Exploratory Practice on Independent Learning

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The stimulus for this project started with students’ thoughts and challenges they were facing about independent learning.

The purpose of this initiative is to motivate learners to become more independent learners.
Hi, I’m Pablo!

I have been living in Australia for four months now. Since I arrived, I have been attending English language classes for four hours each day, five days a week. I have made some progress, but find it very difficult to speak with local people because I can’t understand what they are saying. In the classroom my teacher speaks slowly and clearly, so it’s ok. However, as soon as I leave the classroom, I go back to speaking Spanish because it’s just easier. My family at home all speak Spanish and try to help me with my English, but I seem to give up quickly. It’s just too hard!

My teacher gives me homework, but it is mostly boring and not useful to me. So I tend to make an excuse to get out of it.
The framework of the study

Two classes and two teachers:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MaryAnn</th>
<th>Gamze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• General English 3</td>
<td>• Academic English 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• 18 students</td>
<td>• 18 students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Lower intermediate level</td>
<td>• Upper intermediate level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Mixed cultures</td>
<td>• Mixed cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• %50 male, %50 female</td>
<td>• %40 male, %60 female</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Implementation

- Ongoing initiative for three blocks, 15 weeks
- Implemented new activities during a 5 week course (G3 and A3)
- Spent approximately 40 to 60 min per week (3 days)
- Asked students’ opinions and suggestions at the beginning
- Integrated new activities to enrich the curriculum, not to replace it
Day 1

What are the differences between the education systems in countries around the world?
“In my country, teacher gives all the answers.”

“Here, we need to find them!”

“In western culture, we need to learn by ourselves!”

“Independent learning?”
Group work

Let’s brainstorm some ideas!

How do you help / What actions do you take to help your students become more independent learners?
This study aims to

• expand learners’ understanding of independent learning

• encourage them to become more involved, responsible and active with their own learning processes

• develop an overarching concept about their own learning
Outcomes and Objectives

- To create an adaptable framework for different courses, language levels and teaching styles
- To encourage teacher creativity and use of professional judgement
- To develop a supported environment where learners are moving towards taking more control of their learning experiences
Outcomes and Objectives

- To implement a life-long and ongoing learning process
- To engage learners in learning experiences involving the wider community
- More autonomy through the curriculum, rather than adding to the curriculum
- To work in partnership with learners
How?

by initiating **new thoughts, words and actions**...
Framework

1. Thought
2. Word
3. New Thought
4. Action
5. Self Evaluation
Framework

Week 1 – Thoughts

Week 2 – Thoughts + Words

Week 3 – Words + Actions

Week 4 – Actions

Week 5 – Reflection & new thoughts
Exploratory Practice

Learners and teachers work together to develop new and effective independent learning strategies.
Group work

Enhancing Independent Learning

Inside the classroom

Outside the classroom

How?

Please give examples
Learning tools, concepts

Different activities were incorporated throughout different courses for three blocks 15 weeks

Mary Ann: General English

- Group discussions
- Brainstorming
- Music
- Interviewing
- Keeping a scaffolded journal
- Video/Voice recording

Gamze: Academic English

- Brainstorming ideas
- Pair/group discussions
- Keeping a journal, weekly entries
- Mind mapping, critical thinking
- Presentations, video recording
- Role playing
Learning tools, concepts

• Starting from simple thoughts & words

• Co-constructing – Students work together to develop ideas by creating meaningful, practical concepts

• Blending curriculum with extracurricular activities

• Creating opportunities – learning inside and outside the classroom
Learning tools, concepts

Sharing & reflecting between:
- learner – learner
- learner – teacher
- teacher – teacher

Developing contextually appropriate and effective pedagogies:
- Goal setting
- Needs-based
- Practical applications
Teaching Autonomous Learning through Curriculum Content

Autonomous Learning Framework

Content of Curriculum/English Language Focus

Autonomous Activity
Always 50/50 in relationships

The shoes on my feet
I've bought it

The clothes I'm wearing
I've bought it

The rock I'm rockin'

'Cause I depend on me
If I wanted the watch you're wearin'

I'll buy it

The house I live in

I've bought it

The car I'm driving

I've bought it

I depend on me

(I depend on me)
Concept mapping

- Happiness
- Teaching & Learning
- Health
- Hobbies
- Painting
- Traveling
- Languages
- Learning about new cultures
- Family
- Piano
- Blues
- Music
- Sports
- Swimming
- Europe
- Uni
- Friends
- A U.
- All
What does the word ‘independence’ mean to you?

“Independence means ‘A boy becomes a man’”.

“Independence is like freedom of living.”

“Independence refers to people making decisions and solve problems by themselves, it is a social ability...”

“Independent means people who are not rely on others mentally.”

“Being independent is important because you do not limit your thoughts and skills, for that you will be a fearless person to have or do your own idea. To be independent is the bright side of life for each person.”
Analyse & synthesize
Independence Tree

- Independent economic source
- Freedom
- Do everything
- Take care of myself very good
- Deal with something that are terrible
- Fix something by myself
- Take care of myself
- Being responsible for my actions
- I am independent because...
- tents in life
- Gain experience
Independence Tree

- Highly study skill
- Have abilities to solve problems by himself
- Freedom
- Be responsible for my behaviors
- Spirit independent
- I am independent because...
Actions

Students apply these concepts into their own learning context inside and outside the classroom
Groups in action
Groups in Action
Exploring practices outside the classroom
Outcomes
Students’ comments about what they have learned

“Independent learning will give us more motivation and confidence.”

“I have learned different methods about independent learning. It makes me more effective and also it makes me more confident.”

“Independent learning is not only inside the classroom, but also a kind of life, trying to learn in every moment of my life.”

“I have to like study in my deep heart. If I longing for the knowledge, then study is not a job anymore.”

“I learned two things in order to be independent, one is to take a step to do simple things with extraordinary love; two, give it back to the community by serving them voluntarily.”
Outcomes & Reflection

The two teachers’ views

- Creative & fun
- Better learning & better understanding
- Putting concepts into practice
- More effective (and richer) curriculum
- More enthusiasm among students
- More devotion to learning
- Life long learning
- Integrating into university’s academic culture & environment
- Becoming more independent & confident
Reflection

Let’s share our creative ideas that really work!

Let’s learn from each other, collaborate.

Share with senior teachers and managers.

Enrich the curriculum – make it work better according to students’ needs.

Implement, put it into practice.

Strive for excellency together!


Thank you

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