LEARNERS' ATTITUDES ASSESSMENT IN TERMS OF LANGUAGE AWARENESS, LEARNER MOTIVATION AND LEARNER AUTONOMY WITHIN ONLINE EFL AND ESP TEACHING AT THE TODOR KABLESHKOV UNIVERSITY OF TRANSPORT

Boryana T. Ruzhekova-Rogozherova
boryana@vtu.bg; boryanarogozherova@abv.bg

Todor Kableshkov University of Transport
Sofia, 158 Geo Milev Str.
THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA

Key words: *language awareness, learner motivation, learner autonomy, EFL and ESP online teaching*

Abstract: *The paper focuses on the assessment of crucial EFL and ESP teaching process parameters of language awareness, learner motivation and learner autonomy (LA, LM and LrA) in students' perception perspective under the conditions of online (or distance) teaching at the Todor Kableshkov University of Transport. The study, carried out by means of a survey with questions related to the referred concepts, was developed by the author and filled in by students. The research, which aims at evaluating learners' attitudes about online teaching efficiency, makes reference to previous author's studies concerning LA, LM and LrA exploration in face-to-face teaching. The analysis of online EFL and ESP teaching survey results contributes to more completely revealing cognitively oriented, with language learning strategies (LLS) application, distance teaching process effectiveness, and, thus, to better understanding of relatively new online EFL (FL), ESP teaching methodology. To achieve the paper objective, the following subjects will be treated: online EFL (ESP) teaching characteristics, its advantages and challenges faced by teachers and students as well as the essence of LA, LM and LrA constructs; tables with survey results and conclusion as to distance teaching implementation will be offered to readers' attention.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last year a rather considerable amount of teaching, including in the sphere of FLT, has been carried out online worldwide. New practices in methodology have emerged, developments have occurred based on already acquired distant teaching and learning experience, technological means have become more advanced to facilitate online work. Faced challenges and the way they have been dealt with have undoubtedly contributed to fresh insights appearance in ELT (FLT) theory and practice. The current paper aims at revealing EFL and ESP online[1] teaching effectiveness at the Todor Kableshkov University of Transport through learners' attitudes assessment of language teaching crucial parameters of language

---

[1] The terms *online teaching* and *distant teaching* will be used interchangeably in the paper.

awareness (LA), learner motivation (LM) and learner autonomy (LrA), this way making a modest contribution to distant teaching more thorough understanding.

The study layout includes the following components. First, EFL (and ESP) online teaching characteristics will be treated, next essential EFL and ESP teaching process parameters of LA, LM and LrA will be briefly examined, thus preconditioning subsequent LA, LM and LrA survey results presentation and discussion, and, finally, conclusions will be made as to online teaching implementation.

2. ONLINE EFL AND ESP TEACHING CHARACTERISTICS

Distance education, although technologically relatively recent, is a concept dating back to 170 years ago, with a correspondence course in Great Britain involving sending taught material and receiving learners' assignments by mail. Among most important milestones leading to contemporary online teaching are Intranet creation for students use at the University of Illinois in 1960, first online course in 1986 with DOS offered by Electronic University Network, CALCampus appearance in 1994 and the first in contemporary perspective Internet online courses, onset of MIT providing online teaching materials in 2002, etc. [1]. FLT has understandably followed technological developments, having reached certain achievements in teaching via the Internet, in which resides modern online education essence. Relevant features of online EFL and ESP[2] teaching will be presented here below.

EFL and ESP online teaching is performed either synchronously, when teaching occurs at a scheduled time or asynchronously, over longer intervals [3], or in both ways, combining attached on a distance teaching platform study materials and assignments accessible to learners anytime and real time teaching activities carried out by means of software allowing instant communication. Asynchronous teaching provides flexibility [3], whereas most often synchronous platforms offer direct sound and visual information transmission. Research in terms of online teaching pluses witnesses to increased motivation as to working with the Internet ([4] in [5]) and online teaching platforms [6], enhanced learner independence and study research interest stimulated by online platforms and new learning experiences acquirement stemming from technological developments use [6].

Notwithstanding online teaching advantages, studies in the field acquaint specialists with a series of challenges communicated not only by teachers, but also by students. Difficulties range from unequal distribution of technological devices ([7] in [8]), problems with Internet connectivity [8], absence of information from body language, lack of learner interaction, setting ([9] in [8]), all these playing a vital part in communication, and, thus, in FLT. Among referred to obstacles are also decreased learner responsibility and class attendance, new ways of cheating appearance [8], postponement of assignments ([10] in [8]) and absence of learner engagement leading to learners' turning into inactive attenders ([11] in [8]).

3. LA, LM AND LrA PARAMETERS

LA, LM and LrA[3], crucial in EFL and ESP teaching, illustrate to a significant extent educational process effectiveness; the more fully developed and implemented these constructs are, the higher learner performance and achieved general or specialized language knowledge is.

LA refers to "*conscious awareness, explicit knowledge about language in general and in particular, nature of language, reflection on language and languages*" [12]. LA is

---

[2] Although references concern EFL, statements are applicable to ESP due to FL / LSP teaching tight relationship [2].
[3] Rf. as to these concepts more detailed description and as to researchers having worked in the field in [12] and [13].

fundamental in teaching, learning and language use leading to enhanced degree of categories understanding based on linguistic thinking development stimulated through mainly cognitive and metacognitive language learning strategies (LLS) application. Teaching LA promotes interest in learners in language items essence, reasons of existence and functioning in a specific taught language and / or other languages, NL and / or $FL_2...n$, for instance.

LM, a psychological feature orienting activities towards a certain objective attainment, is subdivided into *intrinsic, extrinsic, instrumental* and *integrative motivation* types. *Intrinsic* LM relates to interest in language learning and sense of accomplishment, whereas *extrinsic* LM refers to promotion, language certificates or better employment obtainment; *instrumental* LM involves functionality, e.g., reading specialized materials and acquiring more information in a certain field, and *integrative* LM is connected to affiliating with groups of language users.

LrA represents the capacity to assume responsibility of one's learning in all possible language learning spheres and to make choices in that respect. Autonomous learners possess, acquired to a different extent, abilities of goal-setting, deciding about materials and content to be learnt, of time scheduling, progression speed, implemented LLS and of assessing acquired knowledge level. These learners reflect on studied language items form / semantics connection, build and verify hypotheses as to language functioning and take risks in language use.

Studies have proved there exists a direct ratio between LA, LM and LrA development, these concepts being tightly interconnected. Thus, for example, due to a number of common to LA and LM building components, higher LA consistently results in enhanced LM and increased LM leads to better LA parameters [12]. LM preconditions LrA development and LLS application is a reason for LA and, thus, for LrA characteristics improvement, LrA greatly depending on ameliorated comprehension of learning process and of taught language features as well [13].

4. LA, LM AND LrA SURVEY RESULTS PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

As already mentioned, a survey as to acquired EFL and ESP LA, LM and LrA values under online teaching conditions was carried out among willing to participate students of EFL (general English course learners) and ESP (Technical English course learners). Learners were asked to give answers based on their individual perception. Filled in questionnaire includes questions referring to studied constructs, and namely, LA (q. 1 - 9), LM (q. 10.1 – 10.10) and LrA (q. 11 - 15). Questionnaire items were founded on previous studies survey items ([13] and [14] for LA; [14] and [15] for LM and [13] for LrA) concerning traditional face-to-face teaching. Previous studies results will not be compared with the current paper survey values, although they are commensurate to some extent, [13], [14] and [15] focusing either on EFL or ESP entirely, or adopting slightly different analysis approach.

Table 1 containing obtained results, consists of six columns, providing information on indices describing LA, LM and LrA (1st c.), low degree of indices coverage (DIC) (2nd c.), satisfactory DIC (3rd c.), very good DIC (4th c.), excellent DIC (5th c.) and lack of answer (6th c.). All DIC are expressed by numerical measures ranging from 1 (the lowest DIC), through 2 (satisfactory DIC) and 3 (very good DIC), to 4 (the highest DIC); lack of answer was measured by 0. Researched indices evaluation was calculated in percentages of learners in all DIC.

For better understanding, the questionnaire was written in Bulgarian and specific linguistics terminology was avoided; though, terminology is used in evaluated indices description below.

Discussion of learner assessed online EFL and ESP teaching indices follows Table1.

		Table 1			
Questions / Survey results in %	1	2	3	4	0
1. General EnL knowledge level (reading, listening, writing, speaking, grammar, vocabulary, etc.)	-	50	43.75	6.25	-
2. Awareness of EnL/NL/FL$_{1…n}$ taught categories similarities / differences (e.g., *past simple, present and past continuous, present perfect, countable / uncountable nouns, articles*) in terms of form / semantics	-	37.5	43.75	18.75	-
3. Relevance of the above type of similarities / differences noticing	-	18.75	37.5	43.75	-
4. Interest in the above type of similarities / differences reasons	6.25	50	18.75	25	-
5. Formal / semantic comparisons between similar / opposite EnL categories usefulness for understanding (e.g., *present perfect / –ed adjectives; continuous / -ing adjectives, present participle, gerund ;–ed adjectives / -ing adjectives*)	-	25	12.5	62.5	-
6. Assessment of LLS implementation degree (e.g., translation, all language levels comparisons, tables, presentations, underlining, paradigms, hypothesizing, conclusion making, transformation, summarizing)	-	18.75	50	31.25	-
7. Understanding of hardships (easier issues) type, awareness of underlying reasons; positive connection between awareness of failure /success reasons and better mastering of taught material	-	-	81.25	18.75	-
8. Awareness of General English or ESP personal predominant relevance	-	6.25	50	37.5	6.25
9. Awareness of frequent error types; of their impact on learners' message interpretation and willingness to combat errors impeding this understanding	-	6.25	43.75	50	-
10.1. English language studying (ELS) personal relevance for communication	-	-	25	62.5	12.5
10.2. ELS personal relevance for establishing social contacts	-	-	25	56.25	18.75
10.3. ELS personal relevance for learning about English speaking countries culture	6.25	12.5	18.75	43.75	18.75
10.4. ELS personal relevance for reading specialized literature	-	12.5	6.25	62.5	18.75
10.5. ELS personal relevance for strengthening position in society and promotion	-	6.25	25	50	18.75
10.6. ELS personal relevance for working with the Internet	-	-	25	56.25	18.75
10.7. ELS personal relevance for getting informed by media	6.25	-	25	50	18.75
10.8. ELS personal relevance for having sense of success (coping with tasks)	6.25	12.5	18.75	43.75	18.75
10.9. ELS personal relevance for making one happy	6.25	12.5	18.75	43.75	18.75
10.10. Personal interest in several aspects of ELS (specify, e.g., grammar, vocabulary, speaking, reading, writing, listening, translation, summarizing, annotating, ESP communication, songs, films understanding)	-	-	25	50	25
11. Ability to assess taught categories degree of mastering	6.25	12.5	68.75	12.5	-
12.Ability to assume responsibility for EnL knowledge enhancement and to elaborate an action plan in that respect	-	18.75	37.5	37.5	6.25
13. Ability to set objectives in terms of EnL education	-	18.75	50	31.25	-
14. Desire to become more autonomous and responsible in the purpose of learning results improvement; conviction that higher LrA is beneficial to EnL teaching process parameters; personal experience confirming that relationship	6.25	18.75	25	50	-
15. Striving for listening at / watching / reading original or graded materials in English; aspiration for communicative competence improvement through: learning outside the classroom and choosing EnL knowledge spheres to improve; analyzing reading / watching / listening materials; delving into paper / electronic / online dictionaries for not adequately understood vocabulary or phrases; striving for better comprehension degree	-	12.5	37.5	50	-

For more generalized indices discussion, their *very good* and *excellent* numerical measures (*3 and 4*) were added together; indices values are hereby discussed mainly in terms of *very good* and *excellent* measures and their sums to reveal learners' degree of positive attitude towards EFL and ESP online teaching.

Thus, **LA** (1 – 9) indices testify to relatively high online teaching LA parameters, ranging from **43.75%** (**3** – 18.75; **4** - 25) for *Interest in EnL/NL/FL$_{1…n}$ taught categories similarities / differences reasons* (index 4) to **100 %** (**3** – 81.25; **4** – 18.75) for *Understanding*

of hardships (easier issues) type ... (index 7). *Awareness of frequent error types ...* (index 9) is evaluated at **93.75%** (**3** – 43.75; **4** - 50) and *Assessment of LLS implementation degree* (index 6) is assessed at **81.25%** (**3** - 50; **4** – 31.25). Further results analysis shows that *LA indices 6, 7 and 8 (as to LLS implementation, hardships understanding and personal relevance awareness of EFL or ESP)* are assessed with 50% or higher percentage as *very good*; *indices 5 and 9 (as to formal / semantic EnL categories comparisons)* are evaluated with 50% or higher percentage as *excellent*.

LM (10.1 – 10.10) indices witness to rather high online teaching LM parameters, ranging from **62.5%** (**3** – 18.75; **4** – 43.75) for indices 10.3 (*ELS personal relevance for learning about English speaking countries culture*), 10.8 (*ELS personal relevance for having sense of success*) and 10.9 (*ELS personal relevance for making one happy*) to **87.5%** (**3** - 25; **4** - 62.5) for index 10.1 (*ELS personal relevance for communication*). It can be also learnt from analysis that *LM indices 10.1, 10.2, 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7 and 10.10 (as to ELS personal relevance for communication; social contacts; reading specialized literature; promotion; Internet work; media information and interest in several ELS aspects)* are assessed with 50% or higher percentage as *excellent*. LM indices evaluated as *very good* receive percentages smaller than 50%.

LrA (11 – 15) indices reveal likewise high online teaching LrA parameters, ranging from **87.5%** (**3** – 37.5; **4** - 50) for index 15 (*Striving for listening at / watching / reading original or graded materials in English ...*) to **75%** (**3** – 37.5; **4** – 37.5 and **3** - 25; **4** - 50) for indices 12 (*Ability to assume responsibility for EnL knowledge enhancement ...*) and 14 (*Desire to become more autonomous and responsible ...*). Analysis shows that *LrA indices 11 and 13 (as to ability to assess taught categories degree of mastering and ability to set objectives in terms of EnL education)* are assessed with 50% or higher percentage as *very good*, whereas *indices 14 and 15 (as to desire to become more autonomous and responsible ... and striving for listening at / watching / reading ... materials in English ...)* are evaluated with 50% as *excellent*.

Survey results examination also testifies to the fact that *a rather limited number of students only* (**6.25%**) provide the lowest DIC (**1**) for LA, LM and LrA parameters assessment. It is equally significant to note that the number of indices evaluated with the lowest numerical measure by only 6.25% of learners, is *seven out of twenty-four indices*. It is likewise relevant to put forward that the number of unassessed indices (6th table column, 0 DIC) amounts to *twelve out of twenty-four*; percentages of respondents who provided no answer range from 6.25% to 25%; most frequently repeated respondent percentages of unassessed indices is 18.75%.

Table 2 aims at summing up discussion, the rows referring to researched teaching parameters in total and the columns relating to learner percentages characterizing correspondent DIC; 6th column (3+4) gives the total of *very good* and *excellent* assessment, this way better illustrating learner positive attitude towards online EFL and ESP teaching.

Table 2

Groups of questions referring to: / Average survey results in %	1	2	3	4	3+4	0
LA - questions 1 - 9	0.69	23.61	42.36	32.64	**75**	0.69
LM – questions 10.1. – 10.10.	2.5	5.63	21.25	51.88	**73.13**	18.75
LrA – questions 11 - 15	2.5	16.25	43.75	36.25	**80**	1.25

5. CONCLUSION

Likewise [13], [14] and [15], research on LA, LM and LrA under the conditions of online EFL and ESP teaching testifies to enhanced LA, due to LLS implementation,

invariably leading to improved LM and LrA, or, to high quality of some education process parameters. It needs to be put forward that although hereby described online teaching proved to be efficient as to researched characteristics, the study has its limitations as it does not account for other ELT features effectiveness, mainly socio-affective, such as lecturer / learner and learner / learner rapport, education process participants interaction and active participation, learner anxiety fighting, etc. Online EFL and ESP teaching has its already referred to advantages as well as challenges to face. Based on concomitant difficulties shared by professionals in the field and by learners, it can be stated that, for the time being, relying on accessible technologies, distant EFL and ESP education can be successfully implemented either in crises or jointly with face-to-face education in blended teaching.

REFERENCES:
[1] The history of online education - Peterson's (petersons.com)
[2] Димитрова Н., Ружекова-Рогожерова Б., Концепция за чуждоезиково обучение в нова бакалавърска програма по логистика, Сборник от юбилейна международна научна конференция октомври 2020, Publishing complex – UNWE, София, 2021, 79 – 87
[3] Atmojo A. E. P., Nugroho A., EFL Classes Must Go Online! Teaching Activities and Challenges during COVID-19 Pandemic in Indonesia, REGISTER JOURNAL, 13, 1, 2020, 49-76
[4] Felix U., A multivariate analysis of students' experience of web based learning, Australian Journal of Educational Technology, 17, 1, 2001, 21-36
[5] Al-Jarf R. S., The Effects of Online Grammar Instruction on Low Proficiency EFL College Students' Achievement, The Asian EFL Journal Quarterly, 7, 4, 2005, 166-190
[6] Cakrawati L. M., STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS ON THE USE OF ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORMS IN EFL CLASSROOM, English Language Teaching and Technology Journal (ELT-Tech Journal), 1, 1, 2017, 22 - 30
[7] Morgan H., Best Practices for Implementing Remote Learning during a Pandemic, The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 93, 3, 2020, 135-141
[8] Naqvi S., Zehra I., Online EFL Emergency Remote Teaching during COVID 19, Challenges and Innovative Practices: A Case of Oman, Arab World English Journal (AWEJ) Proceedings of 2nd MEC TESOL Conference, 2020, 17-35
[9] Granados A., How is COVID-19 affecting ESL students?, EdNC, https://www.ednc.org/how-is-covid-19-affecting-esl-students/, 2020
[10] Nkonge B., Gueldenzoph L., Best Practices in Online Education: Implications for Policy and Practice, Business Education Digest, 15, 2006, 42-53
[11] Quevillon K., Online Teaching: 3 Unique Challenges and How to Solve Them, Top Hat, https://tophat.com/blog/online-teaching-challenges/, 2020
[12] Ruzhekova-Rogozherova B., Language Awareness, Language Learning Strategies, Contrastive and Comparative Teaching in ELT and ESP, Monograph, E-publisher LiterNet, Varna, 2018, ISBN 978-954-304-427-6
[13] Ruzhekova-Rogozherova B., EFL Learner Autonomy and Language Awareness Connection among University Students, BETA E-Newsletter, 42, 2019, 18-38
[14] Ruzhekova-Rogozherova B., Learners' Attitudes Assessment in terms of Cognitive Teaching Parameters and Motivation within the English in Geotechnics Course at the Todor Kableshkov University of Transport, Mechanics Transport Communications, 14, 3/1, 2016, IV-11 - IV-16
[15] Ruzhekova-Rogozherova B., Teaching English Language Learning Strategies at the Todor Kableshkov University of Transport, Mechanics Transport Communications, 12, 3/1, 2014, IV-22-IV-27

ОЦЕНКА НА НАГЛАСИТЕ НА ОБУЧАЕМИТЕ ВЪВ ВРЪЗКА С ЕЗИКОВАТА ОСЪЗНАТОСТ, МОТИВАЦИЯТА И АВТОНОМИЯТА В РАМКИТЕ НА ДИСТАНЦИОННОТО ОБУЧЕНИЕ ПО ОБЩ И СПЕЦИАЛИЗИРАН АНГЛИЙСКИ ЕЗИК ВЪВ ВТУ „ТОДОР КАБЛЕШКОВ"

Боряна Т. Ружекова-Рогожерова
boryana@vtu.bg; boryanarogozherova@abv.bg

Висше транспортно училище „Тодор Каблешков"
София, ул. „Гео Милев № 158
РЕПУБЛИКА БЪЛГАРИЯ

Ключови думи: езикова осъзнатост, мотивация на обучаемите, автономия на обучаемите, онлайн преподаване в рамките на АЧЕ и АСЦ

Резюме: Докладът изследва оценката на студентите на ключовите за обучението по АЧЕ и АСЦ параметри езикова осъзнатост, мотивация на обучаемите и автономност на обучаемите (ЕО, МО и АО) в условията на онлайн (или дистанционно) обучение във ВТУ „Тодор Каблешков". Проучването е осъществено посредством анкета относно споменатите концепти, разработена от автора и попълнена от обучаемите. Изследването, което цели оценяването на нагласите на студентите по отношение ефективността на онлайн преподаването, препраща към предишни изследвания на автора на ЕО, МО и АО в рамките на традиционното преподаване. Анализът на резултатите от настоящото проучване способства за по-пълното разкриване на ефективността на когнитивно насочения, заради приложението на стратегиите за чуждоезиково изучаване (СЧИ), процес на преподаване и, следователно, за по-доброто разбиране на относително новата методика на дистанционно преподаване в рамките на АЧЕ (ЧЕ) и АСЦ. За целта се разглеждат следните теми: характеристиките на онлайн преподаването на АЧЕ (АСЦ), съпътстващите дистанционната работа предимства и предизвикателства пред преподавателите и обучаемите, същността на ЕО, МО и АО; на вниманието на читателя са представени таблици с резултатите от изследването и заключение относно приложенията на дистанционното обучение.