# METHODS OF FORMING UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' FOREIGN LANGUAGE LEARNING AND STRATEGIC COMPETENCE

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**Summary**

The article addresses the urgent problem of modernizing professional training within the paradigm of lifelong education. The research focuses on the theoretical substantiation and practical implementation of pedagogical instruments designed to foster autonomous knowledge acquisition. The aim of the study is to systematize efficient approaches for developing complex skills required for independent linguistic growth in higher education institutions. The methodological framework is based on constructivist and student-centered principles. The paper provides a comprehensive analysis of three instrumental clusters: active interaction techniques (case studies, role-playing) which facilitate social and compensatory skills; digital technologies (LMS, corpus linguistics) which ensure cognitive flexibility and academic independence; and reflective diagnostic tools (portfolios, diaries) aimed at cultivating metacognitive awareness. The results demonstrate that the systematic integration of these elements transforms the educational process, shifting the focus from knowledge transmission to the facilitation of self-regulated academic activity. The study concludes that the proposed holistic system significantly enhances the adaptability of future specialists in a globalized environment.

**Key words:** higher education, self-regulation, metacognition, digital pedagogy, interactive techniques, reflective assessment, professional training, constructivism.

## 1. Introduction

In the context of the lifelong learning paradigm and the processes of globalization of the educational space, the priority task of university training is not merely the accumulation of linguistic knowledge, but the development of the ability to independently acquire this knowledge and apply it in various academic and professional contexts *(Konotop, 2020)*. In this regard, the formation of foreign language learning and strategic competence acquires paradigmatic significance as a key component of professional training for specialists in a globalized world. This competence is interpreted as a multi-component construct that encompasses the mastery of learning strategies (cognitive, metacognitive, social) and communication strategies (compensatory), which ensure the effectiveness of foreign language acquisition and its functional use in academic and professional discourse *(CEFR, 2001; 2018)*.

The transformation of the educational paradigm from a knowledge-based to a competence-based model actualizes the need to reconceptualize traditional methodological approaches to foreign language teaching. Contemporary foreign language education methodology emphasizes the development of students' metacognitive awareness, their ability to reflect on their own learning processes, and conscious selection of optimal strategies to achieve specific learning objectives. This presupposes the integration of a strategic approach into all aspects of the

learning process and the creation of an educational environment that promotes the development of students' autonomy and responsibility for their own learning *(Konotop, 2025)*.

The scientific novelty of this research lies in the systematization of methodological approaches aimed at developing the procedural aspect of language education–the conceptualization of learning strategies, rather than exclusively the content of knowledge. The study integrates contemporary achievements in cognitive psychology, higher education pedagogy, and foreign language teaching methodology to create a holistic system for forming learning and strategic competence. The relevance of this work is determined by the need for theoretical substantiation and practical implementation of innovative methods that facilitate the formation of learning and strategic competence in the modern university context and respond to the challenges of digital transformation in education.

**The aim of the study** is to theoretically substantiate and practically explicate the most effective methods and means for forming university students' foreign language learning and strategic competence, taking into account the specifics of the contemporary educational environment and the requirements of the information society. To achieve this aim, the following research objectives were formulated: 1. To analyze the potential of active and interactive teaching methods in facilitating students' acquisition of compensatory and social strategies, as well as to determine mechanisms for their integration into the educational process. 2. To determine the role of information and communication technologies in forming students' learning autonomy and cognitive strategies, investigating the specifics of the digital educational environment. 3. To characterize diagnostic tools that stimulate metacognitive reflection and self-regulation of learning activities, defining criteria for their effectiveness. 4. To develop methodological recommendations for creating a comprehensive system for forming learning and strategic competence in the university context.

The research methodology is grounded in the student-centered approach, which presupposes the transformation of the instructor's role from a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator of students' strategic competence development. The study relies on the principles of constructivism, andragogy, and the theory of learner autonomy, integrating them into a holistic methodological system. The use of an interdisciplinary approach allows for examining the problem of forming learning and strategic competence from the perspectives of various scientific disciplines and ensuring the comprehensiveness of the research.

## 2. Theoretical Foundations of Learning and Strategic Competence Formation

### 2.1. Conceptualization of Learning and Strategic Competence

Learning and strategic competence as a pedagogical phenomenon constitutes a complex multi-level system that includes cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social components. The cognitive component encompasses information processing strategies such as memorization, categorization, inference, and deduction. The metacognitive component presupposes the ability to plan learning activities, monitor one's own progress, and evaluate the effectiveness of applied strategies. The affective component includes strategies for managing emotional state, overcoming anxiety, and maintaining motivation. The social component encompasses strategies for interaction with other participants in the learning process, cooperation, and requesting assistance.

The theoretical foundation for the study of learning and strategic competence was formed at the intersection of several scientific paradigms. Cognitive psychology made a fundamental contribution to understanding information processing and the role of metacognition in learning.

Sociocultural theory emphasized the significance of social interaction and cultural context in the development of cognitive abilities. Constructivist pedagogy postulated the active role of the student in constructing their own knowledge. The integration of these approaches enables the formation of a holistic understanding of the nature of learning and strategic competence and the pathways for its development *(Konotop, 2025)*.

### 3. Implementation of Active and Interactive Methods for Strategic Competence Development

The formation of foreign language learning and strategic competence requires the application of teaching methods that simulate authentic communicative situations and cognitive challenges that actualize the use of specific strategies (planning, cooperation, compensation). Active and interactive methods create an educational environment in which students are not passive recipients of information but actively construct knowledge through interaction with authentic materials, the instructor, and peers. Such organization of the learning process corresponds to the principles of constructivist pedagogy and ensures deep, meaningful acquisition of both linguistic material and learning strategies.

**3.1. Discussion Methods and Critical Thinking**

**Discussions, debates, and the case method.** These methods extend beyond purely linguistic practice and are fundamental for developing social and affective strategies. Students master strategies for managing anxiety, constructing meanings through cooperation with peers, as well as conducting academic discourse and negotiating positions. Case analysis actualizes cognitive strategies, particularly analysis, synthesis, and argumentation in a foreign language, which contributes to the development of critical thinking in a foreign language environment.

The use of discussion methods requires students to activate a complex of strategies. At the preparation stage for discussion, students apply strategies for searching and selecting information, critically evaluating sources, and systematizing material. During the discussion, strategies of active listening, interpreting non-verbal signals, adapting utterances to the interlocutor's level of understanding, arguing one's position, and constructively critiquing alternative viewpoints are actualized. Metacognitive strategies enable students to monitor their own understanding of the discussion, adjust communicative behavior, and evaluate the effectiveness of their own participation *(Konotop, 2010)*.

The case method has particular value for forming problem-solving and decision-making strategies under conditions of incomplete information. Case analysis requires the integration of linguistic, professional, and intercultural knowledge, which develops the ability to transfer knowledge between different contexts. Students learn to apply strategies of critical analysis, identifying cause-and-effect relationships, predicting consequences of various decisions, and substantiating their own conclusions using the academic register of a foreign language.

**3.2. Simulations and Role-Playing**

**Business games, role-playing, and modeling professional situations.** These methods are essential for practical mastery of compensatory strategies. In simulation situations, when a student lacks a specific term, they are forced to use circumlocution, synonyms, or non-verbal means of communication to maintain interaction, which constitutes the core of strategic competence. Such experience forms flexibility in communicative behavior and adaptability to unpredictable situations of intercultural communication.

Role-playing creates a safe environment for experimenting with various communicative strategies without the risk of real negative consequences. Students can test different approaches

to solving communicative tasks, analyze their effectiveness, and select optimal strategies for specific situations. Role performance requires not only linguistic competence but also understanding of cultural norms, social expectations, and pragmatic aspects of communication *(Konotop, 2010)*.

Modeling professional situations has particular significance for students in specialized fields who are preparing to work in an international environment. Simulations of business negotiations, presentations, interviews, and conferences allow students to master genre-specific strategies of academic and professional communication. Such experience forms confidence in one's communicative abilities and readiness to use a foreign language in real professional contexts.

### 3.3. Project-Based and Problem-Oriented Learning

**The project method and problem-search technologies.** These technologies are directly oriented toward developing metacognitive strategies (planning, monitoring, evaluation). Working on a project requires the student to independently plan their learning trajectory, search for information resources (resource management strategies), and conduct reflexive evaluation of intermediate results of their activities. Collaborative technologies strengthen the ability to use social resources (requesting help, clarification) as a legitimate learning strategy, which facilitates the construction of academic discourse.

Project-based learning implements the principle of authenticity, where students work on real tasks whose results have practical value. This may include creating multimedia presentations, developing educational materials, conducting mini-research, or organizing academic events. Such activity requires the integration of all types of strategies: cognitive (for processing information), metacognitive (for managing the process), social (for coordinating teamwork), and affective (for maintaining motivation throughout an extended period).

Problem-search methods develop students' research competence and their ability to independently formulate questions, search for answers, and construct new knowledge. Students learn to apply strategies of scientific inquiry: formulating hypotheses, collecting empirical data, analysis, generalization, and presenting results. Importantly, this entire process is carried out through the medium of a foreign language, which integrates the development of linguistic and research competencies.

### 4. Information and Communication Technologies as Tools for Autonomy Development

ICT provides the infrastructure for independent learning activities, giving students the opportunity to test and refine their own learning strategies beyond the classroom, which corresponds to the principles of andragogy and the concept of lifelong learning. The digital educational environment is characterized by flexibility, accessibility, and the possibility of personalized learning, which creates optimal conditions for developing students' learning autonomy and strategic competence.

### 4.1. Platforms for Independent Learning

**Mobile applications and online platforms.** Tools such as Moodle, Google Classroom, and specialized language applications enable students to practice self-management strategies. The student independently determines the temporal parameters of learning, chooses an individual pace for processing material, and selects learning materials based on diagnosed knowledge gaps. This facilitates the development of academic autonomy, which is a central component of learning competence.

Contemporary educational platforms offer adaptive learning systems that automatically adjust the difficulty of tasks according to the student's level of success. Such systems stimulate

the application of metacognitive strategies: the student receives feedback on their own progress, can track the dynamics of competence development, and identify problematic areas. Visualization of learning progress through graphs, diagrams, and statistics reinforces awareness of one's own achievements and motivates further improvement *(Konotop, 2015)*.

Interactive exercises on platforms allow for practicing various types of cognitive strategies. Matching tasks develop categorization and grouping strategies. Fill-in-the-blank exercises actualize strategies of contextual guessing and inference. Audio and video tasks with the possibility of repeated listening and playback speed control allow students to experiment with different listening strategies and find the most effective approaches.

### 4.2. Digital Resources for Language Analysis

**Electronic dictionaries, corpus databases, and multimedia resources.** The use of corpus linguistics tools develops cognitive strategies, particularly induction and deduction. Instead of passively receiving grammatical rules, students analyze concordances to infer patterns of the language system, which forms research competence. Podcasts and video materials enable the practice of listening strategies (prediction, listening for general understanding versus detailed understanding), which is critically important for academic communication *(Konotop, 2015)*.

New-generation electronic dictionaries offer not only word definitions but also contextual examples, etymological information, synonyms, antonyms, collocations, and multimedia support. Working with such resources develops vocabulary expansion strategies: creating semantic networks, establishing associative connections, applying mnemonic techniques. Students learn not simply to memorize isolated words but to integrate new vocabulary into their existing knowledge system.

Corpus linguistics opens new possibilities for autonomous learning and the development of metalinguistic awareness. Students can independently investigate the functioning of language units in real contexts, identify patterns of usage, and compare constructions across different genres and registers. Such activity forms strategies of inductive learning, critical thinking, and linguistic analysis, which is especially important for future philologists, translators, and foreign language teachers.

### 4.3. Synchronous and Asynchronous Communication Technologies

**Social networks and virtual communication tools.** Platforms for synchronous communication (Zoom, Microsoft Teams, messengers) create an authentic need for interactional strategies. They provide immediate feedback on the effectiveness of communicative strategies, allowing students to adjust their approach in real time and adapt communicative behavior to the dynamic context.

Asynchronous communication tools (forums, blogs, wikis) create a different educational environment that promotes the development of academic writing and reflective thinking strategies. Students have time to think through responses, edit texts, and search for additional information. This develops strategies for text planning, structuring argumentation, editing, and self-correction. The public nature of communication on forums stimulates responsible attitudes toward the quality of one's own utterances and adherence to academic ethics.

Social networks and language communities create opportunities for authentic intercultural communication with native speakers and other students from different countries. Participation in international projects, tandems, and virtual exchanges develops sociocultural competence, intercultural adaptation strategies, and communicative flexibility. Students learn to consider cultural context, adapt communication style to the interlocutor's expectations, and overcome intercultural misunderstandings.

## 5. Innovative Diagnostics: From Assessment to Reflection

In the context of forming foreign language learning and strategic competence, assessment must be formative and reflective. It should capture not only the product of learning activities but also the process of acquiring knowledge and strategies. Traditional forms of summative assessment are insufficient for diagnosing strategic competence, as they do not provide information about which strategies the student uses and how consciously they do so. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate innovative diagnostic tools that stimulate metacognitive reflection and develop the capacity for self-regulation.

### 5.1. Portfolio as a Tool for Reflection

**Language portfolio and learning journals.** The language portfolio is the most powerful tool for developing metacognitive strategies. Curating one's own work encourages students to engage in self-reflection and critical analysis of their own progress. Self-observation journals encourage students to document their own learning habits, identify the most effective strategies (for example, 'How did I memorize these lexical units?', 'What actions did I take when I did not understand the audio material?'), and determine personal learning goals, which forms agency in learning activities.

The structure of the language portfolio includes three main sections: language passport (documentation of language proficiency level and intercultural experience), language biography (reflection on the learning and self-development process), and dossier (collection of works demonstrating achievements). Regular work with the portfolio forms the habit of reflection, capacity for self-assessment, and goal-setting. Students learn to see their own progress in a long-term perspective, which is especially important for maintaining motivation.

Learning journals can be organized in various formats: traditional written records, digital blogs, audio or video reflections. Regardless of format, the key is the regularity of entries and their focus on the learning process, not merely on results. The instructor can propose structured questions for reflection that direct students' attention to strategy analysis: 'What strategies did I use when completing this task?', 'What worked well, and what needs improvement?', 'What new strategies do I want to try next time?'

### 5.2. Alternative Forms of Assessment

**Self-assessment and peer assessment.** These practices shift responsibility for assessment from the instructor to the student. Peer assessment develops skills in critical analysis, empathy, and constructive feedback, while self-assessment using adaptive systems or checklists allows students to objectively monitor their own progress and take corrective actions regarding their learning trajectory *(Konotop, 2025)*.

For effective implementation of self-assessment and peer assessment, clear evaluation criteria and prior training of students in assessment procedures are necessary. The use of rubrics describing different levels of achievement for each criterion helps students understand expectations and objectively evaluate the quality of work. Importantly, the assessment process itself becomes a learning activity that deepens understanding of quality criteria and stimulates the pursuit of improvement.

Peer assessment has additional value in developing social strategies and emotional intelligence. Students learn to formulate constructive criticism while considering peers' feelings, and to perceive feedback as an opportunity for development rather than as personal offense. The culture of mutual support and constructive criticism formed through peer assessment practices contributes to creating a positive educational environment.

### 5.3. Reflective Practices

**Reflective essays and strategy inventories.** Writing essays about the learning experience helps students verbalize their own cognitive processes, making implicit strategies explicit and conscious. Reflective writing promotes metacognitive awareness and the capacity for critical analysis of one's own learning trajectory. Strategy inventories and questionnaires allow students to systematically analyze the frequency and effectiveness of using various learning strategies.

Reflective essays can be organized around various themes: analysis of successful completion of a complex task, reflection on mistakes and ways to overcome them, comparison of one's own progress at the beginning and end of the semester, planning future competence development. Importantly, reflective writing is not a spontaneous flow of thoughts but a structured analytical activity that requires critical thinking and the ability to generalize.

Strategy inventories, such as the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) or other adapted questionnaires, provide quantitative data on strategy use. Regular completion of such inventories allows tracking changes in the student's strategic repertoire throughout the course of study. Comparing results at different stages of learning can show which strategies the student has begun to use more frequently and which remain underdeveloped, which allows for adjusting the individual development trajectory.

## 6. The Role of the Instructor as a Facilitator of Strategic Development

The transformation of the instructor's role from knowledge transmitter to learning facilitator is a key condition for successful formation of learning and strategic competence. The instructor does not simply convey information about strategies but creates conditions for their conscious application, reflection, and integration into each student's individual learning system. This requires the instructor to develop new professional competencies: the ability to diagnose individual student characteristics, skill in constructing tasks that actualize specific strategies, and mastery in organizing reflective activity.

The instructor implements strategic instruction in several directions. First, explicit strategy instruction through explanation, demonstration, and organization of practice. Second, implicit stimulation of strategy use through task design and learning environment organization. Third, supporting students in reflecting on their own strategies and encouraging experimentation with new approaches. Fourth, creating a culture of learning community where strategy sharing is a norm and value.

An important function of the instructor is strategy modeling. By explicating their own thinking processes while solving tasks (think-aloud technique), the instructor demonstrates how an expert approaches language tasks, which strategies they use, and how they make decisions in situations of uncertainty. Such modeling is particularly effective because it makes visible those processes that usually remain hidden. Students can observe and emulate expert strategies, gradually integrating them into their own practice.

## 7. Conclusions and Perspectives

The conducted research confirms that the formation of foreign language learning and strategic competence represents a multidimensional process that requires specific methodological interventions and a systematic approach to organizing the educational process. The key conclusions of the study can be formulated as follows: 1. Active and interactive methods (simulation,

problem-oriented learning, discussions, project work) demonstrate high effectiveness in developing compensatory and social strategies, transforming students from passive recipients to active constructors of knowledge. These methods create an authentic educational environment that requires the integration of linguistic knowledge and strategic skills. 2. ICT tools are fundamental for developing learning autonomy and cognitive strategies, providing an environment for personalized learning and independent knowledge construction. Digital technologies offer unprecedented opportunities for individualizing learning and practicing strategies in diverse contexts. 3. Reflective diagnostic tools (portfolios, journals, strategy inventories) are indispensable for cultivating metacognition–the ability to plan, monitor, and evaluate one's own learning trajectory, which constitutes the foundation of academic success and learning autonomy. Formative assessment has advantages over summative assessment in the context of developing strategic competence. 4. The transformation of the instructor's role from knowledge transmitter to facilitator of strategic development is a necessary condition for successful formation of learning and strategic competence. This requires the development of new professional competencies for instructors and reconceptualization of traditional pedagogical practices. 5. Effective formation of learning and strategic competence requires systematic integration of various methods, technologies, and diagnostic tools into a holistic pedagogical system that accounts for individual student characteristics and the specifics of the learning context.

Prospects for further research include several directions. First, studying the impact of AI-based personalized feedback on the development of students' self-correction strategies and the formation of their metacognitive awareness. Second, investigating the effectiveness of blended learning models in forming learning and strategic competence under conditions of digital transformation in higher education. Third, analyzing the cultural specificity of learning strategy use and developing culturally adapted models of strategic instruction.

Fourth, longitudinal studies tracking the development of students' strategic competence throughout the entire period of university study and beyond are relevant. Such studies will allow clarification of which strategies remain stable and continue to be used in professional activity, and which require regular reinforcement. Fifth, investigating the relationship between learning and strategic competence and other key competencies, such as critical thinking, creativity, communicative and intercultural competencies, is promising.

Finally, an important direction is the development and testing of instructor training programs for implementing strategic instruction. The success of forming students' learning and strategic competence directly depends on instructors' readiness to implement appropriate pedagogical approaches. This requires systematic work on professional development of instructors, including both theoretical preparation and practical training in organizing strategic instruction, using reflective tools, and creating a favorable educational environment.

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