

ON EFFECTIVE TEACHING/LEARNING

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It is not your business to teach him the various sciences but to give him a taste for them and methods of learning them when this taste is more mature. This is assuredly a fundamental principle of all good education.

(J. Rousseau 1762)

We live in a society which is continually evolving and rapidly transforming, and it has become generally accepted that schooling should change to satisfy the needs of the progressing world. The expectations from traditional approaches are not appropriate and fruitful any more. We are not the same, the new generation is different. Some methods, even if they are good enough to practice, just don't serve their purpose any longer. In order to create a better educational system in Armenia, we must revisit the purpose of education. We are to consider how education can provide individuals with the tools to better themselves, to create a more egalitarian society, and thus to prepare the citizens of tomorrow for the inevitable challenges they are likely to meet.

The education of the future has to produce students able to work independently or in a team environment. They must be problem solvers and critical thinkers. They must know how to go about learning something new. In order to memorize the majority of the obtained information, educators must teach students the skills to acquire new knowledge on their own and use it to come up with novel solutions to problems. This does not mean that content is not important or should not be taught. Students need to learn content from a wide variety of curriculum areas for many reasons. They need to have a shared understanding and background.

We could change a typical course, where all we do is lecturing, to something more productive, and let students try it, see how it works, reflect on how to do it differently, then try it again and again, until it works better. The only way a skill is developed - skiing, cooking, writing, thinking critically, or solving thermodynamics problems - is practice.

Learning is essentially a discovery process. We are all natural learners. As babies, we discover things by ourselves before we can be told. Even when we understand enough to be told, we still need to try things out for ourselves. The understanding cycle - expectation - failure - explanation - reminding - generalization - is a natural one. No one teaches it to us. We are not taught to have goals, nor to attempt to develop plans to achieve those goals by adapting old plans from similar situations. We need not be taught this because the process is so basic to what comprises intelligence. Learning is a natural act. Accordingly, we need to transform all training and education so that it looks, feels, and is like doing (Bransford, Brown, Cocking 2000:12-13).

The role of the teacher is to be an expositor of knowledge. Effective teaching entails trying things out, formulating hypotheses and testing them. But, a student cannot do this in a vacuum. The teacher should be there to guide them to the right experiences. The teacher

should also be there to answer a student's question, or at least, to listen to his question and perhaps suggest ways that he could find out the answer himself. Curiosity comes from trying things out, from failing on occasion, from explaining why, and from trying again (Lochhead, Whimbey 1987:64-73).

A good teacher should have as his goal exposing his student to enough situations that the student will become curious enough to take his learning into his own hands. In other words, the role of the teacher in a goal-based scenario is to open up interesting problems and provide tools for solving them when asked by the student to do so. The accomplishment of the goal should be its own reward. The curriculum must be oriented towards, and satisfied with, the idea that a student will learn what he/she needs to in order to accomplish goals. Hopefully they will become curious and acquired both oddball cases and routine micro-scripts along the way.

Conscious learning plays an important role in language acquisition, enlarges intellectual capacities of learners, and helps to understand new concepts and express new ideas in the target language. This principle also implies comprehension of linguistic phenomena by the learner through the medium of vernacular and the arrangement in sentence patterns graded in difficulties with the emphasis on some essential points. The principle of conscious approach ensures purposeful perception and comprehension of the material, its creative absorption, and retrieval of information from the learner with a certain degree of individuality.

Teachers should help students develop some skills during those contact hours by giving them some practice in the tasks they'll later be asked to perform on assignments and tests. At several points during the class,

1. Give the students something to do (answer a question, sketch a flow chart or diagram or plot, outline a problem solution, solve all or part of a problem, carry out all or part of a formula derivation, predict a system response, interpret an observation or an experimental result, critique a design),
2. Tell them to work individually, in pairs, or in groups of three or four,
3. Stop them after the allotted time, call on a few individuals for responses, ask for additional volunteered responses, provide your own response if necessary, and continue teaching.

Teachers may also occasionally do a think-pair-share, in which the students work on something individually and then pair up to compare and improve their responses before the teachers call on them.

Apart from the above-mentioned techniques the teacher will resort to the general didactic guidelines to ensure activity:

1. The teacher must not correct a pupil's mistake if the pupil can do it himself.
2. During individual interrogation the teacher should address the questions not to the individual pupils but to the whole class to capture their attention and to ensure their active participation.
3. The teacher should comment on the pupil's marks and always find words of praise rather than find fault with them.
4. Prepare the pupils for independent learning.
5. Activeness is largely dependent upon interest. Thus, the learners' interest should be sustained by telling them about manifold possibilities that open up before them as a result of studying the language (Johnson, Smith 1998:36-42).

The above mentioned on the principle of activity makes it possible to suggest the following:

1. Heuristic approach to FLT will stimulate the learners' intellectual activity.
2. The learners' interest should be sustained by proper organization of instruction, the use of purposeful teaching materials to arouse the pupils' positive motivation.
3. Both individual and collective forms of work should be used to ensure the pupils' activity and collective spirit.

As little as five minutes of such work in a 50-minute class session can produce a major boost in learning. Academically weak students get the benefit of being tutored by stronger classmates, and stronger students get the deep understanding that comes from teaching something to someone else. Students who successfully complete a task own the knowledge in a way they never would from just watching a lecturer do it. Students who are not successful are put on notice that they don't know something they may need to know, so when the answer is provided shortly afterwards they are likely to pay attention in a way they never do in traditional lectures.

Have the students work in pairs through a complex derivation or worked-out problem solution in the text or on a handout, with one of them explaining the solution step-by-step and the other questioning anything unclear and giving hints when necessary. Periodically stop them, call on several of them for explanations, provide your own when necessary, and have the students reverse roles in their pairs and proceed from a common starting point. It may take most or all of a class period to work through the entire solution, but the students will end with a depth of understanding they would be unlikely to get any other way (Lochhead, Whimbey 1987:54-56).

Everyone needs to succeed. In order to take the kinds of risks necessary to learn and grow, your students must perceive that success is within their reach. This means you need to learn a great deal about your students' interests, cognitive abilities and learning skills before simply presenting content or assigning tasks. Yet with all the pressure to "get through the curriculum," it's easy to forego this important step. Nonetheless, if your intention is to encourage all of your students to learn, grow and be successful, you'll need to start with them wherever they are - and that's likely to be different from one child to another. You may eventually want to vary your methods of instruction to include small groups, learning centers, self-selection or learning contracts, individualized assignments and student-teacher conferences. Keep in mind that working with different strategies will require various self-management skills your students may not have yet developed. While teaching these skills may appear a rather challenging and time-consuming task, keep in mind that the more independent and responsible your students become early on, the more you'll be able to accomplish together all year.

It is desirable to start slowly and keep things simple. Let your students know when they may and may not come to you with questions and, if you aren't available to help, offer them the option of asking a classmate or switching to a different task until you're free. Keep independent work and routines relatively simple at first - things the kids can do on their own. While some of these assignments may seem like busy work to you, remember that your intention is building confidence, independence and self-management. You've got a whole year to focus on content. It takes time, energy and practice to establish these skills and routines. As the students become better able to work on their own, you will be able to make the work more meaningful by increasing the variety of

materials, the number of choices, the amount of work required and the intellectual processes required.

Use their mistakes as opportunities to teach, shape behavior or encourage them to make different choices. Your patience and persistence can encourage them to keep trying. Schools traditionally have been very negative and critical, and many people assume that we need to be this way or kids won't learn or take us seriously. In fact, a consistent focus on errors and omissions, or a tendency to shame or humiliate students (even in the misguided interest of improving their performance or behavior) will undermine your attempts to provide emotional safety and can ultimately restrict growth in all students, not just in the one being criticized. Focusing on the positive, even when it seems as though a student has done just about everything wrong, allows you to build on the student's strengths. This approach can have an extremely positive impact on the climate of the classroom.

Here are several techniques to make active learning as effective as possible:

- At the beginning of the course, announce that you'll be assigning short exercises during class and explain why you're doing it (research shows students learn by doing, and the exercises will give them a head start on the homework and tests). The explanation can help defuse the resistance some students feel toward any teaching approach other than the instructor telling them just what they need to know for the exam.
- After an active learning exercise, call on a few individuals for responses before opening the floor to volunteers. The knowledge that you might call on them gets active participation from students who would normally just sit passively and let others do the work.
- Go for variety. Vary the type of activity (answering questions, solving problems, brainstorming, etc.), the activity duration (10 seconds-2 minutes), the interval between activities (1-15 minutes), and the size of the groups (1-4 students). As many as half of the participants in teaching workshops report using active learning in their classes, but nonusers often have concerns about the approach (McKeachie, Pintrich, Smith, Sharma 1990:23-34).

There may indeed be several students who just sit staring straight ahead when group-work is assigned, even after the awkwardness of the first few times has passed. We never see more than two or three of them in our classes, but for the sake of discussion let's say it is as many as 10% in yours. That means that while you're doing an active learning exercise, 90% of the students are actively engaged with the material and getting practice in the skills you're trying to teach them, and 10% are out to lunch. On the other hand, at any given moment in a traditional lecture, if as many as 10% of your students are actively involved with the lecture material you're doing very well. No instructional technique works for all students at all times: the best you can do is reach as many as possible, and 90% is more than 10%. Motivating students to listen and learn and remain on task is not an easy thing to do. All teachers, of course, hope to present lessons so engaging and exciting that students intrinsically want to behave and learn, but in the real classroom, you'll often find that you also need a little something extrinsic to motivate reluctant or restless learners (Felder, Brent 1994:34-37).

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Արդյունավետ ուսուցման/ուսումնառության շուրջ

Ներկայիս անվերջ փոխակերպվող հասարակությունը ստիպում է կիրառել ավանդական մեթոդներ, որոնք այլևս չեն ծառայում իրենց նպատակին: Հարկ է դրանք փոխարինել ավելի արդյունավետ ու արգասաբեր նորերով, որոնք հնարավորություն կտան ապահովել վաղվա քաղաքացու լիարժեք կայացումը: Հոդվածում առաջարկվում են որոշ հնարներ ու մոտեցումներ, որոնք կօգնեն ուսուցիչներին և սովորողներին ավելի ճկուն դարձնել ուսումնական գործընթացը: Լուսաբանվում են ուսուցման/ուսումնառության որոշ տիպիկ սխալներ և խնդիրներ, փորձ է արվում տալ դրանց շրջանցման և կանխարգելման լուծումներ:

Об эффективном обучении/изучении

В настоящее время знание иностранного языка – это не только атрибут культурного развития человека, но и условие его успешной деятельности в самых разных сферах производства. В связи с этим пересматриваются цели и задачи преподавания иностранных языков, появляются новые концепции и подходы к обучению иностранным языкам, в практику входят новые формы и методы обучения. Обучение многочисленных, различающихся по психическим характеристикам и среде воспитания групп учащихся, требует поиска таких методов обучения, которые позволили бы наиболее полно реализовать природные способности обучаемых, развивать их, давать им знания в области иностранного языка. Главным принципом в достижении такой педагогической задачи становится проблема выбора методов обучения иностранному языку, и проверка их эффективности.