

Learner autonomy and the role of this competence in learning foreign languages in Albanian schools

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Abstract

In didactics and in the scientific research of foreign languages, the concept of learner autonomy has become one of the keywords over the last years and now is taking more and more place in teaching and learning practices in schools. One of the major tasks of the education system is to educate creative minds, learners who are responsible for their learning, and one of the conditions to achieve this is by encouraging them towards the principle of autonomy.

The process of learning a foreign language is long and difficult. There are many factors that influence the successful learning of a foreign language. Today's European Education System is oriented towards communicative competence and linguistic performance with the aim of long-term learning by focusing on the students, claiming complete avoidance of frontal teaching. Student-centered learning requires the ability of self control and self-regulating the learning process. Numerous scientific studies have shown a connection between this ability and school results. But how much do teachers value and promote this important process in our pre-university education system, in our everyday teaching practices? What is the approach regarding Albanian schools?

At the beginning of this article, the theoretical conceptions on "learner autonomy" will be dealt with in more detail in order to better understand the importance it has on empowering generations towards fundamental learning competencies. The study further focuses on the role of the teacher, cognitive and metacognitive strategies, and their importance to foster learner autonomy. In order to collect data, a questionnaire was used as a research instrument. The groups on which the study was conducted were learners from the age of 13 to 18 and at the same time teachers of foreign languages in the lower pre-university education (grades 8-9) and secondary education (10-12) in several Albanian schools centered in the cities of Tirana, Shkodra, Korça and Pogradec.

We are aware that the fast-paced development of society and European integration constantly put us in front of new challenges and demands to adapt learning in this context. It is necessary to replace the traditional approaches with contemporary ones.

Keywords: learner autonomy, long term learning, learning strategy.

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European Journal of Economics, Law and Social Sciences ISSN 2519-1284 (print) ISSN

2510-0429 (online)