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DOI: [10.15293/2658-6762.1902.09](https://doi.org/10.15293/2658-6762.1902.09)

УДК 378.2

## ОСНОВНЫЕ ФАКТОРЫ ФОРМИРОВАНИЯ УЧЕБНОЙ АВТОНОМИИ В СОВРЕМЕННОМ ИНОЯЗЫЧНОМ ОБРАЗОВАНИИ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ КАЗАХСТАНА)

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**Проблема и цель.** Модернизация системы образования Казахстана, непрерывность образования и личностно-ориентированная программа, детерминирующие развитие современного высшего образования, актуализировали проблему подготовки специалистов, способных к учебной автономии, обладающих навыками самостоятельной работы. Цель исследования – определить основные факторы формирования учебной автономии в современном иноязычном образовании.

**Методология.** Для проведения исследования использовался количественный метод. Для определения исходного состояния сформированности учебной автономии у студентов было разработано специальное анкетирование, которое включало вопросы как открытого, так и закрытого типов. В анкетировании, которое было добровольным и анонимным, приняли участие студенты заочной формы обучения. Задача опроса – выявить, обладают ли студенты качествами и навыками, присущими автономии. Если нет, то какие факторы препятствуют этому? Как взаимодействуют преподаватель и студент в условиях автономности и цифровизации учебного процесса? Насколько эффективно используют современные студенты технологии Web 2.0 в своем профессиональном обучении?

**Результаты.** Авторами были определены навыки и умения, характерные для учебной автономии. В ходе анализа результатов проведенного анкетирования авторы констатировали низкий уровень сформированности учебной автономии у студентов заочной формы обучения. Выявлены факторы, препятствующие формированию учебной автономии: доминантная позиция преподавателя, недостаточно эффективное использование информационно-коммуникационных технологий, слабое взаимодействие преподавателей и студентов. Авторами обобщены организационно-педагогические мероприятия, реализация которых повлияет на эффективность

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формирования учебной автономии. К ним относятся: разработка онлайн-курсов; включение их в качестве обязательного компонента в учебный план; качественное методическое сопровождение курса преподавателем; стимулирование студентов к использованию информационно-коммуникационных технологий в качестве продуцента.

**Заключение.** Обобщаются следующие факторы формирования учебной автономии в современном иноязычном образовании: студентоцентрированное обучение; внедрение инновационных методик обучения и оценивания; предоставление студентам возможностей для взаимодействия, творческой активности, личностного саморазвития и проявления ответственности.

**Ключевые слова:** система высшего образования; форма обучения; учебная автономия; личностно-ориентированный подход; взаимодействие; стратегии обучения; информационно-коммуникационные технологии; сервисные ресурсы Web 2.0.

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DOI: [10.15293/2658-6762.1902.09](https://doi.org/10.15293/2658-6762.1902.09)

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## Basic factors of developing learner autonomy in foreign language education (with the main focus on Kazakhstan)

### Abstract

**Introduction.** *The modernization of the education system in Kazakhstan, the continuity of education and the personality-oriented approach, determining the development of modern higher education system, have actualized the problem of training specialists capable of learner autonomy and having the skills required for independent work. The purpose of the research is to reveal the basic factors of developing learner autonomy in the modern foreign language education.*

**Materials and Methods.** *This study employed a quantitative research method. In order to identify the initial state of learner autonomy a special questionnaire was developed. It included questions of open and closed types. The voluntary and anonymous survey was conducted among part-time undergraduate students. The main goal of the survey was to identify the following: whether students possess qualities and skills required for independent work; factors hindering autonomous learning; characteristics of student-teacher interaction in terms of autonomy and digitalization of the educational process; and effectiveness of using modern Web 2.0 technologies in graduate studies.*



**Results.** *The authors have identified skills and abilities characteristic for academic autonomy.*

*The findings show the low level of learner autonomy among part-time undergraduate students. The study have identified the following factors hindering the development of learner autonomy: teacher-centered approach, insufficiently effective use of information and communication technologies, and weak student-teacher interaction. The authors have summarized organizational and teaching measures fostering the development of learner autonomy. They include compulsory online courses; high-quality methodological support and guidance of the course; and encouraging students to use information and communication technologies as a 'producer'.*

**Conclusions.** *The following factors of learner autonomy are summarized in modern foreign language education: student-centered learning; innovative methods of teaching and assessment; opportunities for interaction, creative activities, personal development and taking responsibility.*

### **Keywords**

*Higher education system; Form of education; Learner autonomy; Personal-orientated method; Interaction; Training strategies; Information and communication technologies; Web 2.0 service resources.*

### **Introduction**

The endeavours of Kazakhstan to modernize the education system and to increase the competitiveness of specialists in order to integrate into the world community are designed to solve many existing issues and problems. One of the key issues related to the study and teaching of foreign languages is the problem of learner autonomy. This problem has been intensively studied for more than three decades in the West, meanwhile in Kazakhstan there is almost no research in this sphere.

The postulate of the rapidly changing modern world is the paradigm of "education through life", the ability of a modern person to "learn", the readiness for self-education are the key to his success. Consequently, in the system of higher education, the principle of learner autonomy is becoming more relevant when it comes to training a specialist who can critically think and act consciously<sup>1</sup>.

The modern higher education system in many countries is a different form of education, for example, extramural form of study or a combination of learning with e-learning support.

Extramural form of study, which currently still exists in Kazakhstan, can be defined as a combined form of education, as it includes both virtual and contact lessons.

The extramural form of study assumes that students must be able to work autonomously, most of the information and educational material must be mastered by students. However, we live in the age of informatization, digital technologies, and therefore unique opportunities, when access to the Internet and the ability to handle digital technologies provide an opportunity for independent learning and self-education, while modern students are the generation that knows how to handle digital gadgets and freely oriented in the spaces of the Internet.

Do these skills help them in mastering their future profession, how effective are modern students generally using Web 2.0 technologies in their professional training? The key concept of our research is learner autonomy, as one of the tenets of the modern education system.

<sup>1</sup> Martos J., Tassinari M. G. Einleitung in den thematischen Teil. *Jahrbuch Deutsch als Fremdsprache. Intercultural*

*German Studies.* München, Iudicium Verlag Publ., 2014, pp. 105–116 (in German)



The concept of “learner autonomy” was introduced by Henri Holec<sup>2</sup>. If, in the understanding of Holec, learner autonomy is focused on competences, then Little emphasizes the psychological aspect of learner autonomy<sup>3</sup>.

Benson distinguishes the technical, psychological and political aspects of learner autonomy: the technical aspect assumes that the training does not take place within the framework of an educational institution, today computerization is particularly conducive to such training, enhancing the effectiveness of autonomous learning<sup>4</sup>.

What learner autonomy is, what strategies and approaches to its formation exist are still remained as the main issues that scientists from different countries research. In detail, we would like to study the articles in which the perspective and presentation of the problem of academic autonomy that is similar to the situation in Kazakhstan.

Nenden Sri Lengkanawati explores the perception by Indonesian teachers of the importance of learner autonomy for professional development. According to the author, the autonomy of students in Indonesian educational institutions is usually not mentioned as an educational goal, and most teachers are hardly familiar with the learner autonomy of students [1]. In the formation of learner autonomy, an important factor is the interaction of the student and the teacher, the role of the teacher in this context, especially relevant in such communities where the teacher takes a dominant position, and the main condition for the formation of learner autonomy is to create an educational environment in which the teacher refuses dominance from the position aimed at himself, his function is that he

shares his experience, provides the necessary information and educational material [2].

Musarat Yasmin and Ayesha Sohail highlight the following most common and significant factors hindering the autonomy of Pakistani students: the authoritative attitude of teachers, intolerance to the student’s creative potential and intelligence, student’s dependence on the teacher, shyness in interaction with the opposite sex and teacher bias [3].

According to Priyatno Ardi, the implementation of the concept of autonomy is a difficult task for EFL teachers in Indonesia, mainly because of the three existing cultural and philosophical values in society: 1) the *manut-lan-miturut* (to agree and obey), 2) the *ewuh-pekewuh* (uncomfortable and uneasy) philosophy, 3) the *sabdapenditaratu* (the words of a priestly king) philosophy. Most students consequently accept their teachers as an authority figure they should follow and obey. They will feel uncomfortable to challenge the authority of teacher as what the teacher says is the ultimate truth [4].

In this context, of great interest is the study of Ernst Apeltauer & Anastasia Senyildiz, which also emphasizes the cultural conditioning of learner autonomy. In the course of their study, the authors had interviewed Turkish students on the subject of students knowing the concept of “learner autonomy”. Referring to the Wolff, the authors note that the seminars focus on such types of work as group or project work that contribute to the formation of learner autonomy. At the same time, the authors consider it important to mention the fact that the Turkish educational system is dominated by the form of work that focuses on the central, leading role of the teacher; great importance is attached to learning the material.

<sup>2</sup> Holec H. *Learner Autonomy*. Strasbourg, Council of Europe Publ., 1980, 53 p.

<sup>3</sup> Little D. *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin, Authentik Publ., 1991.

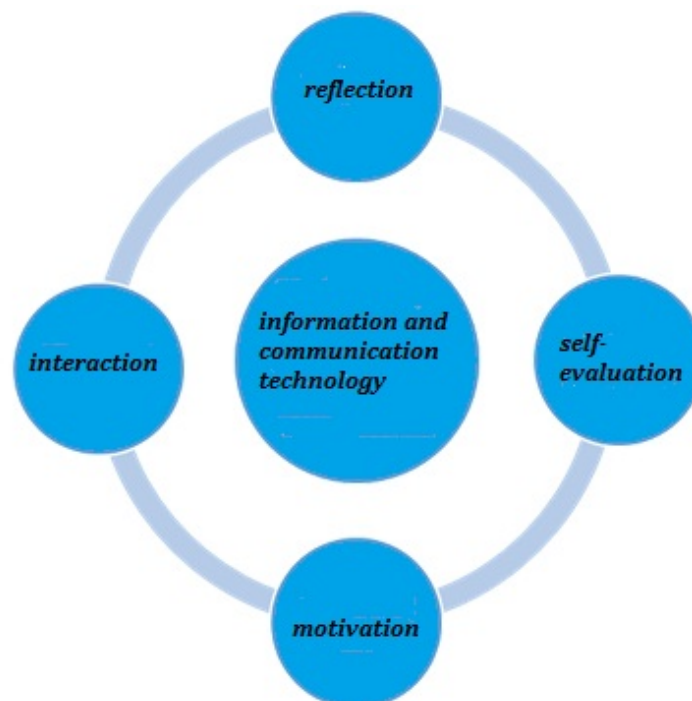
<sup>4</sup> Benson Ph., Voller P. *Autonomy & independence in language learning*. New York, Longman Publ., 1997, 270 p.

The authors note that, on the one hand, the results of the survey were expected, the students' vision largely depends on the existing forms and methods of teaching, i.e. students are more oriented towards traditional forms of education; for Turkish students, learner autonomy is not an important factor in education, which is explained by the features of the education system, existing traditions in the education system, as well as cultural values and norms of Turkish society [5].

In the view of Steve T. Fukuda, Hiroshi Sakata, Mitsue Takeuchi the traditionally taught students with information being passed down from the teacher who decides the goals for each class and the entire course is still the most influential fashion of learning in Japan. After years of this fashion of learning, many students are dependent on their teachers in their learning. As a result, it is hard for students to be effective autonomous learners from the out-set [6].

The studies presented in these articles and their results are interesting to us, because we see the similarity with the situation that has developed in the educational system of Kazakhstan. We must give credit where credit is due, in official documents the emphasis is on the personality-oriented training program for specialists, in Kazakhstani universities students are given the opportunity to build the learning path themselves, however, as practice shows, the form of teaching prevails, in which due to both the mentality and traditions that have developed over many decades.

What strategies do exist for the development and formation of learner autonomy? What characterizes an autonomous student? The model of learner autonomy, which is a chain of interrelated processes, is presented in the figure 1.



*Fig. 1. Learning autonomy model*

In the formation of learner autonomy, digital technologies play a special role, since they represent a more active and potentially changing

paradigm of the environment for creating and sharing knowledge, contribute to the proper

organization and effectiveness of learner autonomy.

The integration of Web 2.0 resources into the educational process, the appropriateness of their use in foreign languages teaching is one of the most widely studied topics in foreign linguodidactics [7-9]. As the researchers note, Web 2.0 resources usage is an exchange of information, improving communication not only between the lecturer and students, but also between students, a good start for using student collective intelligence, developing critical thinking [10-11].

With the introduction of the ICTs in education, over the years many changes of extreme importance have taken place; before the teacher was the key figure for the student, starting from a rigid hierarchical teacher-student model to one now in which the contribution of all participants, teacher and students is valued. Every individual with his personal characteristics tends more and more to construct a personal learning environment which interacts with an ever growing number of technologies and social networks [12].

The authors have noted that some studies devoted to learner autonomy and information and communication technologies concern the use of technology contributing to the formation of students' autonomy and giving them access to resources and the opportunity to work at times and in places of their choice. On the other hand, increased flexibility on the part of teachers, as well as openness to the life of students, their technology and literacy practices, and the willingness to give up control like never before are in acute need [13].

According to Anna Turula digitalization and Web 2.0 tools have changed the nature of autonomous learning in general and, in particular, the nature of self-learning education [14], the use of digital technologies motivates students

regardless of their psychological characteristics [15-16].

In their study, the authors emphasize that the types of tasks and the use of digital tools contributed to student autonomy in different ways. Structured tasks allowed students to work independently on content creation, while open tasks allowed them more freedom to explore an understanding of a particular topic through social interaction [17]. The use of Internet tools for self-assessment and feedback stimulate self-study in a ubiquitous learning environment [18]. However, in order to use the potential of Web 2.0 resources effectively without the support of teachers, Nishioka Hiromi has identified factors hindering the integration of Web 2.0 into the learning process, and his findings also suggested that learners' insufficient knowledge of websites and applications, the absence of Japanese acquaintances offline, and low confidence to interact with Japanese native speakers inhibited the Korean language learners' interactions with Japanese speakers online beyond the classroom [19].

The role of new technologies and changing pedagogy is to promote more effective two-way communication, interaction and collaboration, sharing and participation, i.e. students of distance learning should not be isolated, "autonomous" [20]. In this context, it is implied that the "autonomy" of the student should not mean that he does not interact with other participants in the educational process, complete isolation can demotivate the student, and therefore, the learning process should be based on the principle of teacher – student, teacher – student – student, student – student.

Learner autonomy can be successful only if the student has a clear idea of what specific steps are required to achieve the goal, this applies both to mastering a particular topic, and the ultimate goal of training. Here the role of the teacher who



helps the students in organizing the training is indispensable, who, like the student, should reflect on the strategies and methods of achieving the goals of teaching [21].

### Materials and methods

To determine the initial state of development of learner autonomy among students of correspondence courses, we have used a quantitative method. We have developed a questionnaire, which included open-ended questions, the answers to which are given in free form; closed, representing alternative questions (one answer is chosen) and non-alternative questions (it is possible to choose several answers). By answering questions with *yes or no* options, the answer “*yes*” should have been given a detailed answer, because without clarification and without additional information, the answer will not reflect the true state of affairs. The survey involved 145 students; the survey was conducted on a voluntary and anonymous basis.

### Results

For 52% of surveyed students, *academic achievement* is the ability to work independently with study materials; 38% understand this as the ability to assess their strengths and weaknesses in learning. Only 10% of respondents noted a “*different*”, and for them academic achievements, these are the results of personal development; movement towards the goal; see what you learned, what you need to work on. None of the 145 students surveyed considers *good grades* to be academic achievements, this suggests that students do not relate the obtained grades to their real knowledge, their grades do not reflect the knowledge and skills they have acquired objectively, and as we see, students relate critically.

The next question in the survey is “Are you satisfied with your academic achievements?”

72% of the surveyed students have answered *yes* rather than *no*, 14% answered *yes*, 12% - *no*, rather than *yes*, 2% replied - that it is difficult to answer.

“*Who and what do your achievements depend on?*” 87% of respondents answered that their academic achievements depend on both the teacher and the student; 23% believe that it depends on them. As can be seen from the answers, most students place the responsibility on both the teacher and themselves.

One of the characteristics of an autonomous student is his or her ability to reflect [22-23], the ability to determine his strengths and weaknesses in achieving his goals. 34% of respondents answered this question with “*yes*”, but they did not provide a full and detailed answer, so we believe that students are not able to determine what is most difficult or just difficult for them, what they should pay attention to in their studies. The remaining 76% gave a more or less detailed answer, most of the students say that *English grammar is easy for me, I do written exercises in English well, it's difficult to speak; the grammar of any language is easily than other aspects of language learning, such as speaking, listening; listening comprehension causes certain difficulties; the grammar of a foreign language is easier for me than speaking in this language; the grammar of languages is easy for me, listening and speaking are difficult for me.*

Some students focus on listening, for example, they watch videos of German, English and American bloggers, listen to the radio in these languages. Some use the studied grammar and vocabulary in speech, for example, by doing something they pronounce all their actions out loud in these languages, they learn poems in these languages.



For many students, learning a second language is not very easy due to lack of time and the lack of an initial base. Comparing basic (English) and second (German) languages, students focus again on grammar, for example, *As for English, I already know that I also need to improve, for example, I need to expand my vocabulary. As for the German language there is much more work here. Grammar is more complicated and, therefore, I need to study more; English grammar is much easier than German grammar; German grammar is not easy for me.*

In addition, students note that they have difficulty in speaking: *I do not have enough vocabulary to express my thoughts; I need to expand vocabulary; I need to talk more.*

Analyzing these answers, we can assume that in the classroom more attention is paid to the study of grammar, students mostly perform written tasks, namely, perform grammatical exercises in writing. And such comments as *I am responsible and hardworking, so all that relates to the written form of tasks - I succeed well; however, in class I do not always keep up with the teacher*, rather indicate a grammar-translation method of teaching.

One of the most effective ways to form critical thinking is the ability to evaluate, only 12% of respondents indicated that they *often* evaluate the work of others, 15% *sometimes* and 73% of the respondents *never* evaluate other students in the classroom

As mentioned above, for effective learner autonomy, the introduction and use of information and communication technologies is an indisputable issue. To the question: *“How do you feel about the use of information and communication technologies in education?”* 67% of respondents gave a positive answer, 29% consider this to be a requirement of time, and only 4% were neutral. What is the situation with

Internet access in Kazakhstan? 93% of respondents said that they have both mobile Internet and WI –FI at home. 7% of respondents have access to the Internet only through the mobile Internet. All respondents also indicated that they have access to the Internet at the university, that is, the university provides them with this opportunity. As we can see, technically and economically nothing prevents university students from using the Internet in their studies, they have the opportunity to use the Internet both at home and at the university during contact classes. An equal number of students use digital educational resources in their studies *always* and accordingly *sometimes* – 60%; 22% of respondents *rarely* use digital educational resources, and 18% of respondents do not use digital educational resources in their education. Under digital educational resources, they meant online textbooks, online dictionaries / reference books, online platforms, online courses. The data obtained is quite understandable, since correspondence studies imply that most of the educational material is mastered by the students themselves, respectively; digital educational resources are an integral part of the training. It turns out that a certain part of the students is focused on learning the material received during contact classes.

So, students have access to the Internet, have a positive attitude to the use of information and communication technologies in education, and therefore the question arises, *“do they have the skills to work with service programs?”* All respondents, without exception, can work in Word, create presentations in PowerPoint. In Excel and Photoshop, 67% and respectively 38% of respondents work, but with other service programs things are worse, for example, only 13% have Wiki skills, 11% of respondents know how to work with Quizlet or know how to create a web site and everything only 4% of respondents

have the skills to create podcasts, and none of the respondents have any experience of posting their content on the Internet (Fig. 2).

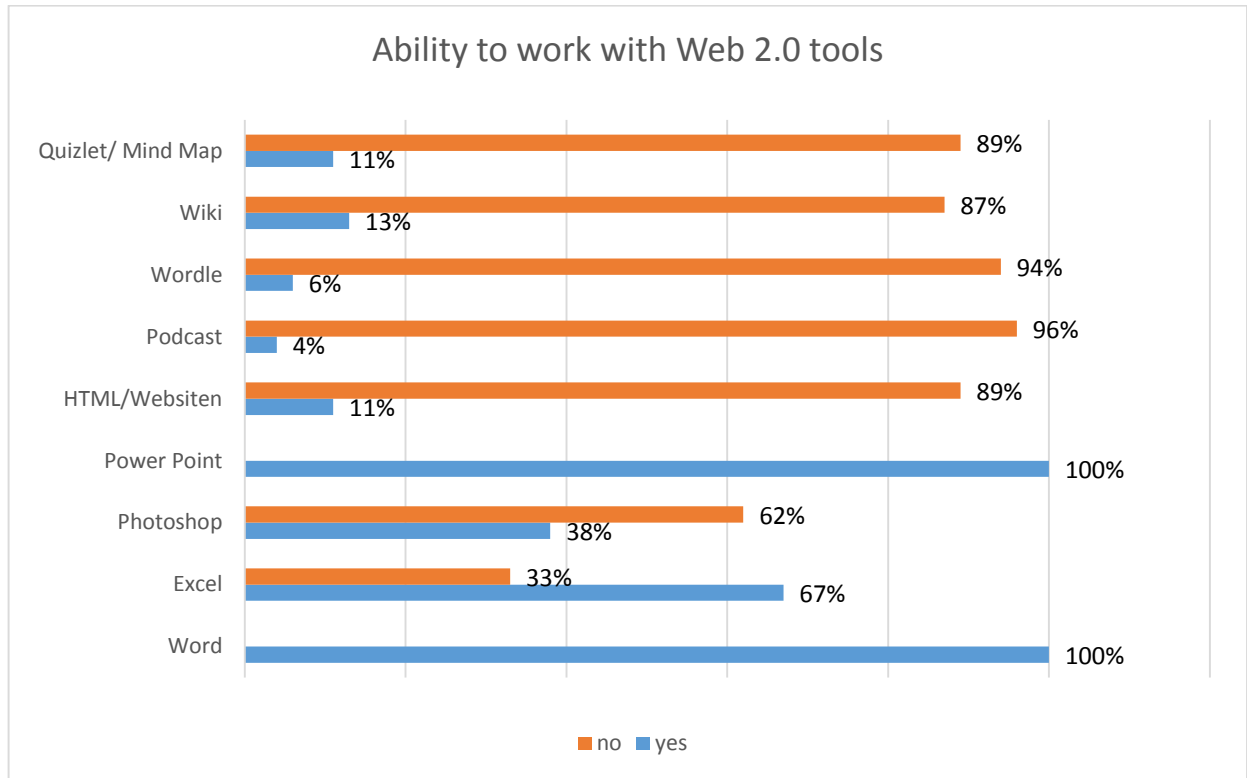


Fig. 2. Ability to work with Web 2.0 tools

As the analysis shows, students have only basic skills in working with service programs, use the Internet and information and communication technologies at the level of a simple user. Here we assume that students cannot and do not use Internet services effectively, this is explained on the one hand by a lack of motivation, on the other hand by a lack of adequate support from teachers.

*What are the Web 2.0 service programs used in virtual and contact classes in a foreign*

*language?* As we see in Figure 3, YouTube and Wiki are always used in virtual and contact classes, and considering the previous data, we can state that Wiki and YouTube are used only as a source of information. Sometimes such programs as Wordle and Podcast are used, rarely - Facebook, Quizlet, Moviemaker, Skype. On virtual and contact classes never used Twitter and VK.

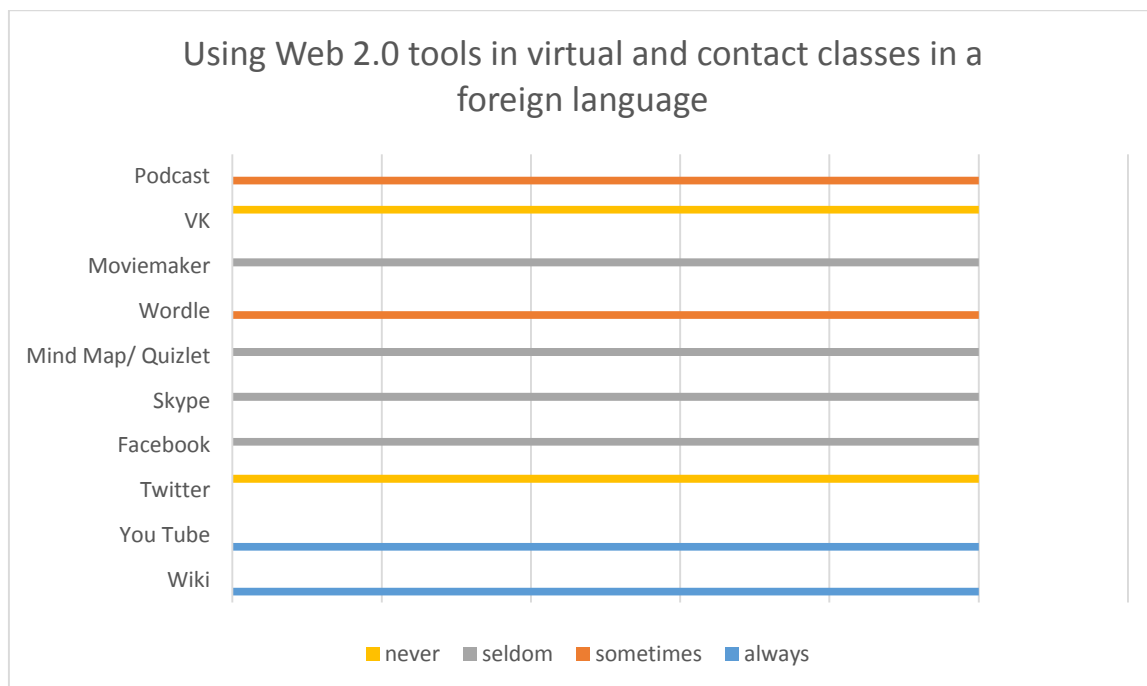


Fig. 3. Using Web 2.0 tools in virtual and contact classes in a foreign language

The use of authentic materials stimulates reading, respectively, autonomous work on vocabulary [24], there are many applications with which you can assimilate and memorize any material [25] by asking the question: “*How do you work with vocabulary? How do you memorize new words?*” We pursued the goal of finding out whether our students are using Web 2.0 service resources when working with vocabulary. 41% of respondents write new words and make sentences with them, 22% memorize them, 20% make cards with them, 11% make cards on Quizlet, and only 6% make thematic series in Wordle. As the analysis shows, when working with vocabulary, our students do not fully use the capabilities of the Web 2.0 service resources.

The formation of communicative and informational competencies is facilitated by the ability to understand foreign language speaking by ear, and to the question “*How do you develop listening skills?*” 34% of respondents independently answered that they listen to podcasts in a foreign language; 22% listen to podcasts in a foreign language and perform tasks for them, 15% listen to songs in a foreign language, 13% watch educational or feature films in a foreign

language, 15% watch news channels in a foreign language. All respondents noted that although listening and it is an obligatory part of tasks that they perform both in virtual and in contact classes; listening is not given enough attention.

There are many Web 2.0 service programs that contribute to the development of writing skills in a foreign language, these are primarily social networks and blogs that provide the ability to publish reviews / comments; Wiki / wiki is a program that does not require special multimedia competencies. To the question Do you publish reviews or comments in a foreign language on social networks? 87% of respondents answered negatively, 8% of respondents rarely write reviews and comments in a foreign language, 5% sometimes leave reviews in a foreign language. The analysis shows that although students are active participants in social networks, they do not use social networks for educational purposes.

### Conclusions

Therefore, basic factors of learner autonomy in modern foreign language education



are student-centered learning; introduction of innovational methods of learning and evaluation, giving the opportunities to students for interaction as with teachers and as with other students, creative activities, personal development and to take responsibility.

Data analysis indicates a low level of development of learner autonomy among students of part-time tuition, which is explained by several factors: the dominant position of the teacher, insufficiently effective interaction between the student and the teacher, the lack of an integrated approach to organizing virtual classes and online

courses; students also use service programs Web 2.0 in its training, then only at the level of a simple user, the recipient, but not the producer.

For the formation of a successful learner autonomy, it is necessary to implement certain organizational and pedagogical activities. These include: the development of online courses; their inclusion as a mandatory component in the curriculum; High-quality methodological support of the course by the teacher encouraging students to use information and communication technologies as a producer.

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Submitted: 02 November 2018

Accepted: 04 March 2019

Published: 30 April 2019



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