specific strategies required for a given independent task, such as extensive-reading or self-monitoring techniques — rather than being assigned without such preparation. Related conditions include the differentiation of independent tasks according to students' varying proficiency levels within the same group, and the systematic provision of feedback following task completion, which research on self-regulated learning identifies as a central mechanism through which learners refine their own learning strategies over time.

3.4. Psychological-communicative conditions

The final group concerns the interpersonal and motivational climate surrounding independent learning. Learner-autonomy research consistently emphasizes that students' willingness to engage in independent study depends on their perception of its relevance to personally or professionally meaningful goals, as well as on their confidence in approaching the instructor for clarification outside scheduled class time. In a non-philological context, where English is not the students' primary field of interest, the perceived professional relevance of independent tasks — for instance, their connection to future specialty-related communication — appears particularly important in sustaining engagement. Psychological-communicative conditions are, therefore, no less consequential for the effective management of independent learning than the normative, resource-based, or didactic conditions discussed above, even though they are less directly amenable to regulatory prescription.

3.5. Discussion

The analysis presented above indicates that Uzbekistan's regulatory-legal framework already provides a solid normative foundation for independent learning through the credit-module system, yet this foundation operates primarily at the level of general workload allocation rather than discipline-specific pedagogical organization. For a non-core, skills-based discipline such as English, this gap between normative provision and operational, classroom-level implementation appears particularly significant, since language competence develops incrementally and depends on the sustained, well-

supported practice that only a properly managed system of independent learning can provide.

The four groups of conditions identified in this article — normative-organizational, resource-methodological, pedagogical-didactic, and psychological-communicative — are consistent with, and extend, established theoretical positions in learner-autonomy and self-regulated-learning research by situating them within the specific institutional and regulatory environment of a non-philological university in Uzbekistan. This contextualization addresses a gap noted in the literature review: while learner-autonomy theory offers a strong general account of the pedagogical conditions required for independent learning, it rarely engages with the concrete regulatory instruments — such as credit-module resolutions or state educational standards — that structure independent learning in specific national systems, and comparative material on quality assurance in Uzbekistan's higher education, in turn, seldom descends to the level of individual, non-core disciplines such as English.

The theoretical character of the present study constitutes both its principal contribution and its main limitation. On one hand, grounding the proposed conditions in an integrated reading of international pedagogical theory and national regulatory documents allows the framework to be immediately relevant to the actual institutional environment in which non-philological universities operate. On the other hand, the framework has not yet been tested empirically, and the relative importance of each condition — or each group of conditions — for actual language-learning outcomes remains to be established through subsequent diagnostic or quantitative research, for example through instruments such as validated self-directed-learning readiness scales adapted to the non-philological ELT context.

CONCLUSION

This article has examined the organizational-pedagogical conditions required for the effective management of students' independent learning in English at non-philological higher education institutions, combining an analysis of international pedagogical and educational-management theory with a review of the regulatory-legal framework governing independent learning within Uzbekistan's credit-module system. On this basis,

four interrelated groups of conditions were identified and substantiated — normative-organizational, resource-methodological, pedagogical-didactic, and psychological-communicative — each of which was shown to contribute, in a distinct way, to whether independent learning functions as a genuinely managed educational process or as an informally supported extension of classroom instruction.

The proposed framework demonstrates that the existing regulatory basis for independent learning in Uzbekistan, while sound at the general level, requires further operational specification at the level of individual, non-core disciplines such as English if it is to be translated into consistent departmental practice. The framework formulated here can serve as a conceptual reference point for English language departments at non-philological universities seeking to review and strengthen their own organization of independent learning.

Further research should focus on the empirical verification of the proposed framework, including the development of measurable indicators corresponding to each group of conditions and their diagnostic application across a range of non-philological institutions, in order to establish which conditions exert the greatest influence on students' actual independent-learning outcomes in English.

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