Olena Chekhratova
Postgraduate student, Department of Pedagogy, Foreign Philology and
Translation,
Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics

LEARNER AUTONOMY AND ITS LEVELS IN PROFESSIONAL STUDIES

Being on the way of transforming from teacher-centered to student-centered, the system of education in Ukraine is to reach the highest European standards. All over the educational establishments pedagogical staff is trying to foster learner autonomy in their classrooms in order to improve the quality of the process of studies, attract the students' interest to the subjects and graduate well-prepared specialists in any sphere of professional activities who are eager to learn more, search for new ideas and approaches as well as work on constant self-development.

It should be noted that although the notion of learner autonomy is not new, it hasn't got a unified definition. It is considered to be the ability to take charge of one's own learning [1, p. 3] or describes a person who, in the process of studying, which means planning, implementing the ideas and progress assessment, takes an active part and works alongside with the teacher, makes decisions about the process, content and the instruments of the studies [2, p. 1].

What is important, if a learner reaches a particular level of autonomy in one area of studies, he / she can definitely transfer this knowledge on other areas and improve the process of their education.

Scholars apply different approaches to defining the levels of learner autonomy. W. Littlewood presents a seven-level scale which is based on the level of choice the learners do in the process of studying [3, p. 429-430]. Here leaners (1) make choices in grammar and vocabulary; (2) choose communication strategies; (3) set goals; (4) create their own learning context; (5) chose the learning tasks; (6) are involved in planning and assessment; (7) use the knowledge outside the classroom.

In his tern, L. Dam presents four levels of autonomy depending on the abilities of the students to complete specific tasks [4, p. 13]. The following levels are defined: (1) the level of setting the objectives for the task / project; (2) of searching for the instruments of completing the task; (3) of implementing the ideas and completing the task; (4) the level of setting the adequate criteria for assessing the completed work.

On the contrary, another approach is based on the role of the teacher and the amount of people involved in the activity [5, p. 91-92]. It starts with

zero level, which is completely teacher-centered: students have to follow the instructions, do the tasks and be dependent on the ideas and believes of their guidance. The first level means the beginning of autonomy and is more likely to be observed in a group (either an academic group or a small wok group organized for completing particular task or a project). It is easier for the students to adapt to new surrounding and find solutions to the difficult tasks. They should sense the atmosphere of collaboration, get assistance from the teacher but be able to set the goal, use specific tools to reach and be responsible for the results. The teacher only helps, suggests and facilitates the process but doesn't show his / her authority. The third level concerns the highest level of autonomy – individual autonomy, when the students accepts full responsibility. What is important, the teacher is still present, still guides, helps, facilitates, but the student is to design, to create, to achieve.

If the student reaches the third level of autonomy, it doesn't mean that the curriculum should be eliminated and the program forgotten. The plans are still used but everything is discussed with and approved by the students. Learning has to be interesting and inspiring, so the learners themselves have to choose what to learn in particular. This is extremely important for their future carriers, for their professional development. If they know how to do it in one subject, they will use this skill all their life.

This can't be achieved in a day and is considered to be a difficult job bot for the students and their mentors. But this is a method worth trying and one of the most efficient ways of organizing the educational process. Although there is one important requirement – students have to be sure that if they ask, qualified help and practical advice is always there.

Learner autonomy is not an easy thing both for teachers and student but with mutual efforts it can be reached and give positive results.

References
1. Holec H. Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning. Oxford: Pergamon. 1981. 65 p.
2. Nunan D. Nine Steps to Learner Autonomy, Symposium, 2003. 12 p.
3. Littlewood W. Autonomy: an Anatomy and a Framework. *System*, 1996. #24(4). P. 427-435.
4. Dam L. How to recognize an autonomous classroom? – *Revisited. A TESOL Symposium. Learner Autonomy: What Does the Future Hold?* 2008. University of Sevilla. P. 13-33.

5. Тарнопольский О. Б., Кожушко С. П. Методика обучения английскому языку для делового общения. Киев: Ленвит, 2004. 192 с.