



## TEACHER'S ASSISTENCE IN ORGANIZING LEARNERS' INDEPENDENT WORK

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**Annotation.** This article is about ways of organizing language learners' independent work. The author of the article writes about the role of the teacher's guidance in the organization process of students' independent work in and out of class. Moreover, there are author's reflections on autonomous learning in her teaching as well as activities that facilitate independent learning.

**Key words:** innovative technology, Independent Study Skills, autonomous learning, pedagogic competence, motivation, logical thinking, critical thinking, facilitator.

Currently, there is growing recognition that knowing any foreign languages is one of the key factors in the success of both academic achievements as well as in the field of employment. It is undeniable fact that English has already been widely known as a lingua-franca in the world. In particular, as a highly developed country, Uzbekistan has already begun reforming foreign languages, especially English, to different spheres of the life.

In the process of teaching any language, a number of new methods have been examined and put into practice in order to help the learners possess their target language efficaciously.

It is worth to say that foreign language teaching has introduced many changes at the university level since then. Language learners are inspired by the new methods of teaching languages, as they are improving all language skills in integration. All the changes are aimed at preparation of well qualified language teacher with proficient language skills and specialist knowledge as well. In order to train skilled specialists who can struggle with challenges in learning and applying

gained knowledge into practice, language educators should concentrate more on learners' independent work.

Among a variety of innovative methods to develop learners' knowledge and skills are surely independent learning. It must be enhanced at all stages of education: from pre-school education to Continuous Professional Development. However, both teachers and learners must realize the importance of their roles equally. "This problem is a task of paramount importance. Speaking about students' independent work, it is necessary to bear in mind two closely related tasks. The first of which is to develop students' independence in cognitive activity, teach them to acquire knowledge on their own, shape their worldview; the second one is to develop skills of application of their knowledge in practice." [1]

Many researchers defined the concept of independent learning differently, taking into account its peculiarities, thus, it could be best summarized by the following definition: "Independent work is a kind of learning activity in which students with a certain degree of autonomy and, if necessary, with partial teacher guide perform various kinds of tasks, applying the necessary mental effort and showing the skills of self-control and self-correction". [2] As it is seen in this definition independent work must not be purely autonomous learning, but teacher's guidance is also a core part of this process.

However, in the organization of autonomous learning many educators put the burden to the students' shoulders considering this form of learning to be totally autonomous learning. The aim of this article is to prove that autonomous learning needs teacher's guidance to some extent.

Nowadays like in many outstanding educational establishments of the world, students' independent work is in the focus of many university curriculums in Uzbekistan. One of the effective programs which have been improving teaching English in our country is PRESETT curriculum leading to the qualification of Bachelor of Philology, English Language Teacher. The main advantage of this curriculum is the development of learners' independent study in all languages and methodology modules of Bachelor program in preparing competent specialists in language and methodology referred to international standards.

Improvement of students' independent working skills in this curriculum starts in the first semester with the course Independent Study skills. The aim of this course is to help students be aware of the practical implications of the concept of learner autonomy at higher educational institutions [2]. The Independent Study Skills (ISS) course introduces the study and transferable skills required in the 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. Independent study skills, then continue to be part of other courses of the curriculum, for instance Vocabulary, Integrated Skills, Reading and etc.

As I have been teaching Independent Study Skills course for six years I noticed considerable improvement in students' study. In this course, learners are supposed to do many tasks in and out of class such as to write entries, make presentations, work on cases and do library researches. Learners are introduced to a variety of skills through discussions, working in different interaction patterns, doing quizzes.

Results of the conducted survey about the advantages of ISS course show that one of the most effective skills gained in this subject is researching skill. Students consider that the task of doing a library research, improved their researching skills considerably. However, reflecting upon teaching students to do a library research for the first time I did not give enough guidance in the organization process. Learners were given a task specification and directed to fulfill the task keeping a deadline. However, after checking learners' research work I understood students needed help in the form of suggestion. The following year I devoted some time in the classroom to give some feedback in the process of working on the research. Generally, students faced difficulties in choosing an appropriate source, giving references and narrowing down the topic. Receiving teacher's support students were able to show much better results in comparison to the previous year results. It was an unplanned experiment for me to feel the importance of teacher's guidance in the language learning classroom, moreover, it also proved independent work requires partial teachers assistance.

Teachers can use different ways of encouraging students' independent work. Another handy method to improve students' independent work is project work. "Method of projects occurred when the minds of educators, philosophers were focused on trying to find ways to develop active, independent thinking of the child, teach him not only memorizing and reproducing knowledge that will give him the school, but to be able to apply them in practice" [6]. Like in many countries the method of projects has been widely used in Uzbekistan in all branches, teacher training is not an exception.

In a foreign language classroom, this method is mainly used in the module Integrated Skills. Each month students are given different projects such as taking videos, designing posters or travel brochures, making role plays, designing group albums of trips and etc. Learners are divided into small groups and each week they should report about their weekly results; afterward they are given instructions for further work. Most of the task is done independently out of class. The final product is presented at the last lesson of the month by all members of the small

group. Moreover, learners will write reflections about their contribution to the project, which helps the teacher in the marking process. This method is useful because it allows integrating students' knowledge from different fields to solve one problem, made it possible to apply this knowledge in practice.' [5] This method helps improve the learning process, develop skills of independent work of students, but one should bear in mind, learners need assistance in every stage of the project work. Otherwise, learners will be bewildering about what to do and it will be a cause to lose their motivation in learning. Furthermore, learners will concentrate on minor important things rather than fundamental ones.

Thus, language teachers feel the need for enhancement of independent work skills of students in the educational process and focusing more than ever before. One cannot deny the fact that organization of students' independent work depends much on the professional competence and creativity of a teacher; his/her ability and skills in the use innovative pedagogical technologies. Teachers should remember that autonomy starts in the classroom and that learners need to be given responsibility to develop their autonomous learning. There should be a balance in students' working on their own and teacher's assistance. Learners ought to work with the teacher's guidance; however, teacher's intervention ought to be balanced as it does not always give desirable results in developing learner autonomy. Learners should remember that teachers can help them to organize their learning, but it's their own duty to improve their knowledge.

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