

## **DEVELOPING A MODULE ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION FOR FUTURE ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS**

**(Material is collected due to the participation in the project “New Generation School Teacher”  
initiated by Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and British Council Ukraine)**

Having analysed the current situation with pre-service education and training for EFL teachers in Ukraine the project team revealed the necessity for curriculum change to prepare skilled, competent and professional teachers of English referred to international standards. Data from the Baseline Study carried out in 2013 and 2014 in several universities of Ukraine has become the basis for the renewal curriculum. The special focus of the project is Methodology which appeared to cover only 3% out of all the subjects learnt in universities [4]. The newly developed core curriculum in Methodology differs greatly from existing one in terms of content, years of study, number of hours, approaches to teaching and learning, assessment specifications. Some new module such as Second Language Acquisition is being introduced to it as well.

Second language acquisition (SLA) denotes the ways in which any learner, a child or adult learns a second language. Second language refers to any language learned in addition to a person’s first language. Though the concept is named second-language acquisition, it also refers to the learning of third, fourth, or subsequent languages. SLA has emerged as a field of study primarily from within linguistics and psychology as a result of efforts to answer three basic questions:

What exactly does the L2 learner come to know?

How does the learner acquire this knowledge?

Why are some learners more successful than others?

Different considerations about SLA are made on the part of those involved in language pedagogy. While curriculum developers and materials writers are interested in providing optimal sequencing orders for acquisition, teachers are concerned with pedagogic tasks which best facilitate acquisition in the classroom.

Teachers need to understand why certain things work or don't work in classrooms. That’s why ‘theory’ may provide a part of the answer to some of the questions future English language teachers should have learnt to ask. Prospective teachers need to know how language is acquired. A knowledge of language acquisition theory helps to justify methodology. So it is important to decide how and in what measure to refer to Second Language Acquisition in teacher education programmes.

SLA research has made learners and learning central, and in some ways has thus contributed to a shift in focus from how teachers teach to how and what learners learn. Yet while the focus on learners and learning is important, it is not one that always offers straightforward answers to teachers [1]. Knowledge of SLA theory and research findings are supposed to help to inform future English language teachers’ decisions, even if these findings are not directly applicable to the classroom.

The term core curriculum is used here to refer to the overall plan or design for a course on Methods of Teaching and how the content for course modules is transformed into a blueprint for teaching and learning which enables the desired learning outcomes to be achieved. Curriculum takes content (from external standards and local goals) and shapes it into a plan for how to conduct effective teaching and learning. It is thus more than a list of topics and lists of key facts and skills (the ‘input’). It is a map of how to achieve the ‘outputs’ of desired student performance, in which appropriate learning activities and assessments are suggested to make it more likely that students achieve the desired results [3].

Input refers to the content of a course. Second language acquisition is a compulsory module which is supposed to be taught in Year 2, Semester 4. The aim of the module is to develop learners’ pedagogical

awareness of Second language acquisition. The *objectives* of the module are shaped in the way that by the end of the module, students will:

- be aware of second language acquisition (SLA) factors and their potential for second language learning and teaching
- be aware of the most relevant SLA hypotheses and their possible applications to teaching and learning
- be aware of SLA mechanisms (input, intake and output) and their stages
- be aware of the nature of their own errors and how to use appropriate strategies for avoiding them or using them as stepping stones in learning
- be aware of the need to create a teaching and learning environment which is close to natural.

The topic areas are generated to make up an Indicative content of the module (thus not everything is necessarily covered during it):

- the notion of SLA and its factors (linguistic, cognitive factors, sociocultural factors)
- SLA vs L1 acquisition and L2 learning
- hypotheses about SLA (the acquisition-learning distinction, the natural order hypothesis, the Monitor hypothesis, the input hypothesis, the Affective Filter hypothesis)
- SLA mechanisms (input, intake and output) and their stages
- the role of interlanguage in error identification and correction
- ways of encouraging SLA in the classroom E.g. through 'exposure'
- 'noticing' as a structured procedure in classroom applications of SLA.

It is noticeable, that in the new curriculum, instruction and all classes in general are to be held in English, unlike in the existing practice where native language (Ukrainian) is also involved. Issues concerning teaching methods and the design of classroom activities and materials are addressed in the domain of process which refers to how teaching is carried out. As opposed to traditional reading lectures and mainly having seminars / or practical classes new approaches to teaching and learning include interactive lectures, task-based sessions, discussions, self-study, workshops, microteaching, reflective journal, portfolio/ diaries.

Output refers to learning outcomes, that is, what learners are able to do as the result of a period of instruction [2]. Learning outcomes are of retrospective character and are all linked to objectives. As a result of learning on this module, students should be aware of:

- favourable conditions for SLA (e.g. exposure, guided exposure, noticing, authentic materials, extensive reading and listening etc.)
- ways in which acquisition can complement learning.

Suggesting ways to assess students' progress we bear in mind several things. In the first place, assessment should be related directly to the learning outcomes. Secondly, we will not be able to assess everything that is taught and learned on the module. And finally, it is of vital importance to state clearly and beforehand the assessment task and the criteria for evaluating it.

So, introducing a module on second language acquisition to core curriculum in Methodology for PRESETT in Ukraine is supposed to raise students' awareness of key issues for implementing second language acquisition practices in their classroom in future. As informal environments, when they promote real language use (communication) are not conducive to acquisition, the formal environment has the potential for encouraging both acquisition and learning. The classroom has a definite role and value in encouraging second language acquisition, it should be viewed as a place where the student can get the input he or she needs for acquisition. The classroom may be superior to the outside world for beginning and low intermediate students, in that the real world is often quite unwilling to provide such students with comprehensible input. The best language lessons may be those in which real communication takes place, in which an acquirer understands what the speaker is trying to say and the teacher-talk that surrounds the exercises may be far more valuable than the exercise itself.

## **Bibliography**

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## **Երկրորդ լեզվի յուրացման գործընթացի համար մոդուլի մշակում անգլերեն լեզվի ապագա ուսուցիչների համար**

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*The national policy on language education in Ukraine has recently undergone considerable positive changes, but professionally oriented courses, and methodology of teaching a foreign language have not being paid enough attention to. New Generation School Teacher is a project initiated by British Council Ukraine and Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine. The aim of the project is to improve the quality of pre-service training for future teachers of English (PRESETT) in Ukraine.*

**Key words:** *second language acquisition, second language learning, future English language teachers, L2 teachers, comprehensible input, curriculum, syllabus, New Generation School Teacher project.*

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### **РАЗРАБОТКА МОДУЛЯ О ПРОЦЕССЕ УСВОЕНИЯ ВТОРОГО ЯЗЫКА ДЛЯ БУДУЩИХ УЧИТЕЛЕЙ АНГЛИЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА**

**(Материал собран благодаря участию в проекте «Школьный учитель нового поколения» инициированного Министерством образования и науки Украины и Британского Совета в Украине)**

*Национальная политика в сфере языкового образования в Украине в последнее время претерпевает значительных позитивных изменений, но, в то же время, таким вопросам, как профессионально ориентированные курсы, а также методике обучения иностранным языкам уделяется недостаточное внимание. Проект «Школьный учитель нового поколения» инициированный Министерством образования и науки Украины совместно с Британским Советом в Украине нацелен на совершенствование качества додипломной подготовки будущих учителей английского языка в Украине.*

**Ключевые слова:** *процесс усвоения второго языка, процесс обучения второму языку, будущие учителя английского языка, учителя второго иностранного языка, учебный план, учебная программа, проект «Школьный учитель нового поколения».*