

ЛІНГВАДЫДАКТЫКА

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WHAT MAKES LEARNING EFFECTIVE?

The article "What makes learning effective?" presents the issue of how received knowledge can be acquired by students or learners. The main purpose of the article is to suggest that turning learning styles into learning strategies might be more effective and profitable. The topic of study skills related to learning strategies is also taken into consideration. Moreover, feedback is viewed here as one of the key elements which helps to make learning more effective. It is also accentuated that students should be exposed to the stages of the academic process which include acquisition, reflection, application and evaluation.

Рассматривается проблема получения знаний студентами и учениками. Выявлено, что планомерное превращение стилей и способов учения в стратегии учения может стать более полезным и эффективным для приобретения прочных знаний. Установлена связь между стратегиями учения и необходимыми учебными навыками. Обоснована необходимость осуществления обратной связи, которая является одним из элементов, способствующих повышению эффективности процесса обучения и учения. Среди множества элементов (компонентов) успешности учения особо выделено знакомство студентов с этапами академического процесса.

It is obvious that knowledge can be acquired in different ways. A lot of young people apply for admission in higher educational establishments to get professional knowledge. Students of any educational institution in our country are traditionally critical of the professional training they receive. It is quite logical for students to expect the highest standards of teaching. From this point of view all our students are the same. This is on the one hand, but on the other hand different students learn in different ways. Taking this fact into account learners can be, for example, subdivided into such groups or categories as:

- active participants (those who are actively involved in the process of learning) and passive observers (those who just sit and watch);
- conscientious students who attend classes and do all their assignments on a regular basis and lazy students who need to be pushed to work really hard because they may skip classes and study by fits and starts;
- theoretically – minded and practically- minded students;
- learners who are apt to respond swiftly and those who take their time to make a decision.

Sometimes students may represent a combination of several categories. The existence of the above –mentioned categories can prove the fact about an individual reaction to the learning process. But what does this individual reaction depend on? It depends on many personal factors, for instance:

- motivation to learn;
- interests and preferences;
- learning abilities;
- character.

All these factors lead to developing learning styles which enable students to study in their own manner. For example, a student can make up his mind how to read – fast or slowly or decide how deep his understanding of a subject should be.

However, the question is: Do students realize their potential and get the fullest possible value from their education by applying individual learning styles?

Moreover, we can ask: Can students change their learning styles when some situations demand it? Can they develop new more efficient ways of learning and abandon those which turned out less effective?

Teachers know from their experience that they are mostly responsible for encouraging their learners to develop new more effective styles and, therefore, making students think strategically. In such a way students' learning styles will turn into their learning strategies. Learning strategies are supposed to come up to learners' expectations about the standard of education they would like to get. If strategies are appropriate which means they are sensible, practical and flexible the desirable effective can be achieved by both teachers and students. Thus, learning strategies become successful if students manage to take control over their studies.

They are supposed to illustrate the evidence of the knowledge obtained. Therefore, teachers can observe the following feedback:

- students show critical understanding and powerful analysis or application of relevant experience, facts and issues;
- they show fresh thinking and originality, coverage of relevant literature;
- they show breadth in reading;
- they manage to integrate detail into a coherent whole;
- they use appropriate and accurate language.

However, one more question remains unanswered. How can we teach anybody study skills? Among study skills that are absolutely indispensable to any student one can mention:

- library skills (including speed reading,);
- listening to tapes of lessons, opinions of other learners, listening to a lecturer;
- watching the activity and involvement of teachers and learners either by being present in a lesson or watching a video;

- speaking including collaborative brainstorming, pooling, exchanging and comparing opinions, ideas, knowledge, beliefs, assumptions and experience;
- comparing personal opinions and experience with those of coparticipants;
- selecting materials which would be appropriate;
- adding personal examples to extend a given list of criteria for making decisions

- taking notes;
- writing essays;
- making conclusions
- doing research work and so on. The awareness of study skills can serve a method of developing learning strategies.

Recollect from your childhood how you learned any kind of skill. It can be described as follows: you did something for the first time in your life, recalled what you had done and how, reflected on it, made a conclusion, prepared for doing it for a second time, did it again, again and again. At last you had a skill. Without anybody's help? Incredible! So, do we need teachers? Yes, we do! Who can direct, explain, motivate, control, assist, instruct, correct and fulfill other essential roles?

How else can teachers be helpful in making learning more effective? Teachers should not forget about the organization and collection of feedback. Feedback is viewed as one of the key elements which helps to make learning effective because it is related to monitoring of understanding or performance of students by teachers, of students by themselves or by each other; reporting back on an activity they have been engaged in; commenting critically on a course they have been following, or a component of a course.

There is another aspect of making the process of learning effective. It seems apparent that students should be exposed to the stages of any academic process. The first stage of any academic process is acquisition. Knowledge can be acquired from books, lectures, handouts, etc. It can also be created by discussion, brainstorming, elicitation by question and answer, and so on.

The second stage is reflection. There are two aspects in the handling of new knowledge.

1. Deep processing, in which the student develops an understanding of the essential underlying meaning of the new knowledge.

2. Active processing, in which the student relates the new knowledge to his previous knowledge and experience.

The third stage is application. Here the student applies new knowledge to the solution of practical problems.

The fourth stage is evaluation. There are also two aspects to the evaluation stage.

1. Student evaluation of content and process, in which the student evaluates the new information which he has received and how it has been presented. How valid is it? How useful is its application? Is there anything more that should be known about it? Could it have been presented in a different way?

2. Assessment. The assessment procedures should reveal to the student and the lecturer how far the course objectives have been achieved by each individual student.

So far in this article we have considered how to make learning more effective.

First of all, students should be aware that there is a variety of ways of learning. Students should be made a little bit more self-conscious about the actual process of study.

Secondly, students should be exposed to a variety of learning contexts in which they can explore and develop their learning strategies.

Thirdly, students should be encouraged to think strategically about their learning. They should ask themselves questions like: What sort of learning is required here? What is the most effective and time-saving method of doing that learning?

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