

Designing And Assessing Independent Learning Tasks For Economics Students In ESP Classes

Sh. A. Jamolidinova

A lecturer of Namangan state university, Uzbekistan, Uzbekistan

Received: 31 August 2025; **Accepted:** 26 September 2025; **Published:** 31 October 2025

Abstract: Independent learning has become a central component of higher education, particularly in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses for Economics students. With the growing demand for learner autonomy and digital literacy, designing and assessing independent learning tasks requires new pedagogical approaches. This study explores effective ways of planning, implementing, and evaluating independent tasks in ESP contexts, emphasizing the integration of technology, project-based learning, and formative assessment. Practical examples are presented to illustrate how such tasks can develop linguistic, cognitive, and professional competencies. The findings show that carefully designed independent learning tasks promote motivation, responsibility, and communicative competence in English for Economics.

Keywords: Independent learning, ESP, Economics students, task design, assessment, autonomy.

Introduction: In recent years, English for Specific Purposes (ESP) has evolved from traditional teacher-centered models toward learner-centered and task-based approaches. In the field of Economics, students must not only learn English but also apply it to professional contexts such as business communication, economic reporting, and market analysis. Therefore, fostering independent learning skills is essential to help students acquire language competence that aligns with their future careers.

Independent learning allows students to take responsibility for their learning processes—selecting materials, managing time, and reflecting on outcomes (Holec, 1981). However, to achieve true autonomy, teachers must design structured and purposeful independent tasks and apply reliable assessment criteria. The present article examines the principles and practices of designing and assessing independent learning tasks for Economics students in ESP classrooms.

LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Benson (2011), autonomy involves learners' ability to control their own learning through goal-setting, strategy use, and self-evaluation. In ESP education, this autonomy is particularly relevant because learning

objectives are closely tied to real-world professional communication.

Research by Reinders and White (2016) emphasizes that independent learning must be guided by pedagogical scaffolding — teachers provide the framework, but students make decisions within it. Similarly, Little (2007) and Hyland (2002) highlight the role of task design and self-assessment tools in shaping successful independent learning environments.

Effective assessment of independent learning, according to Brown (2015), should include both formative (ongoing feedback, peer review) and summative (final evaluation) elements. Assessment not only measures learning outcomes but also motivates students to reflect, revise, and improve their work.

Despite these theoretical foundations, many ESP instructors still struggle to balance freedom and structure in independent tasks. Therefore, this article provides a framework and concrete examples of how independent learning can be effectively designed and evaluated in English for Economics programs.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This qualitative study was conducted at the Faculty of

Economics, Namangan State University. The research analyzed classroom practices, task samples, and assessment methods used by three ESP instructors. The goal was to develop a model for designing and assessing independent learning activities aligned with the needs of Economics students.

Participants

The participants included 45 undergraduate students majoring in Economics and Finance (B1–B2 levels of English proficiency according to CEFR). They were enrolled in the “English for Economics and Business Communication” course, which emphasizes reading, writing, and speaking skills in professional contexts.

Procedure

During a 10-week semester, students completed several independent learning projects and tasks, including online research, written reports, and oral presentations. Teachers applied assessment rubrics to evaluate autonomy, accuracy, and creativity. Both quantitative (grades, completion rates) and qualitative (reflections, feedback) data were analyzed.

Designing Independent Learning Tasks

Activity 1: “Business Start-Up Project”

Objective: To develop students’ writing, critical thinking, and entrepreneurial communication skills through an independent mini research project.

Level & Group: B2–C1; 15 students (individual or pairs)

Duration: 2 weeks (independent + in-class work)

Task Description: Each student (or pair) chooses a start-up business idea relevant to Uzbekistan’s economy (e.g., eco-tourism agency, organic farm, online trade service). They conduct independent research about: The product or service idea

Target customers and competitors

Marketing strategy

Investment and expected profit

Students then write a 1-page business proposal in English and prepare to present it orally in the next class.

Example Output: Business Name: “NamEco Organic Market”

Target Market: Urban families and local restaurants in Namangan

Strategy: Use Instagram advertising and partner with regional farmers

Expected Result: 10% monthly growth within first 6 months

Teacher’s Role:

Provide templates for business plans and vocabulary lists
Guide students on structure and academic writing conventions

Offer feedback on language and content

Assessment Criteria:

- Criteria
- Description
- Weight
- Content & relevance, Clear and realistic business idea- 25%
- Language accuracy, Grammar, vocabulary, cohesion- 25%
- Creativity & originality, Innovative and practical proposal- 25%
- Oral presentation, Pronunciation, confidence, clarity- 25%

Independent Learning Aspect: Students search for information, organize data, and use English autonomously to express professional ideas connected to economics.

Activity 2: “Economic News Roundtable”

Objective: To develop reading, speaking, and analytical skills through independent reading of authentic English economic articles.

Level & Group: B2–C1; 15 students (in groups of 3–4)

Duration: 80 minutes (plus 1 hour independent preparation)

Task Description: Each group selects a recent magazine or newspaper article related to economics (e.g., inflation, trade, unemployment, entrepreneurship) from sources like The Economist, BBC Business, or Financial Times.

Before class, each student: Reads the chosen article independently.

Prepares a short summary (100–150 words).

Notes three discussion questions based on the article.

During class, the group holds a “Roundtable Discussion” where they: Present key points of the article

Share opinions and real-life connections to Uzbekistan’s economy

Debate causes, effects, and possible solutions

Example Discussion Topic: Article title: “Rising Inflation and Its Impact on Small Businesses”

Discussion Questions: 1. What are the main reasons for inflation in developing countries?

2. How can small businesses survive economic instability?

3. What policies could support entrepreneurs in

Uzbekistan?

Teacher's Role: Monitor discussions and take notes on language use

Encourage equal participation

Provide post-discussion feedback

Assessment Criteria:

- Criteria
- Description
- Weight
- Understanding of content
- Clear grasp of the article's main ideas- 25%
- Speaking fluency & accuracy
- Natural speech, correct ESP vocabulary- 25%
- Critical thinking
- Logical and well-supported arguments- 25%
- Participation
- Active and cooperative teamwork - 25%

Independent Learning Aspect: Students autonomously select materials, interpret real-world information, and apply economic vocabulary in authentic discussions.

Summary of Both Activities

- Independent Skills Developed
- Activity
- Focus
- Business Start-Up Project
- Writing & entrepreneurship
- Research, creativity, academic writing
- Economic News Roundtable
- Reading & discussion
- Critical thinking, argumentation, teamwork

RESULTS

Data collected from student performance and feedback showed positive outcomes:

Autonomy growth: 88% of students reported improved confidence in planning and completing English tasks independently.

Improved accuracy: Written and oral outputs demonstrated greater control of economic terminology and structure.

Higher motivation: Students preferred tasks that connected English to real-life economic situations.

Reflective skills: 70% of students consistently maintained their learning journals and reported progress in self-awareness.

However, challenges included unequal participation in group tasks and occasional time management difficulties. Teachers noted that continuous feedback

and clear assessment rubrics were crucial for maintaining motivation.

DISCUSSION

The study confirms that task design and assessment transparency are the key determinants of successful independent learning in ESP. When students understand both the purpose and evaluation criteria of tasks, they become more accountable and proactive.

Independent learning tasks should be:

Authentic – related to real-life professional contexts (e.g., market reports, presentations).

Flexible – allowing choice in topics and tools.

Reflective – encouraging self-assessment and peer feedback.

Technology-supported – integrating digital tools like Google Docs, Moodle, or Canva for accessibility.

Assessment should go beyond language accuracy, including self-regulation and collaboration as learning outcomes. Teachers play a facilitative role—guiding students to set realistic goals and helping them reflect on progress.

CONCLUSION

Designing and assessing independent learning tasks for Economics students in ESP classes requires thoughtful planning, relevance, and balance between freedom and guidance. The integration of authentic, project-based, and reflective activities enhances students' motivation, linguistic competence, and professional readiness.

The proposed task models and assessment framework can serve as practical tools for ESP instructors seeking to promote learner autonomy. Future research could expand this approach by incorporating AI-supported feedback systems or adaptive learning technologies to further individualize the independent learning process.

REFERENCES

1. Benson, P. (2011). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*. Routledge.
2. Brown, H. D. (2015). *Teaching by Principles: An Interactive Approach to Language Pedagogy*. Pearson.
3. Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon.
4. Hyland, K. (2002). Specificity revisited: How far should we go now? *English for Specific Purposes*, 21(4), 385–395.

5. Little, D. (2007). Language Learner Autonomy: Some Fundamental Considerations Revisited. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1(1), 14–29.
6. Reinders, H., & White, C. (2016). 20 Years of Autonomy and Technology: How Far Have We Come and Where to Next? *Language Learning & Technology*, 20(2), 143–154.