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English teaching methods

INDEPENDENT LEARNING: KEY TECHNIQUES*Svetlana POGOSYAN*

Key words: independent learning, key techniques, creative thinking, emotional and intellectual process, flexible delivery of learning material, to accomplish academic goals, to overcome hurdles, to assimilate new knowledge, internal and external factors, motivation, appropriate educational strategies, active and passive students.

Ключевые слова: самостоятельное обучение, ключевые средства, творческое мышление, эмоциональный и интеллектуальный процесс, доступная подача изучаемого материала, достичь академических целей, преодолеть трудности, усвоить новый материал, внутренние и внешние факторы, мотивация, соответствующие образовательные стратегии, активные и пассивные студенты:

Բանալի բառեր` ինքնուրույն ուսուցում, հիմնական մեթոդներ, ստեղծագործական մտածելակերպ, էմոցիոնալ և մտավոր գործընթաց, ուսուցանվող նյութի ձևուն ներկայացում, իրականացնել ակադեմիական նպատակներ, հաղթահարել դժվարությունները, յուրացնել նոր գիտելիքներ, ներքին և արտաքին գործոններ, խթանում, համապատասխան կրթական ռազմավարություն, ակտիվ և պասիվ ուսանողներ:

С.Погосян**Самостоятельная работа. Основные методы**

Методика преподавания иностранного языка неразрывно связана с проблемой планирования и организации самостоятельной работы (СР) студентов при обучении иностранному языку. Современные исследователи, занимающиеся педагогической категорией «самостоятельная работа», считают, что самостоятельное извлечение знаний и их качественное усвоение, анализ результатов в усвоении знаний и развитии умений обеспечиваются самостоятельной работой студентов. Эффективное планирование и организация самостоятельной работы студентов способствуют достижения цели в образовательном процессе.

Ս. Պոգոսյան**Ինքնուրույն ուսուցման հիմնական մեթոդներ**

Օտար լեզվի դասավանդման մեթոդիկական սերտ կապված է ուսուցման ընթացքում ուսանողի ինքնուրույն աշխատանքի պլանավորման և կազմակերպման խնդրի հետ: Ժամանակակից մանկավարժները առնչվելով <ինքնուրույն աշխատանք> հասկացության հետ, համարում են, որ գիտելիքների ինքնուրույն ձեռքբերումը, լիարժեք յուրացումը, յուրացման արդյունքների վերլուծությունը և հմտությունների զարգացումը ապահովվում են ուսանողների ինքնուրույն կամ անհատական աշխատանքով: Ուսանողի ինքնուրույն աշխատանքի արդյունավետ պլանավորման և կազմակերպումը ուսուցման գործընթացի կարևորագույն հիմնախնդիրն է:

It is impossible to study the problem of planning and organization of individual learning the process of foreign language learning detached from methods of language teaching. Contemporary scientists dealing with such a category as “individual learning” consider that individual knowledge getting and its assimilation, the investigation of the results in knowledge assimilation and skill development are provided with individual work of students. Effective planning and organization of a student’s individual work brings to the accomplishment of academic goals in educational process.

One of the key responsibilities of any teaching institution is to provide the context in which students learn how to study on their own.’ Learning to learn’ is a complex process that entails students taking responsibility and playing their part within the educational process. People are feeling beings as well as thinking beings and when their feelings and thoughts are in harmony learning is maximized. Learning is an experience which occurs inside the learner and is activated by the learner himself.

The theme of our article is actual as the problem of independent learning is crucial nowadays for both teachers and students in terms of credit educational system. Many students have trouble making transition to more independent learning required at University compared with their previous study. University study requires students to take responsibility for their own learning, to be more self-directed, to make decisions about how much time they will spend on learning both inside and outside the classroom. The aim of article is to reveal the key techniques of independent learning design process as tertiary education throughout the world today is brimming with activity given to the design and development of flexible learning.

As in the case with many terms commonly used in higher education learning, such as ‘critical thinking’, ‘independent learning’ can mean different things to different people, in different disciplines and in different cultures. Therefore, it is important that this pivotal concept is explained to students so that they know what is required of them within their new context and discipline.

Independent learning is important because it develops creativity and intellectual curiosity. Independent learning is about students being active rather than passive. It is about them working out the answers rather than being told them. It is about wanting to study rather than doing something to pass the examination. Independent learning is not the easy option- it is tough. As teachers we have a choice. If all we want to do is to get results, we can spoon-feed our students. We can give them dozens of model answers and make them learn. But if we want to educate, we encourage, and inspire them to explore the subject, to make discoveries and set the tasks that will challenge.

The process of learning is emotional as well as intellectual. People are feeling beings as well as thinking beings and when their feelings and thoughts are in harmony learning is maximized. Learning is an experience which occurs inside the learner and is activated by the learner himself.

With the arrival of the Internet, it has become relatively easy to get more education without leaving home. Students can practice self-directed learning, develop their computer and typing skills and familiarize themselves with website before starting their degree. To help students get the most, independent learning plans should be provided to guide students on their independent study. Participating additional activities will help students’ progress faster through their English language course. Students have access to many hours of independent learning activities.

Internet is the most valuable when the student has a purpose for using it. Without a clear purpose, a student can drown in a sea of trivia. Furthermore, in contrast with a book, magazine, or newspaper, on the Internet it is not easy to skim information, and so pulling information off the Internet can be less productive than getting information from a book, magazine, or newspaper. Internet can eat up much valuable classroom time. Certainly, it can serve as a supplement to classroom work.

We understand that everyone learns differently. Students can choose the study method that work best for them. As they can practice their skills in all language areas (reading, writing, speaking and listening) they complete their course with a strong grasp of the English language, ready for the workforce or further study. Much of the instructional design that has been applied to Web-based learning environments has been guided by the principles of instructional system design, an approach widely used for the development of learning materials prepared for correspondence and print-based forms of flexible delivery.¹

These approaches are based on the notions that learning occurs primarily through the consequences of internal and external conditions relating to the learner and the instruction.²

Models developed from the approaches identify discrete instructional events as a means for developers to create instructional materials to support teaching at a distance. With such design approaches, the resulting materials seek to provide a means to carry the knowledge from the minds of the experts (teachers) into the minds of the learners.

As print has given way to electronic media, and delivery means have moved from paper to the computer screen, the new forms of learning material have tended to retain the characteristic features of the old. Stories are told in sequential fashions, contents are carried with instructional messages and small tasks interspersed to create forms of engagement and reflection for the learners.

Israeli writer Birenbaum contrasts two types of learning activities. One learning activity is determined by external regulation and involves the teacher taking over learning and thinking activities on behalf of pupils. This would, for example, involve a teacher explaining the relationship between concepts of theories, making comparisons and drawing conclusions.³

Another learning activity involves pupils performing learning and thinking activities by themselves. Birenbaum describes this learning activity as self-directed active learning. Self-directed active learning can therefore be defined as the extent to which pupils are metacognitively, motivationally and behaviorally active in their learning.

¹ Gagné R.M., Briggs L.J. and Wager W.W., Principles of Instructional Design, Orland FL: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1992.

² Ragan T., and Smith P., Handbook of Research for Educational Telecommunications and Technology. New York: MacMillan, 1996. -pp 541-569.

³ Anthony G. Learning Strategies in the Mathematics Classroom: What Can We Learn from Stimulated Recall Interviews? New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 1994.

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The cognitive, metacognitive and resource management techniques that pupils activate, in addition to the related motivational beliefs, allow pupils to accomplish academic goals and overcome any hurdles along the way.¹

Furthermore, active learning is associated with the capacity to assimilate new knowledge and use it to solve problems, the ability to think critically, to communicate and work collaboratively with others.²

When environments are designed to reflect meaningful contexts, it is virtually impossible to create settings that are not in some way driven by their learning activities. It is almost impossible to create a page-turning or transmissive delivery setting. The context demands a purpose and the purpose becomes a learning task. Choosing meaningful and authentic learning tasks can be quite a difficult process but once you start, it becomes easier.³

The way to do this is to consider how the learning is to be used in real life and to replicate this form of activity. Such an act requires considering the learning aims and the forms of competency that might reflect their achievement. From this point, it is then possible to decide what resources and content students will need to support the learning activities. The course content, which in traditional settings tends to be the desired end of the learning, becomes the means to an end.

Now we are probably getting the idea of the design process. We have a meaningful context for the learning and starting to assemble a range of resources to support the learning. The components of the course are the learning tasks.

The tasks have to provide the learners with the capacity to explore, inquire and reflect the means of generating some understanding of the context.

If the tasks are too straightforward, the students will be able to develop solutions and outcomes without overly stretching their mind and intellects. On the other hand if they are too difficult, many students will fail to complete them. If they are to be authentic, they need to have different interpretations, different solution processes and of course to have many acceptable outcomes. Often in task choice, they will be more interested in the processes involved in their solution than in the solution itself.

The key elements of independent learning may comprise factors which are internal and external to learners. The external elements are the development of a strong relationship between teachers and pupils and the establishment of an 'enabling environment'. The internal elements are the skills that individual pupils have to acquire. The skills that pupils need for independent learning are cognitive, metacognitive and affective. Cognitive skills include memory, attention and problem-solving. Pupils are to reach a certain level in their cognitive development, such as being able to decode basic information before they can embark on independent learning. Teachers are able to promote this cognitive development to encourage independent learning. Metacognitive skills are associated with an understanding of how learning occurs. Such as pupils are able to state how they learn and to identify other people who help them with their learning. These skills are necessary for pupils to self-assess their learning. While affective skills are related to feelings and emotions. Such as developing a value system, then, internalizing and acting on these values. Motivation is considered the most important affective skill and is directly associated with increased independent learning and can also be an outcome of independent learning.

The strong relationship between teachers and pupils involves trust and mutual responsibility for learning, which is based on teachers providing explicit messages about learning, teachers being attentive and responsive to pupils' interests and needs.

The successful promotion of independent learning will require careful attention to the learning environment. An important skill linking motivation to independent learning may be 'delay of gratification', which refers to someone's ability to wait in order to obtain something that they want. Assessment of students' knowledge and abilities is the teacher's absolutely best educational tool. It is so powerful because it is an inspiration to the teacher's creativity. The teacher who assesses students' knowledge and abilities begins to think out appropriate educational strategies, whereas with the teacher, there is often a mismatch between what is taught and what is appropriate for the students. When tests are administered in advance of teaching, the teacher sees where needs lie, and the students realize that there is much to learn- the test results are an inspiration to student humility.

¹ L., Educators, Learners and Active Learning Methodologies. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 2004. -pp 275-286.

² Silberman, Mel, *Active Learning: 101 Strategies to Teach Any Subject*. (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1996).

³ Herrington J., Oliver R., Herrington T., and Sparrow H., *Towards a New Tradition of Online Instruction: Using Situated Learning to Design Web-based Units*. Paper presented at ASCILITE conference, Coffs Harbour, Queensland, 2000.

Thus, learners must acquire the cognitive, metacognitive and affective skills. It is these skills together with the element of a strong relationship between teachers and pupils and an enabling environment that underpin the development of independent learning and allow it to make a reality in the classroom. For independent learning realization there must be a conscious decision by responsible authority to establish an independent learning programme and the consequent provision of teacher's education, facilities and resources and leadership.

Summarizing, we can state that

- Independent learning is a process, a method and a philosophy of education, in which a student acquires knowledge by his or her own efforts and develops the ability for inquiry and critical evaluation;
- Independent learning includes freedom of choice in determining those objectives within the limits of a given programme and with the aid of a faculty adviser;
- It requires freedom of process to carry out the objectives;
- It places increased educational responsibility on the student for the achieving of objectives and for the value of the goals.

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