The Role of Independent Study Skills in the Development of Sociolinguistic Competence of Future English Teachers

Sarimsakova Dilafruz Muhamadjonovna

Trainee Researcher of Namangan State University
dilafruz89@gmail.com

Abstract: Developing independent study skills (the characteristics of how to be effective learners from students' perspective) have been a major area of interest in foreign language teaching (FLT) for many years. The concepts "autonomous learning", "learner autonomy", "independent study skills" and "transferable skills" started to be used widely in ELT context with the advent of student-centered approaches to language teaching. Autonomous learning can be fostered step by step in the correctly organized learning environment and it is built on promoting learners independency and addressing learner needs focusing on developing learner responsibility and transferable skills in the safe zone of language classroom where students learn strategies how to become effective learners; The more these concepts widely spread in different disciplines, the more their definitions become multiply meaningful in the respective contexts. However, there might appear confusion or misconception while it comes to interpreting the concept of "Independent study" into Uzbek ELT context where we are used to understanding period of time when learners are alone, mainly out of classroom environment. Independent study skills are defined as prerequiresite skills for enhancing learning which any individual leaner finds beneficial to their learning purposes out of the classroom not necessarily without teacher's support and instruction as it used to be interpreted. This article defines what independent study in Uzbek ELT context are and discusses the role of independent study in current ELT PRESETT curriculum and the essence of the developing of sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers as a part of communicative competence.

Key words: independent study skills, autonomous learning, learner autonomy, transferable skills, independent study in Uzbek ELT context, learning strategy, communicative competence, sociolinguistic competence.

Аннотация: Развитие навыков самостоятельного обучения (изучать эффективно с точки зрения студентов) уже много лет является одной из основных областей интереса в обучении иностранного языка. Понятия "самостоятельное изучение", "самоучка", "навыки самостоятельного изучения" и "передаваемые навыки" стали широко использоваться в контексте преподавания иностранного языка с появлением личностно-ориентированного подхода к обучению. Самостоятельное изучение может быть усилено шаг за шагом в правильно организованной учебной среде, и оно строится на поощрении независимости учащихся и удовлетворении потребностей учащихся, следовательно, на развитии ответственности и «передаваемых навыков» (transferableskills)учащихсяв благополучной среде языкового класса. Чем больше эти понятия широко распространены в различных дисциплинах, тем больше их определения становятся многозначными в соответствующих контекстах. Однако возникает неправильное представление, когда речь заходит о толковании понятия "самостоятельное изучение" в преподавании английского языка в фоне Узбекистана, которуюобычноинтерпретируют, когда учащиеся находятся одинвнеклассной среде.Навыки самостоятельного изучения определяются, как предварительные навыки для улучшения обучения, так как учащиеся находят полезными для достижения своих целей.

В данной статье определяется понятие самостоятельное изучениев преподавании английского языка в фоне Узбекистана, а также обсуждается роль самостоятельного изучения в современном учебном плане преподавания английского языка PRESETT (pre-service teacher training) и сущность развития социолингвистической компетентности будущих учителей английского языка как часть коммуникативной компетенции.

Ключевые слова и фразы: самостоятельное изучение, «самоучка», переодеваемые навыки, самостоятельное изучениев преподавании английского языка в фоне Узбекистана, стратегия обучения, коммуникативная компетенция, социолингвистическая компетенция.

Introduction

Twenty-first century university curriculum in Uzbekistan is endeavoring to change from knowledge-based, exam-oriented mode of teaching to learner-centered, competence-based and quality oriented. "The current refreshed curriculum is the product of the project aimed at achieving lasting improvement in the standard of English language teaching in Uzbekistan by enhancing the learning experience of ELT PRESETT students and by setting clear exit standards in language referred to international standards for ELT. The project is being implemented in collaboration of the Ministry of Higher and Secondary Specialized Education of Uzbekistan and the British Council".[1,p.5] According to this official document, the modules divides into two strands: language

courses and methodology for TESOL strands which includes various language and methodological courses setting out clear objectives for preparing future English teachers who should demonstrate such skills within four academic years at university:

-ability in listening, reading, speaking and writing to the level of C1 on CEFR and sufficient understanding of the pedagogical implications of knowledge about language;

- a clear vision of the role of English in international communication;

-practical understanding of how learners learn languages;

-ability to critically evaluate, adapt and write materials;

-ability to plan and deliver lessons and sequence of lessons;

-understanding of a range of teaching approaches and ability to apply them according to the teaching and learning context;

-ability to evaluate and reflect upon their own learning and teaching;

-ability to research their own practice

-competence in the area of language awareness and language analysis for pedagogical purposes

-understanding of approaches to testing and assessment

-intercultural competence with its implications for teaching English [2, p.5]

Some courses which are difficult to differentiate either Language or Methodology such as Independent Study Skills, Classroom Language, and Developing Intercultural Competence. Therefore to some extent the division is provisional as close interaction between the two strands is assumed in the process of preparing teachers of English language. [3.p.5] Hence, this program claim that future English teachers should develop independent study skills which help to improve the quality of language learning, promotes democratic societies, prepares individuals for life-long learning and allows learners to make best use of learning opportunities in and out of the classroom.

Main part

Defining perceptions of "independent study" and "autonomous learning" in ELT context and Uzbek ELT contexts.

Developing independent study skills (the characteristics of how to be effective learners from students' perspective) have been a major area of interest in foreign language teaching (FLT) for many years. The concepts "autonomous learning", "learner autonomy", "independent study skills" and "transferable skills" started to be used widely in ELT context with the advert of student-centered approaches to language teaching. Autonomous learning refers to the principle that learners should take a maximum amount of responsibility for what they learn and how they learn it. They should be involved in decisions concerning setting objectives for learning, determining ways and means of learning, and reflecting on and evaluating what they have learned. According to Holec , learners should be given the responsibility to make decisions concerning all aspects of their own special learning styles, capacities and needs.[4, p.104] Littlewood (1997) makes a detailed explanation on how autonomous learning is developed in language learning. He distinguished three kinds of autonomous learning to be developed relevant to language teaching as follows: [5,p 111]

1. Language teachers aim to develop students' ability to operate independently with the language and use the language to communicate in real, unpredictable situations.
2. Language teachers aim to help their students to develop their ability to take responsibility for their own learning and to apply active, personally meaningful strategies to their work both inside and outside the classroom. Helping their students to increase their ability to communicate and learn independently, language teachers also try to reach the goal of helping their students to develop greater generalized autonomy as individuals.
3. In language teaching teachers need to help students develop motivation, confidence, knowledge and skills that they require in order to communicate more independently, to learn more independently and to be more independent as individuals.

Autonomous learning can be fostered step by step in the correctly organized learning environment and it is built on promoting learners independency and addressing learner needs focusing on developing learner responsibility and transferable skills in the safe zone of language classroom where students learn strategies how to become effective learners; The more these concepts widely spread in different disciplines, the more their definitions become multiply meaningful in the respective contexts. However, there might appear confusion or misconception while it comes to interpreting the concept of "Independent study" into Uzbek ELT context where we are used to understanding period of time when learners are alone, mainly out of classroom environment. Independent study skills are defined as prerequiresite skills for enhancing learning which any individual leaner finds beneficial to their learning purposes out of the classroom not necessarily without teacher's support and instruction as it used to be interpreted. In this regard, independent study is promoted as an inevitable part of each subject in our country. For instance, in early first academic year at higher education students take a course "Independent Study Skills" (ISS) which introduces the study and transferable skills required in higher educational environment. It covers many areas of university study such as reflection, ability to make independent decisions, self awareness, becoming autonomous, managing university life and studies and many others. [6, p.111] ISS sets out such objectives

➤ be aware of the concept of learner autonomy and its importance in higher education
➤ raise their own self-awareness of their learning styles and preferences

➤ raise their awareness of the importance of reflection in learning
➤ be able to self-assess, set goals and plan further actions for improvement
➤ be able to adapt to higher educational environment by managing their time and stress effectively, learning how to deal with tasks and prepare for exams
➤ have an understanding of developing skills needed not only for learning but also for future work.

Students develop an awareness of the concept of autonomous learning and the ability to apply different autonomous learning strategies in their study.

Researches claim that autonomous learning can be developed well in language teaching and learning through teaching learning strategies along with using cooperative learning.

Cooperative language learning is an approach where students develop their communicative competence through socially interactive activities; Cooperative learning incorporates five elements to work cooperatively by building a spirit of mutual support in the group.

➢ positive interdependence;
➢ face-to-face interaction;
➢ individual accountability and personal responsibility;
➢ interpersonal and small group skills;
➢ Group processing.

With the attempt of fostering autonomous learning which involves cultivation of learning strategies that teachers should organize adequate training to prepare them for more independent learning. For the students, strategies have to be learned. According to Oxford, learning strategies are "…. specific actions taken by the learner to make learning more easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations". [7, p.235] Students need to become independent and self-regulated learners who can continue independent study successfully as further education. While developing learning strategies students also develop their transferable skills at the same time. For instance: time management, group work, leadership and etc.
See the table №1

People skills and attributes	Learning and study skills and attributes	Self management skills and attributes	Professional working skills and attributes
Group work • Interact effectively in a learning/professional group/team • Recognise support and be proactive in leadership • Negotiate in a professional context • Manage conflicts • Give and receive feedback	Problem solving • Problem identification • Defining needs • Logical and critical thinking • Creative and innovative thinking • Analysing • Identifying assumptions • Developing evaluation strategies • Making judgments • Making decisions • Drawing conclusions • Thinking about alternatives • Setting goals	Self evaluation • Self awareness • Self motivation • Challenge own opinion • Reflection on personal development • Critical analysis • Responding to feedback • Openness • Understanding own underlying beliefs and values • Objective self criticism	Ethics • Consideration of the individual and organisational and societal context • Awareness of relevant law (e.g. data protection, computer misuse, intellectual property rights, etc)
Leadership • Take responsibility or the direction and action of a group • Provide a sense of	Information literacy • Recognise a need for information • Recognise the need to use a range of information	Autonomy • Ability to learn independently • Responsibility for own learning	Some further areas to consider • Business awareness • Political

purpose to all members	resources • Find and exploit the most appropriate resources • Compare and evaluate information from different sources	• Planning and organising • Self confidence	awareness • Financial awareness • Commercial awareness • Organisation understanding Organisational sensitivity • Image • Implementing decisions • Setting and meeting deadlines • Accepting responsibility • Continuing professional development • Portfolio building • Professional behaviour • Integrity • Commitment • Confidence and competence • Ability to learn form experience • Professional language and terminology
<u>Group effectiveness</u> • Contribute to group work • Monitor group effectiveness	<u>Research techniques</u> • Frame research questions • Know how to design research instruments • Conduct data collection • Analyse data	<u>Time management</u> • Use time effectively	
<u>Working with others</u> • Listen to, share and support the contribution of others • Keep people working well together • Learn together and from each other • Build a sharing understanding <u>Communication</u> • Listening attentively • Questioning • Telling • Negotiating • Providing feedback • Interviewing • Expressing ideas <u>Other skills related to this area</u> Facilitating, developing rapport, interpersonal sensitivity, dialogue, co-operating, representing others, delegating, teaching, handling details,	<u>Writing skills</u> • Report writing • Essay writing • Note taking • Formal academic writing • Editing	<u>Focus on task</u> • Persistence • Support of others • Coping with uncertainty • Stress management • Change management	

Table 1: transferable skills and attributes https://transferable-skills.com

The table shows transferable skills of independent study skills including people skills, study skills, self-management and professional skills and their sub-skills.

The role of independent study in the development of sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers as a part of communicative competence

Through independent study, students become the directors of their own learning in Uzbek ELT context. The concepts such as the "sociolinguistic competence" and "communicative competence" exposed that real language use occurs in real world contexts. The ability to use English in various appropriate social settings where communication takes place is called *Sociolinguistic competence.* There are several factors to be considered when communicating such as age, gender, social status of the participants and the formality of the setting. Future English teachers will develop their ability to think critically about and resolve problems in intercultural communication; and will have a high level awareness and understanding of linguistic and extralinguistic issues in

communication of their own and target culture; and develop the ability to evaluate, adapt, design materials for teaching culture during the course "Developing Intercultural Competence" (DIC) at university.

According to the assessment specification of DIC course, students prepare case study, doing comparative researches over the articles, course book evaluation along with design a task that can be used in class or as a part of an extracurricular activity on developing learners' intercultural competence using one of the following: a film, fiction, poem, picture, newspaper. [8, p.111] For example:

Respond to the case in writing. The following points may guide you:
➢ What kind of culture clash is described?
➢ Why do you think this situation has happened?
➢ What suggestions can be made to resolve the conflict?

Sample case study

> John Palmer was travelling by train from Tashkent to Samarkand in a small compartment with two young men and an elderly gentleman. John was trying to read *The Times,* the elderly man was sleeping and the boys were talking and laughing. They could hardly hear each other because the radio was playing some very loud pop music. Then one of the boys shouted in English: 'How are you doing, mister? Where are you from? America?' 'Thank you, I'm from
> Britain', said John and kept on reading. The boy laughed and asked: 'Are you married?' 'No, I'm not', said John. 'Really? Why?' John smiled and shrugged his shoulders. 'It's a long story. Could you turn the music down, please?' 'You don't like this music?' asked the boy. 'Well, it's rather nice but it's just too loud… Thank you.' For about two minutes they kept silent, then the boys started talking again. By that time the elderly man woke up, produced a big bag full of samosas and offered them to the boys and to John. 'Eat, mister', said the boy, biting into his samosa. 'Thank you very much', said John, 'maybe later. Thank you. *Rahmat.*' The boys and the man looked surprised. 'Why? You should eat. It's a long journey. Take it!' John felt uneasy and said: 'It's very kind of you, but really, I'm not hungry… and I'm a vegetarian, but thank you anyway.'
> The boy frowned. 'Vegetarian? You mean you don't eat *meat*? Why? Are you ill?' 'No, I'm fine, I just don't. Sorry.' 'Strange', said the boy and translated the conversation into Uzbek to the other boy and the elderly man. They were surprised and did not attempt to speak to John for the rest of the journey.
>
> Taken from DUET Trainer's Notes. Book 2, p.87

In real social settings (sampled in case study) students' intercultural competence becomes an effective platform to build sociolinguistic competences. Thus, the goal of independent study is to develop sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers as a part of communicative competence.

Not every person has an opportunity to study in foreign countries, however today's technology allows every student to be a part of the internationalization process without travelling so that they can develop their sociolinguistic competence through joining free online open asynchronous courses where the participants from different cultures exchange ideas and views regarding the topics surrounding the issues on online discussion boards (*see below*) or by blogs and webinars using an online video conferencing system as well.

The major online learning platforms (Coursera, EdX, Canvas network, Udemy, Future learn, Udacity, Khan Academy and others.) provide free catalogs of all online courses for universities around the world:

Coursera https://ru.coursera.org/courses
It is a platform that offers more than 4,000 courses from universities and companies around the world. At Coursera, you can take hundreds of free courses to learn and to master a variety of specialties (more than 400), certificates listed in master's programs, certifications, and even access to complete information from the Internet.

EdX (https://edx.org)
A global nonprofit organization founded by Harvard and MIT. More than 2,500 courses from 140 institutes for those who want to learn languages, programming, psychology, biology, marketing and other fields on the free open EdX platform.

FutureLearn https://www.futurelearn.com
This is an MOOC project founded by Open University (UK) and SEEK Group. It offers online, short courses in various disciplines, professional and academic accreditation, and BA, BSc, MA, MSc, MBA, PgC degrees from UK universities.

Khan Academy https://ru.khanacademy.org
It offers a panel of hands-on exercises, videos, and personal learning tools that allow students to read as they wish in class, in class, and beyond. Khan Academy teaches mathematics, computer programming sciences, history, art, economics and other subjects.
Udacity https://www.udacity.com

It is as an experiment emerged when Stanford teachers published a course on "Introduction to Artificial Intelligence" on the Internet for free. This platform offers many technical courses: data analysis, artificial intelligence, and programming, cloud computing and business.

Udemy www.udemy.com

It is a global learning market that provides millions of students with the skills they need to succeed. This platform has 150,000 courses in more than 65 languages.

Through those educational platforms, top universities around the world offer a wide range of free asynchronous courses which will facilitate us with the authentic learning to enhance our English language skills and communicative competence. As we have mentioned above that one of the important pedagogical factors in the development of sociolinguistic competence is manifested through linguistic abilities: listening, reading, writing and speaking competencies. Communicative competence plays an important role in ensuring that linguistic ability is put into practice. Every future English teacher should be able to understand such indicators as listening comprehension in a foreign language, clear and fluent communication, adherence to the culture of communication in the process of communication, taking into account the social status of the interlocutor, the age of the interlocutor. It is important to have accurate information about the social, economic, cultural life, language, religion, history of the country where the language is studied. The sociolinguistic competence of a future English teacher develops in the understanding of the nature of events in society and in nature, in the culture of communication, on the basis of a comparative analysis of the socio-economic and cultural life of their country and language. The positive result of our efforts is that today's future language teacher is able to apply the knowledge, skills and abilities that they have has learned in practice.

Conclusion

A brief outline of the role of independent study skills in the development of sociolinguistic competence of future English teachers of this article enables the following conclusions: independent study skills can be developed in language teaching and learning where the teachers play an important role in setting objectives, plan works, select materials, evaluate themselves, and acquire the skills and knowledge needed. Students carry on developing independent study skills out of the classroom.

References:
1. PRESETT refreshed curriculum: (2013) a partnership program of the Ministry of Higher and Specialized of RU and British Council,. p.5 Tashkent
2. PRESETT refreshed curriculum: (2013) a partnership program of the Ministry of Higher and Specialized of RU and British Council,. p.5 Tashkent
3. PRESETT refreshed curriculum: (2013) a partnership program of the Ministry of Higher and Specialized of RU and British Council,. p.5 Tashkent
4. Holec, H. (1981). Autonomy in foreign language learning. Oxford: Pergamon Press. P.104
5. Littlewood, W. (1997). Self-access work and curriculum ideologies. P.111
6. PRESETT refreshed curriculum: (2013) a partnership program of the Ministry of Higher and Specialized of RU and British Council; Syllabus p.111. Tashkent
7. Oxford, R. (1989). The use of language learning strategies: A synthesis of studies with implications for strategy training. System, 12(2), p.235
8. PRESETT refreshed curriculum: (2013) a partnership program of the Ministry of Higher and Specialized of RU and British Council; Assessment specification p.111. Tashkent Suggested Internet websites:
9. https://www.cousera.org/
10. https://www.canvas.network
11. https://www.udemy.com
12. https://www.udacity.com
13. https://www.futurelearn.com
14. https://ru.khanacademy.org