

LANGUAGE LEARNER TYPES IN EFL CLASSROOM

Навчання іноземних мов завжди було викликом, проте сьогодні це ще складніше, оскільки середовище навчання змінюється з точки зору культурних та етнічних відмінностей та різноманіття. Навчання іноземної мови сьогодні стає досить проблематичним не тільки через різноманіття мотивацій та преференцій серед студентів, але й через проблеми, пов'язані із збільшенням кількості студентів у групі. Саме тому багатьом викладачам англійської як іноземної (EFL) складно будувати навчальний процес у класі з урахуванням усіх індивідуальних стилів навчання учнів.

У теперішніх умовах в Україні низка педагогів висловлюють стурбованість щодо здатності вчителів задовольняти освітні потреби учнів. Під час навчання в університетах майбутні вчителі не досягають свого повного потенціалу; вони отримують оцінки, які не відповідають їх справжнім можливостям. Така ситуація може бути пояснена багатьма факторами – замала практична підготовка (практика у середніх закладах освіти), недостатня кількість годин з методики навчання іноземних мов тощо. Як результат, молоді вчителі відчувають труднощі в успішному викладанні англійської мови у середній школі. А одним із факторів успішного викладання є знання та навички вчителів працювати з учнями різних стилів навчання.

Під час роботи над розробкою інноваційної програми з методики навчання іноземних мов, що виконувалась у рамках проекту «Шкільний вчитель нового покоління» ми познайомились з класифікацією Ерла Стевіка типів учнів, які вивчають іноземну мову – Інтуїтивний Учень (an Intuitive Learner), Формальний учень (a Formal Learner), Неформальний учень (an Informal Learner), Учень-уявник (an Imaginative Learner), Активний учень (an Active Learner), Навмисний учень (a Deliberate Learner), Самосвідомий учень (a Self-aware Learner). Такий підхід є досить новим для національної освітньої системи і його використання може бути досить ефективним у освітньому процесі.

Earl W Stevick is a leading researcher within the field of second language acquisition. While being employed at different universities, he published several leading publications and among them is, *Success with Foreign Languages: seven who achieved it and what worked for them* (Stevick). Earl W Stevick investigates the factors which have led to the success of learners in acquiring a second language. Earl W. Stevick put the students into different learning categories according to their preferred learning environment, namely how they obtain, process and retain information while studying a foreign language. Moreover, the learner types are closely related to the students' personalities.

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The main criteria for categorizing the learner types are their preferences in learning vocabulary and grammar, how important it is for them to master their pronunciation, if they find classroom work effective for learning a foreign language or not. Or they would rather work autonomously. One more criterion is the role of the coursebook in language learning. For some types (a Formal Learner, an Active Learner, a Deliberate Learner, a Self-aware Learner) the coursebook is essential, while the others (an Intuitive Learner, an Informal Learner, an Imaginative Learner) prefer to learn a foreign language from authenticity resources.

Unfortunately teachers do not regularly provide the ideal learning environment for the intuitive and formal learners. Thus, teachers do not focus on phonetic transcription or provide regular and suitable oral exercises. Furthermore, the informal and imaginative learners are asked to read longer literary texts and there are no mathematical instruments used in teaching; this does not provide the optimal learning conditions for members of these categories. The mathematical instruments could involve rods or tables. The active and deliberate learners require a thorough organisation and full involvement in tasks so teachers should regularly give the students lesson plans prior to the lessons or make them actively involved in all tasks. The imaginative learner requires exercises that stimulate their imagination. The last learning style is the self-aware learner. The self-aware learner requires total control of

their own learning and being able to improve and practise grammar in their own way. Thus, teachers should allow the students to structure their own learning.

In our teaching experience we introduce our students to the theory in Methodology Course in Unit *Psychological Factors in Language Learning* as a separate session. Below you can find the session we designed on the topic. Students find it effective for the future teaching career:

Procedure	Purpose	Time
<p>Activity 1: Warm-up</p> <p>Learner’s experience</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask students why they are good or bad at language learning. Ask them to draw on their own study habits and preferences. • Accept all responses and explain that the variety of their answers proves that people have different different ways of language learning and retaining information. • As a class brainstorm reasons why it is important to understand one’s learning type <p><i>Possible answers: ideas about motivation, learning styles, self-confidence, anxiety etc</i></p>	<p>to introduce students to the topic; to get students to reflect on their experience of language learning</p>	<p>15 min</p>
<p>Activity 2: Case Study on 7 Types of Learners (<i>Earl W.Stevick Success with Foreign Languages. Seven who achieved it and what worked for them</i>)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Split students into pairs • Distribute Handout 1(a set of 7 Case Studies) and Handout 2 (a blank grid) to each pair • Ask students to read the Case Studies on different types of language learner, analyse them and match each with the type in the grid • Ask students to report back to the class like <i>Learner 1 is An Imaginative Learner because he/she learns best when.....</i> <i>Learner 2 is An Active Learner because he/she learns best when.....</i> <i>Learner 3 is A Deliberate Learner because he/she learns best when.....</i> • Display the keys to the grid on board <p><i>Key</i> <i>Case Study 1 - A Formal Learner</i> <i>Case Study 2 - An Intuitive Learner</i></p>	<p>To acquaint students with different types of language learner and their main features</p>	<p>30 min</p>

<p><i>Case Study 3 - An Imaginative Learner</i></p> <p><i>Case Study 4 - A Deliberate Learner</i></p> <p><i>Case Study 5 - An Informal Learner</i></p> <p><i>Case Study 6 - A Self-aware Learner</i></p> <p><i>Case Study 7- An Active Learner</i></p>		
<p>Activity 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce students to Earl W.Stevick classification, according to which learners can be of such types as An Intuitive Learner, A Formal Learner, An Informal Learner, An Imaginative Learner, An Active Learner, A Deliberate Learner, A Self-aware Learner • Split students in groups of threes. Tell them: to address this question: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - <i>Which of these seven types of learner is closest to your own way of learning?</i> - <i>Support your decision with examples from your experience of learning English</i> <p>Remind students that as language learners they all can be of more than one Type.</p>		20 min
<p>Activity 4. Round-up</p> <p>Now that the students have learned a little more about their language learner types, ask them to answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What do you think are some of the challenges associated with your language learner type? - What do you think are some of the advantages/ disadvantages of your learning style? 		10 min

<p>Case Study 1</p> <p>When I started to learn English, I wanted to listen, listen, listen until I was ready to start repeating. So I listened to sentence patterns over and over again and when I repeated them often enough, I felt I really knew them. I was glad when my teacher insisted on drilling us in the classroom, paying attention to correctness in grammar and pronunciation. I would practise everything at home, just getting used to speaking and trying not to make mistakes. I wasn't too worried about matching the forms to meaning – there was time for that later. Now I speak English pretty well, I think, but I still worry about making mistakes.</p>
<p>Case Study 2</p> <p><i>I think I am different from most people. They depend on seeing. I do not think I learn much through my eyes, through looking at the printed page. I seem do to most of my learning through my ears. One more thing is that I do not feel that everything I learn in English goes into some system. I do not worry about systemizing everything I learn – I just simply take these things in. I hate learning different language systems, e.g. the phonetic transcription system – I'd rather make up my own symbols than use ready-made ones in a book. And another thing – I do not know why but I can reproduce the sounds. It is enough for me to hear the teacher pronounce words with definite sounds so that I can remember and imitate them. What I really dislike is learning vocabulary lists. I try to guess the meaning of a new word in its context – isn't it fun?!</i></p>
<p>Case Study 3</p>

I find it much easier to study English grammar and vocabulary by making charts. I make up my own charts. I get more value from doing so than from having the same material presented to me by a teacher or by a textbook. When I started to learn the language I would try to reproduce the way my teacher spoke or I “heard” native speakers in my head. Then I would also imagine myself speaking with the same accent. The more I practised in this way the better my pronunciation got. In learning process I like being immersed in a problem and then allowed to try to find my own way out of it. I like role-play and simulation – in this kind of interaction I can play around with the things I am learning or have just learnt. There is always an imaginary speaker I carry on a conversation in English with – this is my way of learning languages.

Case Study 4

I like to learn English from books. I have to see things before I try to say them. I do not like to work spontaneously on the language things I am weak in – I should be able to know the stuff before I produce it in class. I try to put my whole self into language learning. I try to grasp each lesson step by step and do it thoroughly and completely. As to English grammar I always master the patterns that are presented to me in class. I prefer using paradigms. The more often I use them the less time it takes to learn grammar. For learning vocabulary I use ordinary word cards. Especially at early stages before I wanted to say something I had to write it down and say it a few times for myself before it became natural. I used to carry cards on the bus and put them around my house. I believe it is my thoroughness that enabled me to become a successful language learner.

Case Study 5

I know I speak incorrectly in English. When I started to learn the language I didn't study basic grammar and all those grammar charts. That is because I don't know much about understanding and memorizing – I don't think it is important for being able to speak English. I have never memorized things! Whenever students are supposed to learn a dialogue and to use certain words in it I feel depressed. I don't think drilling suits my way of studying – I have so many other words to express the same meaning rather than using the particular words that are in the book. Learning for me is not fun. Maybe because I feel under pressure in classroom situations. I think that the other students are holding me back, keeping me from using what I know. For me communication as well as learning should be natural. I know some English not because I learnt it, but because I have acquired it in real situations.

Case Study 6

I think that success in language learning depends largely on self-study. From the very beginning of my learning English I always started out with things I knew intellectually – teachers call it a rule. I liked to practise constructing a sentence first in my head, applying the rules I knew. In this way I understood how grammatical principles worked. Then when the sentence was still fresh in my head, I could put it in the conversation. I don't mind if I make mistakes. I think it is a natural process in learning a foreign language. I felt my teachers disliked me as my progress was painful and rather slow. I felt comfortable when teachers explained rules in class so that as a language learner I could say “I know it and use it because I understand it”. I got frustrated when I had to memorise dialogues without any grammatical background to the forms, used in it, in other words, without being aware what I was memorising. I think grammar patterns should come first. It was only when I had the whole picture of English grammar that I felt rather free to construct long sentences and then conversations.

Case Study 7

In the first weeks of studying the language I liked to read it out and get the sound, though I did not understand the words. Even now if I study at home I cannot study by just reading something silently. I have to pronounce everything. This helps me to memorise new words and to get the flow of the whole sentence – I understand the grammatical structure of complicated sentences better if I read them out! Vocabulary and grammar come to me via words and sentences I am pronouncing. Memorising things is not my strength. I don't like to learn single elements and then put them in a structure – I mean starting with words and prefixes and building them into sentences, words into sentence. I prefer to “manipulate” the words or sentence structures in a meaningful situation. I work actively to make up English sentences, based on basic grammar rules and some previous drilling. Though there is one thing I have noticed in my English learning – at the beginning of the English course I had a lot of energy to study, but after a certain period my enthusiasm and level of energy went down. Since then the feeling comes and goes usually in cycles.

It is obvious that the theory has some controversial issues to be fully implemented in the language classroom. However it is worth being regarded by EFL teachers. Further research would need to be conducted in order to investigate student achievement when teachers fully incorporate Stevick's seven learning categories. Thus, it would be insightful to extend this research by identifying the different learning categories and provide exercises that are beneficial to each of the learning styles.

REFERENCE

Earl Stevick, W. (1989) *Success with Foreign Languages. Seven who achieved it and what worked for them.* Prentice Hall International (UK) Ltd.