

THE BENEFITS OF INDEPENDENT STUDY IN TEACHING FOREIGN LANGUAGES

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Abstract:

Independent study in teaching foreign languages is a valuable approach that can enhance language learning experiences for students. By taking control of their own learning, students can develop important skills, deepen their understanding of the language, and foster a greater appreciation for different cultures. The relevance of this topic is that in recent years there has been a noticeable increase in interest in students' independent work. Whether used as a standalone method or in conjunction with traditional classroom instruction, independent study is a powerful tool that can empower students to become confident and proficient language learners. The purpose of this article is to study the issue of organizing independent study and its benefits in teaching foreign languages.

Key words: independent study, traditional classroom settings, individual learning, self-motivation, self-discipline, critical thinking, cultural awareness.

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Learning a foreign language is a challenging but rewarding endeavor. In traditional classroom setting, teachers often facilitate language learning through structured lessons and exercises. However, there is another approach to language learning that is gaining popularity- independent study.

Independent study in teaching foreign languages refers to the practice of students taking charge of their own learning outside the formal classroom setting. This approach allows students to explore the language at their individual learning needs, and develop a deeper understanding of the target language.

One of the most noticeable benefits of independent study in teaching foreign languages is the flexibility it offers to learners. Traditional classroom settings may not always cater to the diverse learning styles and preferences of students. By engaging in independent study, learners can choose the methods and resources that work best for them, whether it is using language learning apps, watching foreign language films, reading news, articles, or practicing conversation with native speakers. Moreover, independent study promotes self-motivation and self-discipline in language learners. Taking responsibility for one's own learning requires commitment and dedication. By setting personal goals, creating study schedules, and monitoring their own progress, students can develop important skills that will benefit them not only in language learning but also in other aspects of their lives. Advanced teachers have always believed that their students should work as independently as possible, and the teachers should provide material for it. Experts in this field emphasized that it is important to give students a method, a guiding thread for organization the acquisition of knowledge, and this means equipping them with the skills and abilities of the scientific organization of mental work, i.e. the ability to set a goal, choose the means to achieve it.

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The organization of independent education involves creating learning communities where learners can share their knowledge, challenge each other, and construct new understanding collaboratively. This aligns with both constructivist and connectivist theories, highlighting the social aspect of learning. Through project-based learning, study groups, or online forums, learners engage in meaningful interactions, enhancing their learning experience through the diverse perspectives and support of their peers. Vygotsky's concept of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) further informs the organization of independent education. ZPD refers to the difference between what a learner can do without help and what they can achieve with guidance and encouragement from skilled partner. This theory underlines the importance of scaffolding in independent study providing support structures that help learners progressively increase their independence and capacity for learning. However, connectivism highlights the importance of digital literacy, the ability to learn from diverse, often non-traditional sources, and the skills to navigate and synthesize information from various networks. This theory supports independent education by estimating the role of technology as integral parts of learning ecosystem.

It is important to note that independent study should not be seen as a replacement for traditional classroom learning but rather as a complementary approach. While organizing of independent study offers many benefits, including flexibility, individual learning, self-motivation, and critical thinking skills, classroom instruction provides important opportunities for interaction, feedback, and structured practice that are also essential for language acquisition.

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