'LEARNING BY TEACHING' – A STRATEGY FOSTERING LEAENER AUTONOMY

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Thinking of how to teach students to learn a second language successfully and how to help them on their way of learning has become one of the topical issues in ELT today. The learner autonomy concept, therefore, with its focus on learners and specifically self-directed learning opens new perspectives of searching and experimenting various learning strategies and techniques including a 'Learning by teaching' strategy this contribution is focused on.

From the historical perspective, this strategy has had quite a wide range of pedagogical implementations so far. Among those are Andrew Bell's (1795) and Joseph Lancaster's (1815) educational experiments with students as teachers' assistants, or Sudbury Schools experience where a lot of teaching was done by students. Later on Jean-Pol Martin (80s) established French lessons conducted by secondary school students (Germany).

The data analysis shows that 'learning by teaching' was accepted by most students with enthusiasm. In their reflections, 11 out of 13 participants found a new strategy effective and useful. Here are some of their responses:

Overall feelings

Learning	Teaching
▪ *'I've learnt a lot of new things'* ▪ *'This is the best way of learning'* ▪ *'I've learnt in a funnier and more interesting way than usually'* ▪ *'this kind of learning was more effective compared with a traditional way'* ▪ *'It was a good experience of learning'*	▪ *'we had a good chance to speak in front of everyone'* ▪ *'everyone listened to me and paid attention'* ▪ *'I had a good feeling about the fact that others learnt something from me'* ▪ *'It was nice to share what I've learnt'*

Atmosphere

The most frequently accounted characteristics were '*positive', 'interesting', 'impressive', 'everyone was involved', 'we had a chance to work together', 'we could choose and plan things by ourselves'.* Those responses definitely indicate that the strategy is worthy and beneficial. It fosters intrinsic motivation and creates an inspiring classroom atmosphere.

Students' preferences

The analysis of students' preferences in terms of conventional vs innovative teaching/ learning process demonstrates three different points of view. 10 students think that a new strategy proved to be more effective than a traditional text-book based learning. 1 student considers combining both ways. 2 students prefer a traditional learning/ teaching process.

Suggestions for improvement

Most students expressed their desire to continue working on new learning strategies and on project-based assignments in general without any specific suggestions on improvement. Only two voices reflected towards changes in the future:

- *'We should have more choice in which way we would learn'*
- *'those who take the roles of teachers should make a stronger agreement about what they want to teach to avoid repetitions'*

As it was previously mentioned, most students gave a very positive feedback on the project. However, the two students were not happy about their learning/ teaching involvement. They were sure that a conventional figure of a teacher worked for them much better. Nevertheless, they indicated that the whole atmosphere of the project was positive and that most students felt enthusiastic. Two other students had mixed feelings and along with expressing excitement they wrote about their ins
ecurity and the lack of confidence. All of those remarks should be taken into consideration by a teacher.

What I as a teacher found especially interesting in the students' reflections was their assessment of my new role in the project. They described my activities as follows:
The teacher:
- *'explained what was unclear'*
- *'helped and gave advice'*
- *'suggested appropriate techniques'*
- *'pointed out what needed improvement'*
- *'gave us freedom of choice'*
- *'gave feedback, answered our questions'*
- *'gave directions, guided'*
- *'motivated'*
One of the students called me *'a mentor'* rather than a teacher.

Conclusion

The empirical research based on implementing the 'learning by teaching' strategy has demonstrated the great increase not only in speaking capacities of the students but also a positive change in their attitudes towards learning English. It undoubtedly fosters learner autonomy and supports the growth of students' intrinsic motivation. The overall project outcomes have ensured the author of the presented article in the remarkable efficacy of self-directed learning and its prospective development in the future .

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