

РІВНЕНСЬКИЙ ДЕРЖАВНИЙ ГУМАНІТАРНИЙ УНІВЕРСИТЕТ
ФАКУЛЬТЕТ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ ФІЛОЛОГІЇ
КАФЕДРА ПРАКТИКИ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ



АКТУАЛЬНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ СУЧАСНОЇ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ ФІЛОЛОГІЇ

СТУДЕНТСЬКИЙ НАУКОВИЙ ВІСНИК

PHILOLOGY



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Студентський науковий вісник



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НОВІТНІ МЕТОДИКИ НАВЧАННЯ ІНОЗЕМНИХ МОВ

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AUTONOMY IN THE CLASSROOM: DEVELOPING AUTONOMY THROUGH GROUP WORK AND PAIR WORK

Autonomy has been a major area of interest in foreign language teaching for around 30 years. A lot has been written about what learner autonomy is, about the rationale for promoting it, and about its implications for teaching and learning. Learner autonomy improves the quality of language learning, prepares individuals for life-long learning and it allows learners to make best use of learning opportunities in and out of the classroom.

The focus of much research in learner autonomy is on defining how learners can take charge of their own learning and how teachers can help students to become more autonomous. Learner autonomy was first defined by Holec [7]. Holec's defines the learner autonomy as "*the ability to take charge of one's learning ... to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning*" and the specific decisions he listed were:

- determining the objectives;
- defining the contents and progressions;
- selecting methods and techniques to be used;
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition;
- evaluating what has been acquired.

Sinclair [12] suggests 13 aspects of learner autonomy which 'appear to have been recognised and broadly accepted by the language teaching profession' (see Table 1).

Table 1: Defining learning autonomy [12].

1.	Autonomy is a construct of capacity
2.	Autonomy involves a willingness on the part of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning
3.	The capacity and willingness of learners to take such responsibility is not necessarily innate
4.	Complete autonomy is an idealistic goal
5.	There are degrees of autonomy
6.	The degrees of autonomy are unstable and variable
7.	Autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent
8.	Developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process – i.e. conscious reflection and decision-making
9.	Promoting autonomy is not simply a matter of teaching strategies
10.	Autonomy can take place both inside and outside the classroom
11.	Autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension
12.	The promotion of autonomy has a political as well as psychological dimension
13.	Autonomy is interpreted differently by different cultures

Autonomous learners have the capacity to determine realistic and reachable goals, select appropriate methods and techniques to be used, monitor their own learning process, and evaluate the progress of their own learning [9]. According to Dam [2], an autonomous learner is an active participant in the social processes of learning and an active interpreter of new information in terms of what she/he already and uniquely knows. Autonomous people are intrinsically motivated, perceive themselves to be in control of their decision-making, take responsibility for the outcomes of their actions and have confidence in themselves [5].

Fostering learner autonomy may be defined in simple terms as helping learners to become more independent by training them to use language learning strategies effectively in their language learning process, thus taking the responsibility to control, evaluate and monitor their language learning process. Dickinson [6, 330] identifies six ways “*in which the teacher can promote greater learner independence*”:

1. Legitimizing independence in learning by showing that we, as teachers, approve, and by encouraging the students to be more independent;
2. Convincing learners that they are capable of greater independence in learning -give them successful experiences of independent learning;
3. Giving learners opportunities to exercise their independence;
4. Helping learners to develop learning strategies so that they can exercise their independence;
5. Helping learners to become more aware of language as a system so that they can understand many of the learning techniques available and learn sufficient grammar to understand simple reference books;
6. Sharing with learners something of what we know about language learning so that they have a greater awareness of what to expect from the language learning task and how they should react to problems that erect barriers to learning

As put forward by Dickinson [6], what teachers aim to achieve through training learners on language learning strategies is to provide learners with awareness on how to learn a foreign language on their own.

The learner has to be equipped and empowered to exercise his autonomy as and when it is required. The teacher`s role in promoting the psychological attributes and practical abilities involved in learner autonomy and in engaging student`s existing autonomy within classroom practice becomes crucial [1, 2]. Supportive engagement of learners` existing autonomy (by the teacher) can be seen as an important basis for its progressive development; indeed, the notion that learners have the power and right to learn for themselves is seen by many proponents as a fundamental tenet [12].

L.Vygotsky [14] sees learning as a matter of supported performance and emphasises the social-interactive dimensions of the learning process. According to this model, the teacher's role is to create and maintain a learning environment in which learners can be autonomous in order to become more autonomous. The development of their learning skills is never entirely separable from the content of their learning. An autonomous learner is characterised as one who should have insights into his/her learning styles and strategies, take an active approach to the learning task at hand, be willing to take risks (to communicate in the target language at all costs), complete homework whether or not it is assessed and place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy (edit own work). Unfortunately, many learners seem not to understand the importance of practice when it comes to learning the skills required for study.

If the learning environment is comfortable where the learners feel encouraged, they are more likely to experiment with different learning strategies and not be afraid to ask questions and to ask for assistance when necessary. Learners also need to be given the skills to be able to seek out materials and resources outside the classroom to enable them to improve their recognition of what is relevant and what is not. They need to be able to recognise that these research skills are important and transferable and can be utilised when they go on to further study.

Strategies for successful autonomisation include the use of the target language as the preferred medium of teaching and learning from the very beginning; the gradual development by the learners of

a repertoire of useful learning activities; and ongoing evaluation of the learning process, achieved by a combination of teacher, peer and self-assessment. Posters and learner logbooks play a central role in three ways: they help learners to capture much of the content of learning, support the development of speaking, and provide a focus for assessment.

Independence and autonomy can be encouraged by giving the learners tools for success in their further study. These tools include helping the learners to understand their real goals and to develop skills to enable them to find the answers and information they need in order for them to be successful in reaching these goals. Learners need to be able to be aware of and understand their own learning styles and to use these to their advantage. At the same time, they should be willing to adapt to a more autonomous method of learning. As they gain confidence they will be more able to monitor their own learning which will in turn make them confident and give them a sense of achievement.

One of the most effective ways to promote learner autonomy is using such kind of work as group work. Group work is an important part of the learner autonomous classroom. By shifting the focus from teaching to learning and diminishing the learners' dependence on the teacher the groundwork is laid for peer assistance. The relationship between learner autonomy and dependence means that at any particular time learners will be able to perform some tasks by themselves but need help with others. Individual differences will ensure that learners develop at different rates and with different emphases. This means that almost from the beginning, learners will be able to support one another in task performance. This is why group work plays a key role in any pedagogy derived from Vygotsky's principles. In Vygotsky's definition of the zone of proximal development he relied on adults or more capable peers to take on a pedagogical role. In the principles of learner autonomy relating to group work this role is assumed first by one learner and then another in a complex structure of interdependence [10].

Leni Dam [3] indicates that in an autonomous classroom, learners manage their group work by using their own resources. Leni Dam has built up some criteria that can be used when training learners in forming their own groups:

- Learners are allowed to choose partners by their preferences, those they work well with or they think they can learn from;
- Learners can choose partners they have seldom or never worked with before which provides variety in the group work, helps learners get to know one another and prevent cliques;
- Partners that have the same interests in different activities or materials,
- Partners that have certain abilities like good writing;
- Partners that can provide peer tutoring [3].

At the end of its task all the group members, together with the teacher, assess the group work. This helps the learners make the connection between the goals they set collaboratively in the beginning, the strategies used to achieve them and the outcome, and put them into words. The learners assess their own contribution to solving the task and the group work. The experiences accumulated by different groups are shared with the whole class and the teacher, and together they try to find solutions to different problems and the most effective way to form groups [4].

At first the learners may form groups out of habit choosing to work with their friends, but as they get used to the format, different groups begin to appear. At the upper levels, the following criteria are a good frame of reference:

1. *“What do I want to be better at? Why?”*
2. *What do I want to do? Why?*
3. *Who would I like to work with? Why?”* [3, 44].

Learning how to choose working partners increases learner awareness of, for example, their strengths, weaknesses and personal working style.

Successful group work can boost learner autonomy and help implement a different atmosphere in the classroom [13]. A teacher has to be very much aware of how the group work is progressing and step in if necessary. Bad group work can do as much damage to morale as good group work can help it. It is important for teachers to give learners ample opportunity to develop good group work habits and they may have to work with the whole class regularly in setting up good group work principles.

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**EXTRACURRICULAR READING AS A TOOL OF DEVELOPMENT OF
PUPILS' CREATIVE ABILITIES**

Nowadays reading is singled out as one of the most important aspects of language learning in sociocultural and linguistic dimensions. Pupils can not only improve their level of knowledge in lexical sphere, but also get acquainted with the realities and traditions of the language that is their field of study. Extracurricular reading helps to give children understanding of the current English with all its dialect and slang variations. A pupil gets an opportunity to express his or her own opinion about the course of events in the book and give an assessment review to characters that contributes to the increase of the level of language proficiency.

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АКТУАЛЬНІ ПРОБЛЕМИ СУЧАСНОЇ ІНОЗЕМНОЇ ФІЛОЛОГІЇ

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