DEVELOPING LEARNER AUTONOMY AS A MAJOR FACTOR IN PRE-SERVICE TEACHER TRAINING

Alla Gembaruk,
PhD, Associate Professor
Pavlo Tychyna Uman State Pedagogical University

Setting the problem. Learner autonomy is an important concept in educational fields. Developing learner autonomy has an important role in the theory and practice of foreign language teaching and learning. Thus, developing learner autonomy has become one of the major factors in Pre-Service Teacher Training. The new EFT Methodology Curriculum which is designed for Bachelor's level students who are training as teachers of English and designed within the "New Generation School Teacher" project, initiated and supported by the Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine and the British Council, Ukraine, includes the Unit "Developing Learner Autonomy" which is aimed at developing students' ability to develop learner autonomy both in and beyond the classroom.

Main research questions. This article is focused on developing understanding of the notion "learner autonomy" and studying the ways of developing learner autonomy in the framework of the new ELT Methodology Curriculum. The research was organised around the following research questions:

1. How learner autonomy is defined in the methodological literature?
2. What are the main skills of an autonomous learner?
3. What ways of developing learner autonomy are suggested by the new ELT Methodology Curriculum?

In order to answer these research questions the following *methods* were used: *literature review* in order to understand the notion of learner autonomy and identify the main skills of an autonomous learner; and *document study* to analyse the new ELT Methodology Curriculum in order to identify the ways it suggests to develop autonomy.

Findings. The term *learner autonomy* has been used in education since the early 1980s, when it was first introduced by the educator Henri Holec. Holec

defined learner autonomy as the learner's ability to take charge of his/her own learning. In taking responsibility for their learning, learners need to work in partnership with the teacher and other students. In keeping with the definition above, there are a number of skills which are needed to be developed. The main skills are:

- the ability to identify and set learning goals;
- the ability to plan and execute learning activities;
- the ability to reflect on and evaluate their learning;
- an understanding of the purpose of their learning;
- an understanding of their own learning processes;
- knowledge of a range of learning strategies and skills;
- clear motivation to learn.

In short, autonomous learners need to be proactive, responsible, reflective, self-aware and motivated. Learners can become autonomous only when they are taught by autonomous teachers.

The new Methodology Curriculum was studied to answer the third research question about the ways of developing learner autonomy. As a result, we can state that it is focused on training autonomous teachers of English, responsible for their learning, motivated, able to reflect on their action critically and plan their learning. The new ELT Methodology Curriculum is based on the totally new approaches to teaching and learning which enhance the development of autonomy. Methodology course does not rely on traditional lectures. On the contrary, the theory is taught through practice. According to this approach students learn new ideas by having exposure to different problems and solving them. Thus, the curriculum recommends a range of teaching approaches, including task-based learning, the use of case studies, simulations, group projects and problem solving. All of these approaches are intended to promote high levels of interaction and student involvement in their own learning processes.

School experience is very important experience in pre-service teacher training. As an essential part of the ELT Methodology Curriculum, school

experience is aimed at linking methodology classes to teaching at school. Thus trainee students have an opportunity to develop their teachers' competence in an actual classroom within school settings. The suggested school experience model is well-structured and consists of three stages: guided observation, teacher assistantship, observed teaching. Students spend one day (minimum 4 hours) in classes at school with no classes timetabled at the university. This well-designed school experience model is based on the best European practices and promotes the development of teachers' competence in an actual classroom within school settings.

Another way of developing autonomy is reflection. Teachers who explore their own teaching through critical reflection develop changes in attitudes and awareness which they believe can benefit their professional growth as teachers, as well as improve the kind of support they provide their students. That is why reflection is a key point of the new ELT Methodology Curriculum. Students learn to reflect right from their first methodology sessions, the final stage of which is reflective stage. Individually or in groups, students reflect on what they have learnt, what they are well aware of and what still is not clear for them. Much attention is paid to reflective essays or reports as items for summative assessment. Moreover, students keep reflective journals which are shared with their university supervisors. Portfolio is another way of developing reflective skills. According to assessment specifications it is a part of final assessment. Thus, students reflect on and analyze their work for the whole period of study. It provides them with an opportunity to demonstrate how they have met the standards of the program.

Conclusions. Thus, new ELT Methodology Curriculum is designed to promote autonomy on pre-service level. It provides the following ways of developing autonomy: 'to theory through practice approach' to teaching and learning; the integration of school experience into the methodology course; developing reflection skills. So, the new ELT Methodology Curriculum is aimed at training new generation school teachers able to develop autonomy in their learners.

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