



Development of the Learners' Self Education Skills in the Process of Teaching English

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Abstract

Current paper touches upon the problem for the development of learners' self learning skills in the process of teaching English.

The purpose of the paper is to study and highlight the peculiarities and possibilities for the development of self-education within the framework of English classes.

The problems of the paper are:

- 1. Analyze the importance of the development of learners' self education value system in the English teaching process.*
- 2. Specify the features of integrated classes.*
- 3. Present tasks and activities aimed at the development of the value system of self-education, which can be used during English classes.*

In the scope of the current study we try to introduce practical tasks and activities that are based on appropriate teaching methods and techniques and can serve as a tool for the development of above mentioned skills. We present our observations, which refer to pupils in schools of Armenia, and particularly in the process of teaching English.

We are certain that only with the domination of student-centered instructional context it is possible to form and develop self learning skills, simultaneously ensuring effectiveness of the teaching process. We emphasize the significance of teachers as facilitators and mentors who inspire students to embrace self-education as a valuable tool for personal and professional growth.

Keywords: *self education, interactive environment, life skills, student-centered teaching environment, interactive teacher, intercultural learning.*

Self-education is a life-skill, a value that helps a person, in this case, a school student, to gain knowledge and skills, to recognize his/her own opportunities, to gain the ability to live and act in multicultural and multilingual world independently.

Education is currently changing its nature with time. Today, society demands from education not only to provide students with knowledge, but also with the necessary abilities and skills, so that they can later independently expose themselves in society. Nowadays the importance of self-education is increasing rapidly.

Cambridge University Press in its *Cambridge Life Competences Framework* has identified six life competences and main domains of their development, they are:

1. Critical thinking skills
2. Creative thinking skills
3. Communication skills
4. Collaboration skills
5. Social responsibility skills
6. Learning to learn skills [2].

Among these competences **Learning to Learn** occupies key role. The relevance of the formation and development of the value system of self education is greater than ever. It is determined by the rate of information creation, change and applicability. Formal educational institutions, being relatively more conservative structures, are not able to adequately respond to this pace.



Hence the need arises not so much to change the curricula, materials, plans, but also to prepare students for self learning. They need to be endowed with competences that will help them "adapt" to the created situation in the way they need.

Thus, the importance of the formation of the value system of self education among students is required, which determines the relevance of our research.

In Cambridge Life Competences Framework three core sub-skills are identified within self learning skills, they are:

1. **Practical skills for participating in learning** - Includes important techniques such as making notes, storing and retrieving information. There are various methods for engaging in these techniques, and learners need to experiment and choose the one which best suits their own personal style, needs and resources. Useful information needs to be stored, and systems developed for retrieving information as and when required.
2. **Taking control of own learning** – It is required to become autonomous, maintain motivation, and stay focused on the task at hand in order to achieve the best results. To accomplish this, learners need to be clear about their learning goals.
3. **Reflecting on and evaluating own learning success** - Involves learners reflecting on their own learning in order to assess what worked for them and what did not. This reflection can lead to evaluation which, in turn, can inform decisions regarding whether to persevere with certain courses of action or to make changes. As a result, learners are able to identify and use effective learning techniques and strategies. Strategies chosen will depend on the context, the learning goal, objectives and the learner's individual characteristics, since strategy effectiveness will vary according to all of these multiple factors.

As a life skill of the 21st century, learning to learn (self-education) competence is of key importance and only interactive classes based on purposefully and carefully elaborated lesson content will generate students' motivation, foster their language communicative skills and diverse life competences as well. To develop learners' learning to learn skills it is essential to raise their autonomy as well. Learners must grow as independent thinkers and communicators. They must use critical and creative thinking, solving problems independently. Thus, pupils must become independent and autonomous learners. Although language teaching is learner-centered, the teacher has a major role, he/she is a manager in class facilitating and monitoring the instruction [4; p. 25, 7; p.16-18].

Teacher's roles in instruction



Self-learning competence is not a straightforward process; it requires carefully elaborates lesson plans, topics, language material, as well as scaffolding by the teacher with multiple techniques and opportunities. Teaching languages must be based on:

- interculturality
- interdisciplinarity



- interdisciplinary integration
- multilevelness
- multifunctionality.

In the case of self-education, the learner himself outlines the goal of his learning and the ways and tasks to achieve the final results:

- what to learn?
- how to study?
- where to study?

He is free in his activities, but he must be able to choose the right methods and strategies to ensure efficiency. In the process of teaching English, the teacher should be able to introduce such tasks that the student can express himself by applying the critical thinking and the ability to create.

In Cambridge Life Competences Framework Learning to Learn Competence is introduced in details and with carefully elaborated descriptors. The document considers the gradual development of students' learning to learn skills according to the stages of learning: pre-educational, elementary, secondary, higher and professional [2].

Within the scope of this paper we try to specify issues on formation and development of self education skills of the learners at the elementary and secondary levels of instruction, and particularly through interaction. It should be mentioned that the development of above-mentioned skills is diverse from stage to stage and from learner to learner. So, it is important by the teacher to provide the appropriate amount of support, depending on each learner's individuality and the peculiarity of teaching requirements for each stage.

Teachers must acknowledge that the development of these skills is carried out throughout of life and at any age or stage. Parallely school learners acquire these skills from learning other subjects as well. So, the combination of physical, cognitive and affective skills together with scaffolding and diverse support by teachers can set up firm basis for the generation of self learning skills. In this context teaching English in a communicative environment is of key importance [1; p. 45].

Communicative language teaching emphasizes interaction as the core and outcome of learning.[3; p. 47-48] The teacher must possess adequate language knowledge and professional skills to provide communicative interactive environment in the classroom with authentic topics, texts, situations, language material (dialogues, discussions, role-playing games, real-natural games, simulations and debates).

As one of the 21-st century life skills, communication is multi-layered and multi-faceted. It includes:

- written and oral communication
- mediated language processing
- online communication
- interaction
- appropriate value system and attitude
- body language: gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, etc.

In the context of self education, the learner is expected to demonstrate high commitment, initiative and self discipline.

Next, we present our observations, which refer to the journey of developing Learning to Learn skills of pupils in schools of Armenia, particularly in the process of teaching English.

It is necessary to accentuate that the formation of sub-competencies mentioned above, is relevant to all stage learners, just their age, interests, and language proficiency levels are different. Teachers should take this factor into account while elaborating content of each lesson with corresponding individual lesson plan.

Elementary Level

We believe, that at this stage young learners are too curious and active. It means that teachers must create a favourable environment in class, fostering the learners' curiosity, motivation and engagement in the learning process [5; p. 204]. Besides, it is necessary to help children communicate with each other friendly, maintaining turn-taking, mutual tolerance and respect. Children are free, and they prefer games, songs, motion activities to academic tasks. They don't have organizational thoughts. At this stage it is a



huge problem to make the learners autonomous thinkers. For this account the teachers must elaborate tasks and different kind of classroom activities that will engage them in free and autonomous performances and exposure. First of all young learners must acquire **reflective** and **evaluative skills** to monitor their progress in their learning. Teachers can use appropriate course books, flash cards, digital technology, didactic wheels or other items to use in class. These kind of tasks also provide the scope for learners to compare their performance over the period of time. Teachers can scaffold this development by providing simple tools such as a post-task self reflection form in which learners evaluate their performance in a given task. Learning material and task types should be relevant to the main goals. Through these tasks and activities teachers consider how they could build up their students' learning to learn skills.¹² Bellow we suggest some lessons, the core content of which is relevant to elementary students' level of language instruction.

Grade 3. Topic: "My School Life"

Goals of the Lesson

- Expand the vocabulary representing the school, the class schedule, school routine.
- Introduce and reinforce grammatical material relevant to the topic.
- Develop the ability to present the school, the timetable, the school routine in very simple and short expressions. **Form a caring attitude towards the school and its environment.**

Proposed Forms of Autonomous Activity

1. Work with pictures and cards
2. Wallpaper: "List of Lessons in a Foreign Language"
3. My Daily Routine
4. Role play: "My School Routine."

General Ideas

1. Evaluation of justice and development
2. Identifying learners' rights and duties
3. Recognizing equal opportunities.

Interdisciplinary Integration

1. Native language - Describe the school routine.
2. Fine Art - Picture your routine for the day.
3. Technology - Make school supplies with cardboard.

Grade 4. Topic: "My Daily Life"

Goals of the Lesson

- Develop the vocabulary, expressions and speech structures needed to represent everyday life, leisure and favourite activities.
- Introduce and reinforce grammatical material relevant to the topic.
- Form skills/abilities to communicate in simple sentences about his/her daily life, favourite occupation. **Form an attitude towards the importance of properly organizing daily life.**

Proposed Forms of Autonomous Activity

1. Role playing
2. Poster: "Timetable"
3. A letter/card to his/her friend in the native language.

General Ideas

1. Acquire orientation in time and space
2. Respect rational management of time and personal responsibility.



Interdisciplinary Integration

1. Native language - Write tips about managing time well.
2. Fine Art - Depict your favourite pastimes.
3. Me and the surrounding world - Present a role-play on how to properly organize daily life.

At this stage it is essential to encourage learners, so that they willingly get integrated into the learning process and are active. As for the tasks presented in class they should be accessible to learners and encourage them to participate.

Teenage Learners

Students at this age are more motivated, especially when the presented tasks and practical activities are consistent with their age and interests. Therefore, it is necessary to personalize the learning process, that is, teachers should connect the teaching material with the personality of the 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 to integrate into the learning process, thus trying to understand the content of the language material, as well as find connections between ideas. As for organizational tools teachers can use:

1. brainstorming
2. note-taking while reading or listening
3. subsequent discussions about the topic or theme
4. organising ideas that emerge during group work activities.

Bellow we suggest some examples of activities practising learning to learn competencies of the secondary school students' in their language learning journey.

Grade 5. Topic: "Work and Profession"

Goals of the Lesson

- Introduce the idea of the importance of work and professions.
- Familiarize with the vocabulary, phrases, structures, instructions specific to the work/profession topic.
- Develop the ability to answer simple and short questions within the framework of the topic. **Form respect for work and different professions.**

Contents:

- My little job/investment/weekend, tree planting/housework
- Types of professions
- What do I want to become?

Expected Outcomes:

Knowledge. At the End of the Topic, the Student Should Know:

- thematic vocabulary
- given grammar material
- skills required for certain professions
- role of each job and professions in our lives.

Language Abilities. At the End of the Topic, the Student Should Be Able to:

- listen and understand the simple speech about work and professions (video, audio, etc.),
- read and understand simple texts about work and professions
- describe (oral and written) different jobs and professions using short and simple structures
- briefly present his/her preferred work/profession in simple terms
- ask simple questions about work/profession or his/her preferred work/profession and answer similar questions addressed to him/her



- conduct simple correspondence on the topic of work, presenting his/her preferred professions
- explain the importance of work and profession
- recognize the advantages and disadvantages of cooperative work.

Proposed Forms of Autonomous Activity

- Role playing
- Work with pictures and cards
- Art-collage/Wallpaper: "My Favourite Specialty".

Interdisciplinary Integration

- Native - Read a text about work and explain the importance of work and profession.
- Fine art - Draw a tree.
- Technology - Make a poster about the sabbatical.
- Digital Literacy - Prepare a PPT about professions.

Grade 7. Topic: "Music as a Universal Language"

Goals of the Lesson

- Introduce the idea of universality of music.
- Expand and strengthen vocabulary and simple expressions related to musical styles and instruments.
- Introduce and reinforce grammatical material relevant to the topic.
- Develop five communicative abilities on the topic (listening, reading, monologue, written speech, interaction). **Evaluate music as a means of cross-cultural, interpersonal communication and self-expression.**

Our analysis and observations testify that along with the formal education carried out in schools, it is actual to provide students with self education opportunities. In this context, communicative language teaching provides a favourable environment in class not only for formal education or self education, but also for the growth of students' autonomy, self confidence, for the development of their critical and creative thinking, problem solving and decision making skills in different life situations.

The teacher offers task, the solution of which requires critical/creative thinking. So, learners have to conduct experiments to solve the task. They are free in their actions and should not be afraid of making mistakes [6; p.298]. As a result they acquire self learning skills and multilateral thinking abilities.

Thus, teaching methods, language material, as well as educational process aimed at forming students' self learning abilities are different. The teacher makes the choice taking into account the children's age, interests, intellectual abilities, including many educational, pedagogical and extra-linguistic factors as well. As a 21-st century life skill, self education is a value and it has a central role for the development of an independent and competitive individual.

The formation and development of students' self education skills requires a carefully elaborated methodology, which embraces diverse interactive methods, authentic material, practical tasks, as well as a positive and constructive learning environment. We are certain that all this is possible if the teacher himself has high self education skills and regularly applies them in his professional field.

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