

Таким образом, внедрение управляемой самостоятельной работы обучающихся в учебный процесс требует значительного совершенствования ее традиционных видов.

Самостоятельная работа при изучении иностранного языка может стать эффективной только тогда, когда она организуется, управляется преподавателем и имеет достаточное методическое и материальное обеспечение. Роль преподавателя предполагает косвенное и непосредственное управление деятельностью обучающихся, а также организацию и корректировку процесса подготовки и проведения самостоятельной работы, посредством которой осуществляется управление познавательной деятельностью.

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PROCESS NOT PERFECTION: EXPLITING RECEPTIVE SKILLS PRACTICE TO STRENGTHEN SUB-SKILLS AND ENCOURAGE INDEPENDENT LEARNING

Foreign language teachers nowadays face a plethora of motivating factors, needs, goals and learning styles from their classes of students. Each student is unique and approaches the course slightly differently. In order to reach each student where they are in their language learning, it is essential for teachers to foster independent life-long learning strategies in their students so that students can personalise the opportunities that are presented to them in the classroom and use them in the way that is most beneficial for them. Receptive skills tasks offer channels of opportunity by which students can advance their understanding and productive language knowledge. Teachers play an indispensable role in making resources available to students and helping them to access them in a way that they will benefit from them, regardless of their level. This paper will offer examples of tasks that can be carried

out at the pre-task, task and post-task stage using both authentic materials and course books, or materials prepared especially for language learning, and will focus on developing the process that students should follow rather than only being concerned with the end result.

A common activity in language classrooms nowadays is to use reading and listening texts to practice receptive skills or to introduce and extract the target language for the lesson. Course books are filled with texts and are usually accompanied by two or three activities, such as true/false or short answer comprehension question. However, while these may be common place activities, what are their purpose? What is the teacher hoping to achieve by using such tasks in the classroom? By completing these tasks are the learners actually improving their receptive skills or merely demonstrating their ability, and if they are unable to complete it, how do they benefit the student in the short and long term? There is no one-size-fits-all method when it comes to language learning and classroom tasks need to be exploited more widely and deeply in order for all students to benefit from them.

As noted by the National Capital Language Resource Centre (NCLRC n.d d), language instructors are often frustrated by the fact that their students continue to approach receptive skills tasks in the target language differently to those in their native language. They will often become distracted from the meaning of the text as a whole due to their inability to understand individual words and have a low tolerance for uncertainty. Learners need to be made aware of the strategies that they employ in their native language and when to use them to aid comprehension in the target language. Unlike what many learners may think, listening is not a passive activity but rather an active one that requires a range of both bottom-up language focus and top-down background knowledge focus strategies to create meaning. This can be confusing for students as it is not a conscious process in their native language, but by developing their skills in a process-oriented way they will be better placed to improve their receptive skills both inside and outside of the classroom and, most importantly, will notice the improvement in these skills through regular reflection and analysis and hence maintain greater motivation for learning.

Empowering students to take more responsibility for their learning invites the role of language instructors to be reassessed. Ken Robinson (2013) notes that “teaching is a creative profession not a delivery system”. The role of an educator is not merely to transmit information but to lead students to a higher level of understanding through inspiring curiosity, encouraging reflection and “creating a climate of possibility” (Masallam 2013; Robinson 2013). If this is not occurring, it is reasonable to question whether learning is actually occurring while the instructor is “engaged in the task of teaching” (Robinson 2013). By solely using reading and listening texts and tasks as developed in course books for receptive skills practice, they are removing the opportunity for students to employ native speaker strategies as these tasks contain language that has been graded to a specified level and have exercises that are generic and may not be relevant for their students (NCLRC n.d. d). Just because it is a task in a course book does not make it a ‘good’ task for learners to do. Instead, combining these texts with authentic texts that students will encounter outside of the classroom, will better prepare them for using their language skills in-

dependently. Ultimately, the main concerns of instructors are to ensure their learners are communicative, satisfied and hence motivated to learn. To do this learners need to be encouraged to use diverse reading and listening strategies, especially those which are top-down as they would in their native language (NCLRC n.d. d).

Sources of receptive skills practice are diverse and varied, and in today's age of digital technology, much more accessible. Sources of input to develop listening skills beyond the course book may include podcasts from internet news and radio sites and other information-based presentations such as, TED talks, Big think and Youtube; instructor-made recordings (using Vocaroo, Screencast-o-matic or another recording device); TV shows, movies, songs, guest speakers and, of course, the teacher and other students in the class are a valuable source.

Reading skills can benefit from access to newspapers, special interest magazines (to engage students' interest), topic specific textbooks and essays (especially for academic students or professionals who are looking to communicate their existing technical skills in a different language), transcripts of listening texts, websites such as East of the Web, which provides fiction on a range of themes and at a range of levels, and blogs that can be found to match the interests of the student, graded readers, information sheets and service texts, such as brochures and advertisements, diagrams, tables, graphs and schedules

All input offers the opportunity for students to broaden their vocabulary, gain grammatical awareness and get exposure to the pragmatics of discourse in context but there are some issues of use to consider. When course books material is chosen, instructors should ask: Is the text culturally relevant? Is it outdated? Does it need to be adapted?

When authentic materials are used, instructors should ask: How will my students benefit? (What sub-skill will be able to be practised?) Why is it of interest? What kind of task should be designed to make it achievable but still challenging for my students?

In each case, the ways in which the text can be exploited is paramount while remembering that students will need support to convert their passive awareness, or intuition for what sounds right and ability to tune their ear to the accent and speed of the speaker, into active learning to broaden their existing knowledge.

To support students in developing their receptive skills they need to be introduced to the reading and listening process and encouraged to use it continually whenever they are confronted with such a task. This process can be divided into three stages: pre-task, task and post-task, each of which is as important as the others.

Pre-Task Stage. *Setting the Context.*

Discussion. This involves having learners discuss questions or statements about the topic of the text as they relate to their lives and experience or based on their opinions.

Running Dictation. Alternatively, this activity incorporates speaking and writing practice and can give students background information about the theme. Students are divided into pairs or groups of three and a short text (2-4 sentences) is typed up and stuck on a wall in a large room or outside the classroom. One student in each pair runs to the text reads the first sentence and returns to his/her partner to dictate as much as he/she can remember for his/her partner to write down. This con-

tinues until the whole text has been dictated with partners changing roles halfway through. If three students are in a group, one student takes the role of a reader and reads the text aloud to student 2: the runner, who then runs to student 3: the writer.

Vocabulary. In order to prime students for reading or listening it is necessary to activate existing knowledge of vocabulary related to the theme or context of the text and pre-teach some new vocabulary so as to unblock the task for students (Schulstad, 2013). While it can be debated if this is a native speaker strategy or not, as while native speakers do use their existing knowledge, they do not have the luxury of having the opportunity to be introduced to new vocabulary before encountering it in the text itself (Ozog, 2013), it should be remembered that the brain processes and acquires an additional language differently to one's mother tongue and so the learning approach and support should reflect this (Ortega 2009).

Matching Meanings. Learners are encouraged to match vocabulary that they already know first to build their confidence and make the task easier for themselves, having fewer options in the end to match with unfamiliar vocabulary, and not to use a dictionary but rather to use their classmates as a resource and foster teamwork and interpersonal skills. Vocabulary could be matched with simple definitions or examples, or alternatively with synonyms or antonyms for horizontal expansion that will aid the organisation of vocabulary into a more memorable network of words rather than individual items of lexis.

Brainstorming. This has the benefit of allowing students to teach each other, as the language is student generated. This is not only confidence building, but also allows for on the spot error correction of fossilised or common errors and another means of organising vocabulary and showing the relationship between words, especially if a word map is used.

Giving words in context. Target vocabulary is presented in sentences rather than in a list so that students can use the sentence to guess the meaning from the context. Students may be able to derive the part of speech, connotation, register, root form or topic to which it relates, all of which are useful in developing inferencing skills.

Word Forms. Also known as word families, these related words can be examined. By learning three or four words rather than one for certain items of vocabulary, it provides yet another way of organising the vocabulary in the brain to make it memorable by creating a network of connections between words, which is especially useful for visual learners.

All of these activities can also be expanded to allow students to practise using the language themselves in their own sentences, thereby formatively testing their understanding of the vocabulary introduced to them.

Prediction. This serves several purposes, the most important of which is to motivate students to do the task by giving them a reason to read or listen. Predictions could be made from the title or sub-heading, the vocabulary list, by hypothesising the relationship between the words as they are used in the text, or the student's knowledge of the topic or pictures and captions. It is useful for students to write their own questions for the text based on what they think they will be able to learn about the topic from the text. Not only is this a way to personalise the learning experience for the student, but it is also promoting actions that native speakers do rapidly and

subconsciously when they read or listen to information. Students naturally will go straight to reading or listening to a text without preparing themselves for it and hence often struggle to understand it. This pre-task stage is aimed at unblocking the task. By leading students through these stages, teachers are scaffolding them towards a successful outcome, while developing their speaking, writing, vocabulary, pronunciation, social and problem solving skills, and increasing their tolerance for uncertainty.

Task Stage can be divided into two parts, namely, tasks that require comprehension of main ideas and those that require more specific information.

Main Ideas. Tasks which focus on the main idea utilise top-down strategies and may include:

Grouping vocabulary. Vocabulary can be grouped based on similarities or by identifying the odd word out from those presented in a list to provide a focal point and organisation to the text. Oftentimes, students do not realise how much they understand and only see how much they do not understand which makes them feel like they have not achieved anything positive in the task. This activity aims to dispel that myth.

WH... Question Words. WHEN did it happen? WHAT happened? WHO did it happen to? These are just some of the basic questions that aim to build confidence as students do not need to be able to explain the text in detail, which makes it much more achievable.

Paragraph cut-ups. Especially good for reading texts, students are given the text cut up into paragraphs and work in small groups to put the text in order. This kind of task can also serve as beneficial practice for developing writing skills if the topic sentence is cut off of each paragraph and has to be matched together first. In this type of task students need to focus on key words, time, the relationship between events and cause and effect. Because it breaks a large amount of information into smaller chunks, they are likely to be perceivably less intimidating for the students.

Write the title. This is also for reading texts and requires students to write a title for each paragraph to summarise it rather than the text as a whole thereby identifying the key themes and breaking the text down. This is especially useful for authentic texts as it shows the students what they can do themselves with texts they find outside the classroom to aid understanding.

Specific Information. These tasks employ a bottom-up strategy focussing on the words and grammar that create more precise meaning. Tasks in this stage commonly include true/ false/ not given questions, multiple choice questions or short answer questions as they provide a straight forward form of assessment for teachers and help to focus students on what they should be identifying in the text. However, beyond this they are not so useful, especially for authentic tasks, as these kinds of tasks are not able to be applied by students for themselves for self-study.

Transcript Gap Fill. This task is useful for listening texts as students have the opportunity to tune their ears to chunks of language rather than listening for individual words, thereby identifying the relationship between words as collocations, phrasal verbs, set phrases or idiomatic language. This kind of task can also be exploited for specific grammatical structures or word forms.

It is in this stage that students need to develop the ability to prioritise information and “decide what is and is not important to understand” (NCLRC n.d. b) to ensure that they are reading or listening to complete the task; therefore, not being able to

understand everything is okay. There is a caveat associated with this that teachers need to be aware of: changing the form of the input to make it more accessible for students may be doing them more of a disservice and hindering their linguistic development. For example, by recommending students watch English movies with subtitles is changing a listening task into a reading task and, therefore, is not providing practice to develop the weaker listening skills (Schulstad 2013). It would therefore be more beneficial to adapt the task, that is, what the students need to listen or read for rather than how they access the information.

Post-Task Stage involves personalisation of the language input and learners evaluating “their progress in terms of increases in their functional proficiency” (NCLRC n.d. c). By making connections between the vocabulary in the texts and their own communication means students are not only more likely to remember the new vocabulary and maintain motivation for learning, but also develop their productive skills and gain awareness of the pragmatics of the language. This may be achieved by focusing on certain functional language examples from the text, related to register or context for example, or by eliciting certain collocation, synonyms, colloquialisms or idiomatic language so that students have yet another opportunity to use skills for drawing inferences. Furthermore, students can develop their speaking and writing skills through personalisation and response tasks that aim to make the new language gained more memorable for the individual.

Spoken Responses include ranking or discussion topics and they may be organised to be conducted in small groups, pairs or as a whole class.

Again, Again, Again. This activity is useful for developing accuracy and fluency. In this task students are in pairs and talk to each other for about 5 minutes each about their experience or opinion on the topic. Then students change partners and repeat the same experience or opinion to answer the same question to their new partner, but this time only have 3 minutes each. One final change of partners follows this and the students repeat themselves again, having only 2 minutes each. The aim of this activity is to build confidence and fluency when speaking, but also for students to start to fine-tune and self-correct their own speaking as it will surely be easier to talk about the topic the third time and they are likely to do so in a more succinct way in comparison to the first time.

Written Responses

Half Sentences. Students could be given half sentences with vocabulary from the text or about issues discussed in the text to complete in a way which is true for them.

Quick Writing. This involves students spending 10-15 minutes writing whatever they are thinking at the present moment about the text that they just read or listened to. It is designed to uncover what ideas it has stimulated in the students and if students are told not to worry about spelling, grammar or punctuation, can make them feel more comfortable and less worried about making errors, which are a vital part of learning.

By continually developing skills at each of the three stages of receptive skills tasks, students are being scaffolded to a more realistic and attainable level of success and developing strategies that they can use when doing self-study. This is a salient

consideration as this will determine the rate of improvement. Furthermore, these strategies can be used for years to come when using the language outside the classroom as this is ultimately what language learning is all about; despite limitation with regards to grammar and lexis, students need to be able to “fend for themselves in communication situations” (NCLRC n.d. b). Focusing on the result and having native speaker-like perfection is not realistic and, for most students, unattainable as even native speakers make mistakes, have misunderstandings or develop bad habits with pronunciation and grammar.

In order to prepare students for successful outcomes with regards to language learning and use, they need to be empowered by demonstrating what they can do for themselves. Students have a great deal more knowledge of a language than they realise, but oftentimes have trouble accessing it. Therefore, poor organisation of new language in their working and long term memory becomes a barrier to learning which instructors need to assist in breaking down (Ortega 2009). This may be achieved in many cases by adapting tasks to the students’ level rather than the text so as to develop strategies for dealing with information in the target language outside of the classroom. In the end, all students can achieve something if opportunities that become available in a text are exploited. By doing this, instructors are meeting students where they are rather than showing them how far they are from where they should be.

In summary, due to the variety of students’ background, strengths, learning styles and needs, as well as the communication situations that students will be called on to use the target language, instructors need to use a variety of sources in a variety of tasks that develop strategies to deal with difficult sources of information at each of the three stages of the receptive skills process. Many students find it difficult to notice an improvement in their receptive skills which may be because they are finding the task continually challenging, but have failed to realise that the tasks themselves have been becoming more difficult as the instructor has diagnosed a sub-skill that needs to be improved and developed a task accordingly. Receptive skills success is not so much about achieving 100% accuracy 100% of the time for a graded task, but rather developing skills that can be applied outside of the classroom for authentic situations, as this is the purpose of language learning after all.

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КОМПЕТЕНТНОСТНО ОРИЕНТИРОВАННОЕ ОБУЧЕНИЕ ИНОСТРАННОМУ ЯЗЫКУ В ВУЗЕ

Требования к образовательному процессу в высшей школе на современном этапе предполагает оптимизацию не только содержания, методов и форм, но и разработку новых подходов к определению роли иностранного языка в системе вузовской подготовки. Такая подготовка подразумевает не только традиционное, фактическое владение всеми аспектами языка, но и, прежде всего, формирование понятийного аппарата обучаемых, дающего возможность культурно-образовательной ориентации и деятельности в европейских высших учебных заведениях. Оставляя неизменными основные задачи обучения иностранному языку, следует значительно расширить страноведческой и культурологические аспекты подготовки. На наш взгляд, такую задачу можно реализовать, используя компетентностный подход в обучении иностранным языкам, который позволяет современному студенту выступать в роли субъекта образовательного процесса, где он учится формировать свое мировоззрение, постигая накопленный человечеством опыт с помощью традиционных источников информации и новых технологий, а преподаватель выступает в роли советника, помощника, оппонента и консультанта. Именно компетентностный подход позволяет не только получить некий объем знаний, но и обучает студента самому главному – умению самостоятельно мыслить и приобретать знания.

Таким образом, компетентностный подход выдвигает на первое место не информированность ученика, а умения разрешать проблемы, возникающие при освоении современной техники и технологии, в обыденной жизни при выполнении социальных ролей, а также в ситуациях неопределенности, что предполагает наличие опыта осуществления деятельности «по образцу».

Несомненно, возрастет и востребованность специалистов со знанием иностранных языков на рынке труда, что является дополнительным стимулом к изучению иностранного языка. Все это влечет за собой и изменения в требованиях к уровню владения языком, определение новых подходов к отбору содержания и ор-