



Development of the Learners' Social Responsibility Skills in the English Teaching Context

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Abstract

Current paper deals with the problem of the development of students' social responsibility skills in the process of language teaching. Appropriate methods, topics, exercises and practical tasks are introduced to observe the peculiarities of the development of students' social responsibility skills alongside with their language acquisition.

The paper clarifies the idea that only with the presence of student-centered instructional context it is possible to form and develop the above-mentioned competence, simultaneously ensuring effectiveness of the teaching process.

Methods for teaching social responsibility are different. Here the role of the teacher is essential. He/she should make a careful elaboration of the lesson plan, considering the children's age, interests, as well as the topic of the lesson, goals, expected outputs and different other pedagogical and educational components.

Within the framework of this article we try to present our observations related to the issue of formation and development of social responsibility of students at elementary and secondary stages of learning, particularly through interaction.

It becomes clear that today social responsibility is a life-skill, a value that helps a person, in this case, a school student, to recognize his own skills, to gain independence, self-confidence, the ability to live and orient himself in different socio-cultural contexts.

Keywords: *social responsibility, interactive environment, life skills, cooperative learning, student-centered teaching environment.*

Social responsibility describes the awareness, understanding and appreciation of people and surrounding environments. Socially responsible students try to engage with people and the world around them in ethical and respectful ways. Social responsibility includes four core tenets. They are:

- **building relationships**
- **contributing to the community and caring for the environment**
- **resolving problems**
- **valuing diversity** [5].

The classroom is a conducive learning environment where not only the acquisition of knowledge is valued, but also life skills: communication, collaboration, critical/creative thinking, learning to learn, social responsibility, etc. Various methods and processes are aimed at developing students' social responsibility skills in the classroom: brainstorming, task-based learning, authentic dialogues and conversations, presentations, role-playing, debates, etc. As one of the life skills of the 21st century, it helps students acquire the skills to live and act harmoniously in a multilingual and multicultural world, as well as the ability to relate and cooperate with others, along with language acquisition. It develops skills that will be essential for the learner in the future: how to select the right choices in different life situations, make decisions, and finally, live in inner and social harmony.

Today, the development of social responsibility of students is at the core of general education, particularly in language education. Important international program guidelines address this issue. In "The Cambridge Life Competences" published by Cambridge University Press, social responsibility is discussed in detail, with the



help of carefully developed descriptors, the sub-competencies characterizing its development are covered. The document considers the gradual development of students' social responsibility skills according to the stages of education: pre-educational, elementary, secondary, higher and professional [1].

Next, the three main sub-competencies of social responsibility are presented:

Understanding of personal and social responsibility as part of a particular social group – Refers to the identification and understanding of the importance of personal and social responsibility at different levels or situations, from the partial to the global. Presupposes that learners should fulfill their personal and social responsibilities as a member of a social group and/or as a global citizen and take responsibility for their actions.

Demonstrating intercultural awareness - This refers to the learners being able to describe and analyze the characteristics of their own culture and that of others, and make comparisons in a positive and respectful way. It also includes the opportunity to collaborate with people from other cultures. Culture in this context can refer to the cultures of different countries or the cultures of different ethnic/social groups and organizations.

Understanding global/universal issues - Involves identifying, discussing and understanding a range of perspectives on global issues, such as health, human rights and environmental topics. Learners will be able to understand how their behaviour can positively or negatively contribute to the identified issues [1].

In the General Language Education Program of the Republic of Armenia the social responsibility of learners is also emphasized, it is included in the topics presented in the content core and in the corresponding language material, through the context of the concept of **identity**. Naturally, social responsibility should be emphasized in the teacher's lesson plan, where he/she elaborates and specifies the purpose and expected outcomes of each lesson, guaranteeing meaningful and effective language learning.

Role of the language teacher supporting social responsibility

To support social responsibility of the learners, we must provide an inclusive instructional environment in class. For this account we can use the following tools:

- assign classroom jobs' use
- role-playing in social situations
- large and small group activities
- class stories
- class meetings
- discussions, debates
- different kind of social activities, events, etc.

Students today understand the importance of developing skills. They know the value of being an all-rounder and understand the value of social cohesion. That is why students also need to work on their social responsibility and realize their duties as responsible citizens.

So, how can teachers play a crucial role in making students aware of social responsibility. They can teach responsibility to students in the following ways.

- **Primary school learners:** Teachers can help their students learn the concept of giving back to the local community. They can take pupils out for volunteering activities or organize drawing competitions based on their social responsibility.
- **Secondary school learners:** One of the ways to let pupils know the importance of social responsibility is by giving them enough resources and keeping them informed. Teachers can provide students access to websites and other informational/media resources that evaluate the environmental and social impacts of different kind of human activities.
- **High school learners:** Teachers can offer projects about environmental concerns and what students can do to make the environment better. Also, they can encourage students to participate in debates concerning social responsibility [3; p.46].

These are some ways through which teachers can encourage students to participate in solving various issues concerning the environment. To make social responsibility more engaging for students, teachers can encourage them to take internships or projects with an organization working for the welfare of society and the environment. The development of the learner's social responsibility supposes the evaluation of the following principles:

Accountability



Transparency
Ethical behaviour, respect for human rights
Respect for the rule of law
Respect for international norms of behaviour [5].

Within the framework of this article we try to specify the issue of formation and development of social responsibility of the learners at the elementary and secondary levels of education, and particularly through interaction.

Elementary Level

We can testify, that junior schoolers are curious by nature. It means that it is necessary to create an environment in class that will stimulate their curiosity, internal motivation and as a result they will be integrated into the learning process. Above all, it is necessary to help children communicate with each other respectfully, maintaining the order of speech, mutual tolerance and respect. Children are free, they can ask each other questions, trying to understand different phenomena, analyze situations and evaluate facts.

Non-academic technologies are very effective at this stage of learning, as children strive to learn with the help of songs, fairy tales, short stories, simple texts and games. Role-playing games are especially effective. The teacher must make appropriate choice when choosing the topic to integrate the personal/social responsibilities and rights of the learners in the society into the language lesson. They can be offered roles: brother or sister, son or daughter, classmate, friend, team member, and match them with the responsibilities of each role: share responsibility, be considerate, respect others' feelings, be fair, respectful, consider others' opinions, help the one who is more vulnerable, follow the rules, etc.

To provide effectiveness in class the teachers must carefully and purposefully select the topics for each lesson. Topics must be available and interesting to children, taking into consideration their age, social background, interests and hobbies. Besides, the teacher must elaborate and specify the goals of the lesson and expected outputs.

For example, introducing the topic “**House**” we can work out the following goals:

- Expand the vocabulary describing the house, room, housework.
- Develop the ability to use simple expressions describing the house, room, household chores in written and oral speech.
- Import and reinforce grammatical material relevant to the topic.

As for recommended forms of activities we offer:

- Wallpaper: My house/room
- Watching a video: Homework
- Role play
- Work with pictures.

As a result, in association with language skills the learners acquire a caring attitude and responsibility towards the house and things.

The topic “**Me and my friends**” is also appropriate to this stage of instruction. We suggest the following goals:

- Expand the thematic vocabulary related to friends, friendship, acquaintance.
- Import and reinforce very simple and short phrases representing himself and his friends.
- Develop the skill of introducing oneself and one's friends in simple words and short sentences.
- Introduce and reinforce grammatical material relevant to the topic.

Contents of the lesson can embrace the following questions:

- My classmates
- Who is my friend?
- New acquaintances, etc.

As for recommended forms of activity we offer:



- Wallpaper: My Friend
- Role play: Acquaintance in the yard, library/corridor etc.

As a result, the learners develop their language knowledge and acquire an attitude towards the importance of friends and friendship.

Teachers can introduce different situations in class, making learners more motivated. Students can also work in pairs or groups to role-play the given situations, for example:

- A classmate at school or a family member at home does not fulfill their duties responsibly. mom is busy with housework, one of the children immediately stops the game and helps mom, and the other one still annoys her. **-To form a caring attitude towards one's own place of residence, community. To form respect to work and to different professions.**
- In the store, the older brother is doing shopping for the family, and the younger one stubbornly demands his brother to buy a game channel for him. **-To form awareness of the importance of spending money sparingly while shopping, buying only what is necessary and suitable.**
- It's winter, children don't accept their mothers' advice: they don't go to school in warm clothes and get sick. **- Create an awareness of the importance of wearing clothes appropriate for the season and the weather of the day.**
- They see that some children are polluting the nature while eating ice cream in the park, not throwing the ice cream paper in the trash. **- Give examples (also from own experience) of basic rules of behaviour in one's own place of residence, caring for the community, entertainment places.**

With similar situational tasks children should be helped find the mutual connection between the acquired knowledge and personal life experience, so that the knowledge does not remain as a simple memorization of theoretical ideas, but becomes practical, connected with life.

In an outclass contexts teachers can enhance social responsibility in students if they teach them the art of **preserving**, for example: to teach to respect the environment and to make it a better place. First of all, the teacher must make the children be aware of their surroundings and learn the art of preserving. They can encourage students to keep their surroundings clean. Teachers can help them understand the need to preserve water and other non-renewable resources of energy. The habit of switching off the lights and fans before leaving the classroom should also be encouraged.

As a citizen of the 21st century, the above-mentioned processes are aimed at helping students to acquire skills to live and act harmoniously in a multilingual and multicultural world, as well as the ability to relate and cooperate with others.

Secondary Level

Students at this age are more motivated, especially when the presented tasks and practical works are consistent with their age characteristics and interests. Therefore, it is necessary to personalize the learning process, that is, teachers should connect the taught material with the personality of their students and their daily life. The closer the children are to the content of the language material being taught, the more motivated they will be integrated into the learning process.

Today, as a result of ICT communication, students have more awareness of the world around them. Being motivated, they will be able to explore themselves and people in different social contexts. Hands-on learning in the classroom and outside of school in extra-curricular environments should be promoted. Again, the right choice of topics is important. We should choose topics that have gained more and more popularity in the media, for example, "Climate change", "Animal protection", "World cuisines", "Company on social networks", etc.

The topic "**Climate change**" can be studied in the context of regular class, open class or event, it can include:

- reading, discussion of texts
- video viewing and discussion
- making of posters, slides
- various discussions, debates



- short reports
- quizzes, contests, etc.

We can introduce the above topic to the class through exercises or practical tasks, for example:

- State in three sentences what actions you want to support the fight against climate change.
- Present how you save resources at home and at school, for example: water and energy.
- Write a letter to national or global authorities calling for urgent proposals to overcome the climate crisis.

As a result, along with language knowledge, **students acquire information on the importance of participating in different actions for preserving our planet from disasters and cataclysms.**

The topic “**Animal protection**” is also interesting for children. Within the scope of this topic we can:

- expand and strengthen the vocabulary and grammatical structures related to the topic
- develop oral and written language
- organize a role-play on the themes "On the farm", "In the forest"/"In the zoo".
- organize a visit to the zoo, and then ask children to prepare a short report, poster or PPT show on the topic "My favourite animal".

As a result, along with language knowledge, **students acquire the responsibility of caring for animals, the ability to preserve the environment and realize its importance.**

At this stage, projects are also effective, their topics should be consistent with the students' age interests, preferences, and the language material should be in accordance with their knowledge and skills. Students can work in pairs, groups.

While introducing the topic "**Cuisines of the world**", we emphasize the development of the social responsibility of students within the framework of presenting the idea of the diversity of cuisines and cuisine as a part of national culture.

Students will learn:

- the language material related to the topic
- the names and composition of famous dishes of one's own country
- the most popular dishes of the target language country and other countries
- information on the lives and activities of famous chefs.

As a learning method, the followings will be effective:

- role-playing
- poster on the theme "Cuisines of the world"
- project: Creation of a cooking video/Organization of a multicultural dinner
- visit to the cafe/restaurant, follow-up discussions.

As a result, **students realize the importance of interculturality and multiculturalism as the most important competence of a modern citizen, their ability to perceive and value the diversity of cuisines in the given cultural context will be formed.** In parallel, they will re-recognize their national values and acquire abilities not only to appreciate, but also to represent them.

While teaching the topic “**Holidays**”, we emphasize the development of the social responsibility of students within the framework of the idea how to be respectful towards others and their cultures. We can suggest the following goals:

- Introduce the idea of holidays as an important part of culture.
- Expand vocabulary and structures describing holidays/anniversaries/national/international holidays.
- Import and reinforce grammatical material relevant to the topic.
- Familiarize with the similarities and differences of national holidays held in the country of the target language and in Armenia.

Contents of the lesson can embrace the following questions:

- anniversaries
- national holidays (in the studied country and in Armenia)
- international holidays.

As for recommended forms of activity we offer:



- role playing
- cross-cultural research project: "Holidays"
- PPT presentation: "My favorite holiday"
- writing a short simple letter to an online friend "My birthday"
- video viewing/discussion.

As a result, the learners deepen their responsibility for the preservation of national culture, holidays and acquire a respectful attitude towards other cultures and holidays.

In an outclass contexts teachers can enhance the learners' social responsibility skills encouraging them to participate in **voluntary activities**. They can take students to an old-age home or introduce them to various other organizations that work for the betterment of society.

Teachers can encourage their students to **make contributions**: to collect their old books, gadgets, clothes, and other items and donate them to needy people.

In the modern changing world problems regularly arise that the students are also concerned with. Willingly or unwillingly, they address the opportunities, issues and challenges of a fast-paced, multicultural world. Therefore, teachers should help students recognize and realize their rights and responsibilities. As a result of our professional experience and observations in the schools of the Republic of Armenia, we are convinced that in this context it is essential to introduce the topics, language material, situations, dialogues, as well as authentic texts that will promote social responsibility in the classroom. The selection should be made carefully and purposefully, taking into consideration the learners' needs. Experience shows that students are happy to integrate into discussions on social topics, using the target language in parallel.

We, teachers must be flexible in choosing topics. Social responsibility issues should be included in weekly lesson planning as they provide a meaningful learning context for the language use. It is simply necessary to have a friendly, non-judgmental environment in class, where everyone's opinion is respected and valued. The student must realize that he/she is not a passive learner, but an active social actor, therefore they have the right to express their own opinion, and that making a mistake is not a defect and they will not be criticized or judged for their wrong answer.

There is a continuing debate about the amount of time teachers should spend talking in class. Overuse of Teacher Talking Time (TTT) is inappropriate because the more teacher talks, the less chance there is for the students to practice their own speaking, and it is the students who need the practice, not the teacher. [4, p 38]

Main language educational document in Europe, the CEFR emphasizes communication in language teaching, considering "action-oriented approach" as the basic approach within the communicative language teaching [2; p.27].

Thus, methods for teaching social responsibility are different. The teacher should make a choice, considering the children's age, interests, as well as the subject of the lesson, goals, current objectives and expected outputs.

As a life skill of the 21st century, social responsibility is of key importance and only purposeful and carefully elaborated interaction will generate motivation in class, fostering the learners' language communicative skills and their diverse life competences as well.

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