ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND STUDENT AUTONOMY AS FACTORS FOR IMPROVING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROGRAMME (ESP) IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract: This article analyzes current trends in teaching English for Professional Purposes (ESP) in the context of reduced classroom hours and the transformation of the higher education educational environment. It examines the methodological challenges of implementing traditional teaching models, the concept of student learning autonomy, and the role of artificial intelligence technologies in building individual educational trajectories. Based on the results of an empirical study, it analyzes student attitudes toward the use of AI in learning, its impact on motivation, academic performance, and learning effectiveness.

Key words: ESP, learning autonomy, artificial intelligence, individualized learning, higher education.

The modern higher education system is characterized by significant changes affecting both the structure of curricula and the methods of organizing the educational process. One of the most noticeable trends in recent years has been the reduction in the number of classroom hours for English. This is largely due to the fact that a significant portion of applicants to universities already possess a

confirmed level of foreign language proficiency (B1–B2), which formally reduces the need for extensive general English study. However, this does not mean a reduction in learning outcomes, especially in the context of students' professional training.

Unlike a general foreign language course, teaching professional English (English for Specific Purposes, ESP) is focused on developing students' ability to effectively use the language in specific professional and academic situations. This involves mastering specialized terminology, skills in working with professional texts, the ability to participate in business and academic communication, and the development of written language in genres specific to their future professional activities. Implementing these tasks within a limited number of classroom hours significantly complicates the teacher's work. As A. N. Oveshkova (2018) notes, the traditional Presentation-Practice-Production (PPP) methodological model, widely used in foreign language teaching, involves the sequential introduction of new material, its reinforcement through controlled exercises, and subsequent free use in speech. However, in the context of ESP and reduced classroom time, this model is often implemented fragmentarily, which negatively impacts the quality of language skill development. Teachers are forced to either shorten the productive language use phase or transfer a significant portion of the learning process outside the classroom.

An additional factor influencing learning effectiveness is the changing characteristics of the modern student. New-generation learners possess a high level of digital literacy, access to diverse information sources, and a pronounced need for personalization of the learning process. They are less focused on passive acquisition of knowledge and expect active participation in learning, the ability to independently choose the pace, format, and content of learning activities. Under

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these conditions, the traditional role of the teacher as the primary source of knowledge is losing its relevance. In response to these challenges, pedagogical science is increasingly focusing on the concept of learner autonomy. According to D. Little, autonomy is a learner's ability to take responsibility for their own learning, including setting goals, choosing strategies, and evaluating results. A. Holek emphasizes that autonomy is not an innate quality, but is formed during the learning process with appropriate pedagogical support. Thus, the development of autonomy requires a purposeful organization of the learning environment and a change in the nature of interactions between teacher and student.

It should be noted that learning autonomy does not mean abandoning the role of the teacher. On the contrary, the pedagogical partnership described by D. Little presupposes the active participation of the teacher as a mentor and facilitator. The teacher helps students master effective learning strategies, develops reflective skills, monitors the learning process, and provides methodological support. This role is especially significant in the context of ESP teaching, where students require assistance in navigating professionally oriented language material. In the context of the digital transformation of education, artificial intelligence technologies are becoming an important tool for supporting academic autonomy. The use of AI enables a transition from standardized educational models to personalized ones focused on the individual needs and capabilities of students.

In the context of the digital transformation of education, artificial intelligence technologies are becoming an important tool for supporting student autonomy. The use of AI enables a shift from standardized educational models to personalized ones focused on the individual needs and capabilities of students. According to modern research, the use of AI in education increases learning efficiency by 30–35%

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through the automation of routine processes, adaptation of educational content, and provision of personalized feedback.

A key advantage of AI in ESP teaching is its ability to analyze large volumes of data, including current and final academic performance, the nature of typical errors, the pace of learning, and student learning preferences. Based on this analysis, AI systems can generate personalized recommendations, offer additional assignments, adapt the difficulty of materials, and support students in independent work. This is especially important in conditions of limited classroom time.

The practical implementation of AI in the educational process confirms its potential. For example, as part of the Personal Adaptive Tutor project at the University of Arizona, an AI system is used to create individualized curricula. An analysis of the results revealed a 15% increase in student academic performance and a 12% decrease in dropout rates. (Kuzmin N.N, & Irina Nikolaevna Glazunova I.N. 2024) These findings demonstrate the high effectiveness of AI as a tool for personalizing learning.

An empirical study conducted among students also confirms the high level of AI integration into educational practice. According to the data obtained, 95.6% of respondents use AI in their learning activities. The most common tools are virtual assistants (88.2%) and AI-focused educational platforms (42.4%). (Vieriu AM, Petrea G. 2005) Most students use these technologies regularly, demonstrating their sustained engagement in the educational process.

An analysis of student attitudes toward the use of AI revealed that 80% of respondents rated its impact on learning as positive, noting time savings, easier access to information, and the ability to personalize learning. Furthermore, 82.4% of students believe that AI contributes to improving academic performance. At the same time, certain concerns were identified related to the risk of receiving inaccurate information, a decline in critical thinking, and the development of excessive dependence on technology. (Vieriu AM, Petrea G. 2005)

These results demonstrate the need for a balanced and methodologically sound approach to the use of AI in the educational process. The integration of AI should be accompanied by the development of students' skills for critically evaluating information, consciously using digital tools, and responsibility for their own learning outcomes. In this context, the role of the teacher as a facilitator and mentor remains crucial.

Thus, the combination of the concept of academic autonomy and artificial intelligence technologies represents a promising direction for the development of professional English language teaching in universities. This approach helps compensate for the shortage of classroom time, enhance student motivation, and create the conditions for developing sustainable professional and communicative competencies essential in today's labor market.

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