



Teachers' views on the role of individual difference variables: Implications for teaching, research and teacher education

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Introduction

- Aim of the presentation: to offer English teachers' insights on the workings of the individual difference variable: L2 learning autonomy
- Research gap: no previous studies on the views of Hungarian teachers of English



The problem

“At the moment language lessons are characterized by frontal teaching, while pair and group work, which allow more active language use are less frequent, thus traditional language teaching methodologies dominate. Language lessons are not always held in the target language. The high number of teachers per student indicates frequent teacher changes, and the fact that many students take private language lessons in the language they learn at school, reflects their dissatisfaction with language education at school” (Öveges & Csizér, 2018, p. 227)



Theoretical background

- Learner autonomy is broadly defined as the learner's ability to exercise **control over learning** (Holec, 1980).
- taking responsibility for the **learning process** (Benson, 2011)
- Differentiation between the content and the process of learning → autonomy vs. self-regulation
- Illés (2012): „learner autonomy can be defined as the capacity to become competent speakers of the target language who are able to exploit the linguistic and other resources at their disposal effectively and creatively.” (p. 509)



Studies in Hungary

- Illés (2011): re-conceptualization of second language learning autonomy in the era of ELF
- Csizér & Kormos (2012): the link between L2 motivation and L2 autonomy
- Spiczéné Bukovszki (2016): teachers' views on their own roles in developing students' autonomous learning behavior in HE
- Asztalos & Szénich (2018a, b): students' view of autonomous learning in HE
- Albert et al., (2018b): the decline of autonomy during public education
- Albert et al., (in press): how emotions relate to L2 autonomy

The research question

- What characterizes secondary school English teachers' views on the role of autonomy in Hungary?





Methods

- 31 semi-structured piloted interviews
- English teachers from various Hungarian towns in the country
- Gender: 29 females, 3 males
- Age: 27-64 years old
- Teaching practice: 5-35 years
- Length of the interviews: 29-90 minutes
- Topical analysis to investigate their insights





Insight 1: autonomy

"They need to take responsibility for part of it, because here in class, let's say in three classes per week, it is impossible to teach the language, this is quite clear. But it is possible to learn it in three hours without a private teacher if they are willing to add at least six to nine hours to it at home. This is difficult, I mean learning languages is difficult, and I think that they need to take responsibility for this. But the teacher's task is to develop this sense of responsibility in the kids."



Insight 2: autonomy

"But I cannot study instead of them. So I can give them methods, I can call their attention to what could be done more effectively, but then it is up to them."

"And also based on my personal experiences, I can tell them what worked for me. Because maybe my personal example will influence them."



Insight 3: autonomy

I: "Successful language learner?"

T: "Someone who is diligent, who is also ready to invest independent work. This is what I see as the biggest problem today. They think that what we do in class is enough. Then there is the next level, those who attend private lessons and think that as long as they have a private teacher, they did everything they could. And it is independent practice that is missing, which I think would be very important. I think this would be the most important: to practise independently, and find those sources from which they can learn. I often feel that they get everything ready-made from us, and they still cannot make use of it."



Insight 4: autonomy

"Yes, I think that this is a great, great, maybe the greatest task, life-long learning, so they should be capable of it afterwards, and I think this is not just a pompous fake goal, but this is what we should truly be preparing them for. And what we can do is that we consciously reflect on those components that they might need here. I mean learning methods, difficulties and self-evaluation because in the Hungarian educational system, these are still in their infancy. This is a big challenge for us right now, but I think the older a generation becomes... it will be easier with the newer ones, because they live much more consciously, and this is what they see in the outside world as well."



Conclusion

- Importance of autonomy
 - Language learning is a long process
- Developing autonomy in learners
 - Teachers as role models
 - Methods
 - Difficulties



Thank you for your attention!



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