Autonomous English Acquisition in Blended e-Studies for Adults for Sustainable Development: Transformation of Values

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Abstract: The topicality of the research “Autonomous English acquisition in blended e-studies for adults for sustainable development: transformation of values” arises from the complexity of holistic paradigm of sustainable development and cohesion of environmental and human sciences. The aim of the research is to check and realise the synergetic systemmodel for facilitation of transformation of values towards English acquisition in virtual learning environment. Theoretical analysis of the topic shows that the paradigm shift towards system approach in science has resulted in using different systemmodels in education. The whole of the third level system, the place of autonomy in it and didactic models for transformation of values are analysed in the research. The appropriateness of synergetic systemmodel and synergetic research methodology for the process of changes is proved in the theoretical part of the research. Methodological principles of synergetics, two submethods depending on the point of bifurcation and three perspectives of observation are used in the research. Practically, the integration of vertical values of responsibility is established by the survey in the group of English acquisition programme of adult non-formal education. The facilitation of horizontal values of developing of language skills, English acquisition skills and experience in four steps for realisation of the model are described and used in active research. They are: investigation of the group, determination of sensitive factors for facilitation of the transformation of values, strong sides, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis for realising and removing threats for full use of given opportunities, facilitation of the transformation of values by promoting determined sensitive factors. Weaknesses were excluded during quantitative research factor analysis. Determined sensitive factors are: the most understood factor of skills and the less understood factor of participation. The research resulted in working out practical means for facilitation of the transformation of values towards English acquisition in virtual learning environment. Substitution of traditional synergetic approach with minimum teacher's influence on transformation of values with facilitation of new formations of values followed from sensitive factors expresses the significance of the results of the research.

Keywords: autonomous English acquisition, synergetic systemmodel, sensitive factors, adult education.

Introduction

Results of the research on autonomous English acquisition in blended e-learning for adults for sustainable development are described in this article. The hypothesis of the research is that in autonomous English acquisition in blended e-learning for adults transformation of values towards self-organised acquisition in virtual learning environment occurs on the basis of criteria of responsibility and/or on the basis of methodological criteria.

The research aims to create and check the model for facilitation of the transformation of values from directed English acquisition in classroom environment to self-organised acquisition in the Internet supported learning environment. Tasks of inquiry of the experience of self-regulated and self-directed English adult learners’ readiness to autonomous English acquisition in blended e-learning and possibilities of facilitation of transformation of values in active research were implemented. The process of the research and results of its parts have been described in several articles (Bojāre, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013, 2014; Bojāre, Ignatjeva, 2014).

Methodology

The research is based on the system approach. In general, the system includes the whole of the world organisation. In education it can mean the system of its formal organization; its self-organisation in
virtual learning environment; relationships between its participants and the environment in the process of learning; the whole of the student’s body, heart and mind, and integrative whole of his/her intellect, emotions and will. Learning for self-integration in sustainable society reflects nowadays values – integrative personality, sustainable society and technologically supported environment. The values should be implemented by becoming, doing and learning.

Transformation of values is required at adult student’s microlevel in the process of autonomous English acquisition in blended e-learning of non-formal education as macrolevel for its self-organisational acquisition in the Internet supported learning environment as a meso-level. The student’s learning is seemed as the whole of self-regulated learning (SRL), self-directed learning (SDL) and self-determined learning.

The design of the research follows from the assumption of an individual’s creative development in and with the environment (Laszlo, 2004). According to it, the concept of autonomy has developed from physical autonomy to autonomy of personality at emotional level and autonomy of consciousness at psychological level. All together they connect learning with creative decision making, self-regulation, self-determination and self-direction in the general process of multidirected evolution.

The system approach started with Ludwig von Bertalanffy’s (1968) General System Theory (GST) and has caused the paradigm shift in science, including social sciences (Давыдов, 2008). Historically, the whole of the first level physical system in education consists of different parts; a part of the second level energetical system reflects the whole; the parts are connected in open synergetic system of the third level.

The autonomy expresses the learner’s autonomy, the autonomy of personality and psychological autonomy of the consciousness there. The aim of learning develops from acquisition of universal knowledge, skills, attitude and values to the special and the general. The teaching method of directed transmission of knowledge, facilitated self-directed learning and creative self-organised learning corresponds to that.

The learner’s identity develops from directed Self to self-directed Self and to We identity according to paradigm shift from the teacher’s centred to learner’s centred learning process. Object-subject and subject–subject relationships reflects the doer in the action.

The researcher determines the system of the research, where V.G.Budanov (Буданов, 2007) introduces the perspectives of observation of the systems. The perspective of metaobservation by exposing the point of bifucation supplements with the dimension of quality of changes and shows their direction. It allows to use dynamic system approach instead of statistic and linear investigation of systems in educational research.

Three didactic models based on actualisation of values are realised by system approach in education: cybernetic, synergetic, and holistic didactic model. The first reflects the flow of investments (Parkin-Obe, Johnston, 2004) to the learner, for example, programmes for unemployed, and communicative flow to the educator. The second – the flow of investments to educational programme and communicative flow to the learner. A holistic didactic model should ensure the flow of investments and communication in both directions and it means to achieve the learner’s participation and integration in the holistic model of education for his/her creative development in and with the environment.

Graphically the cybernetic model is showed by A.Broks (2000), the open third level systemmodel (Liepa, 2011) is appropriate for a synergetic model and an integrative model – for reflecting a holistic model. Generally, the first reflects the aim, levels and the flow of investments; the second - the structure and the process; the third - the structure and functional connectness of its parts. The functionality expresses the levels of learner’s development in education: directed learning, autonomous learning and co-learning of autonomous learners.

Self-investment into one’s own education is substantiated by K.Rogers (Роджерс, 2004) and supplemented with the learner’s investment in developing of English acquisition methods for fulfilling of communication needs of the society in this research. So the synergetic didactic model is used for
socially and technologically facilitated learners’ self-integration in learning environment in this research.

A supportive method of education was actualised by O.F. Bolnov (Больнов, 1999), recommended by V.G. Budanov (Буданов, 2007) as synergetics for education and investigated by Marulevska (2011). It facilitates holistic education the aim of which is an integrative personality and integrative skills (Parkin-Obe, Johnston, 2004) for complex and sustainable development.

Transformation of values is based on strong outside influence in a cybernetic model and on minimum influence on the learner in traditional synergetic model. Substitution of influence by facilitation makes it suitable for facilitation of the transformation of values that stresses self-integration into learning environment by developing learning skills towards autonomous content acquisition using technologies and participation in learning community and society.

The synergetic model of the research is shown in Figure 1. It reflects to the concept of the research based on developing of the learner’s learning experience according to the paradigm shift from the value of directed learning, to self-directed learning and meta-learning (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Synergetic system model for facilitation of transformation of values (Bojāre, 2014).](image)

Autonomous English acquisition in blended e-learning is an organisational form of changes. Its features are outside stability and inside nonstability where the learner’s self-experience develops by creation of a new value in the process of inside resonant of methodological factors and outside transformation of levels of responsibility. Organisational forms of the learning process based on different levels of responsibility for the learning process correspond to dimension of vertical hierarchy but methodological strategies of English acquisition - to horisontal dimension.

The methodological strategies express parameters of order in the process of transformation of values. The personal factor, the factor of involvement, the factor of organisation, the factor of evaluation, the factor of knowledge, the factor of skills and the factor of development were exposed by factorial analysis during the quantitative research.

In general, the model is analytical, sequenced, integrative, reliable and valid, because reflects to the theoretical background. It is complex and hierarchial because it has several levels; dynamic because of including the factor of time expressed by previous and new experience; structural and procedural because it shows the structure of the fenomena and the possibilities of its realisation; synthetic because it syntheses the inside and outside; structurally economical and capable to create (produce) the new experience.
The model actualises creating means for determination of the learners’ psychological readiness for practical activities in the future on the bases of self-reflection and means for pedagogical implementation of the model. Methodological principle of synergetics, two submethods depending on the point of bifurcation and three perspectives of the observer are used in the research. The observer’s perspectives are: outside metaobservation in the qualitative part of the research, outside mezoobservation in the quantitative part of the research and inside microobservation in active research.

One of the clear synergetic concepts is the point of bifurcation – the moment in which the complex structure has a choice of evolutionary motion forward. The development of the self-organization mechanisms lead to quality changes in human personality as a complex, non-linear dynamic systems. It is open to interaction and to information exchange with the environment. The self-development process in the educational activity could be realised on the basis of integration of the content side, the interaction on the process side (Marulevska, 2011).

It includes the transformation of values. Exposing and not exposing the point of bifurcation makes two submethods of synergetics. It is not exposed in pedagogical part of the research, and it is exposed in the quantitative part of the research as psychological readiness to self-learning of English. Readiness means the causality of the possibility of complex self-developing system to turn into reality (Степин, 2003). It is mathematically observed and special principle of its creation – the principle of non-linearity, openness and non-stability are also the necessary and sufficient conditions of its realisation. Informative structural codes (indicators) of experience fix its important ways of relationships with the environment and renewal of the whole of the system.

The research methodology is based on general principles of synergetics: the anthropological principle, the hologram principle, the recursive principle. The anthropological principle means the uniqueness of the student, his valuable personality (Marulevska, 2011) and reflects personal evolution. The hologram principle takes into consideration the whole of the system and allows to find specific characteristics of the complex dynamic structure that are part both of its past and its future (Marulevska, 2011). It is important for determination and facilitation of changes.

The recursive principle realizes itself in the personal self-development which is a result of the creative formation of one’s own educational product. It supposes autonomy in overcoming of the traditional metaphysic oppositions of the social culture and the individual activity; the production and the reproduction; the subject and the object; the inner and the outer side. The reproduction is structurally incorporated in the production process (Marulevska, 2011). Autonomy in self-development includes the possibility for mastering new values, methods, competences and knowledge.

A language learner’s personality is seen as a complex, open, non-linear self-developing system. Pedagogical synergetics of the process of changes is based on self-organisation of the system. Self-determination is facilitated in the process of learning. The characteristics of holistic learning process (Martin, 2003) highly corresponds to non-formal adult education because understanding of information and knowledge has been constructed in the context of one’s own life.

Self-governed learning in a group and with the teacher is a practical transition form directed learning to sustainable self-organised learning in virtual learning environment where the teacher’s and learner’s role is changing. Transformativve learning is the method of holistic pedagogy. Social-individual didactic approach is used in it; the student is an active estimator of one’s own achievements; facilitation is the strategy of teaching. The process of acquisition of the content is based on creating of values; the method is modelling.

The teacher faces the task to organize an optimal environment for the interactive process of synergetic communication between the participants in the educational process. A special attention should be paid to the creation of new value of metalearning when not only self-regulated but also self-directed and self-determined learning skills in the group are developed. It is important to give learners a chance to evaluate their own English acquisition potential and invest in developing of groupmates’ learning experience, too.
Results of the research and discussion

The empirical part of the research consists of the qualitative research, quantitative research and active research. Five participants were involved in the qualitative research, 210 respondents in quantitative research and a different number of participants in three cycles of the active research. The participants of the qualitative research are characterized by a rich experience of other foreign languages and they have an interest to learn English.

Nonprobability sampling of respondents was chosen for quantitative research on the base of the principle of accessibility. It consisted of volunteers who were ready to take part in the face-to-face research and the survey implemented by means of e-mails. Participants of English courses of adult non-formal education were invited to be respondents of the research, but their amount was insufficient for the research. After that, teachers, librarians and parents of schoolchildren as potential participants of English acquisition courses were involved in the research.

Participants of active research were chosen depending on the results of the quantitative research. 46 participants (N1=46) were involved in the first cycle. They were real participants of English courses of adult non-formal education. 32 of them took part in the second cycle of the research (N2=32), four facilitators (N3=4) took part in the third cycle.

The questionnaires of the first cycle, 12 working lists of SWOT analysis of the second cycle and 4 SWOT analyses of the third cycle were analysed in the research according to determined sensitive factors of English acquisition. So the results of the research were obtained by making qualitative, quantitative and active research.

The method of narratives was used in the qualitative part of the research where its participants described their experience of acquisition of foreign languages. It resulted in a unique set of stories showing a person’s developmental adjustment to nowadays multilingual world. The results of their content analysis were compared with European Language Portfolio for adults (Dalbiņa, Grīnberga, 2006) and used for making a questionnaire of the quantitative part of the research.

An important finding of qualitative research was a personal six-step self-actualised training model for foreign language acquisition practised by one participant of the research: singing songs in the target language, listening and repeating all the audio materials of the book for self-studies for acquisition of pronunciation, writing audiodictations using the same learning material and self-monitoring the writings with the tapescript, listening, synchronous reading and retelling all the audio texts, including dialogues, with the tapescripts; answering the questions and doing grammar exercises, activities of collaborative learning (also with native speakers if it is possible) for presenting monologues, speaking dialogues, answering questions on the texts, singing songs and speaking.

Reading books, e-correspondence, taking part in the projects, watching films, communication with foreigners in the target language may follow according to the situation (Bojāre, 2013). This model is convenient for nonprofessional and non-formal acquisition of English and other foreign languages.

The quantitative part of the research was carried out by the method of the survey. Data obtained by 5-point Likert-type Self-directed English acquisition readiness scale (SDEARS) in blended e-studies (Bojāre, 2013) were mathematically analyzed by 22.0 version of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) programme. It resulted in reducing the number of indicators from 306 to 126 and creating a short form of questionnaire. It can be used for practical self-evaluation of participants’ and division them into groups in courses of adult non-formal education.

The main conclusions (Bojāre, 2014) are the following: (1) respondents do not distinguish different forms of organisation of learning process. Vertical values based on different degrees of responsibility for learning join in virtual English acquisition. It is associated with independent learning, causing the interest about learning strategies and enhancing values of developing of language skills, English acquisition skills. (2) Only education and professional belonging is meaningful for dividing respondents into groups. (3) Decision making depends on respondents’ social and professional role and on their level of education.
Three groups were revealed by the decision making tree. Two groups preferred stable forms of learning process – learning directed by the teacher or autonomous learning, but one group had an uncertain opinion. It contained mostly participants of English acquisition programmes of adult non-formal education what was chosen for further inquiry by SWOT analysis of inquired factors for scientifically grounded facilitation of transformation of values towards autonomous English acquisition in virtual learning environment depending on learners’ strengths and opportunities in facilitation of changes in horizontal dimension. It is a processual dimension of developing of language skills, English acquisition skills and experience.

The participants were inquired using a questionnaire (Bojāre, Ignatjeva, 2014) in the first cycle of the action research. It confirmed that participants of non-formal English acquisition preferred self-regulated learning directed by the teacher. After that they analysed proposed methodological factors by the SWOT analysis in the second cycle. The personal factor, the factor of involvement, the factor of organisation, the factor of evaluation, the factor of knowledge, the factor of skills and the factor of development were exposed by factoral analysis during the quantitative research. Their weakness was removed by factoral analysis in the previous part of the research.

Working lists with strong sides of factors were prepared and participants of action research were asked to think about opportunities to use these strengths in the classroom and virtual learning and to write why these opportunities could not be used. SWOT analysis was realised in three steps: participants did that individually, in pairs and in groups. SWOT analysis was done by facilitators in the third cycle.

The validity of the questionnaire was checked, but the first interpretation of obtained data from the point of view of personality’s harmonic and general development (Bojāre, 2014) did not fit exactly in the system approach. Their reinterpretation was done on the basis of sensitive factors. In general, the factor of skills (working with learning materials, developing listening skill, translation) is the most understandable factor for participants of active research. The factor of participation is a less understandable factor (choosing methods and strategies for doing the task, making tables about learned topics and grammar rules, making mind maps and layouts about learned topics and grammar rules).

It is assumed, that the paradigm shift at individual and group level can be done by strengthening competitive attractor – the factor of skills and/or by developing the factor of cognitive participation. The facilitation of factors would cause resonance of other factors and promote their transformation. So the facilitator supports developing skills of self-evaluation, construction the meaning of experience and transformation of values by developing of language acquisition competence in four steps.

They are: investigation of language learners, determination of sensitive factors for modelling transformation of values, understanding and removing threats of not using available opportunities, facilitation of competitive attrator – sensitive factor and/or facilitation of developing of less understandable metalearning as a new formation of value, for example, by making a personal model for English acquisition.

It makes a pedagogical instrument for realism a synergetic systemmodel for facilitation the transformation of horizontal values of developing of language skills, English acquisition skills and experience where self-evaluation in using/not using opportunities allow learners to improve the quality of one’s own choice (Mezirow, 2000). Sensitive factors are the criteria of becoming of the system that create the transformation of other methodological factors.

The future direction of the research is to realise the model by conducting an action research in other groups of English courses of adult non-formal education for developing research methodology and promoting self-organised English acquisition in virtual learning environment.

Conclusions
The hypothesis of the research is partially proved because in autonomous English acquisition in blended e-learning for adults the transformation of values towards self-organised English acquisition in virtual learning environment occurs on the basis of methodological criteria.
A synergetic model for facilitation of the transformation of values from directed English acquisition in classroom environment to self-organised acquisition in the Internet supported learning environment is created, checked and can be used for facilitation of developing of self-experience of acquisition of other foreign languages as well.

Division into groups of participants of English acquisition programmes of adult non-formal education is a sensitive moment for facilitation of transformation of values. The methodology includes learners’ self-evaluation by the questionnaire, SWOT analysis of sensitive factors of skills and participation individually, in pairs and in a group and the facilitation of sensitive factors by the facilitator.

Determined sensitive methodological limit factors for transformation of values are the factor of language skills and the factor of participation because they are the most and less understood by learners. The factor of participation is a new formation for transition to self-organised English acquisition in virtual learning environment.

It is recommended to support language learning by working out an individual model of acquisition of language skills and acquisition of learning strategies, for example, making mind maps for acquisition of English grammar.

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