Bridging the Gap: Aligning Self-study with Course Content for Smarter Learning

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TEACHER TALKS at RMIT Vietnam

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Outline of session

- Overview of autonomous learning
- Our self-study plan
- Discussion: Comparing our 2 versions
- Creating your own plans
- Final recommendations

Supporting learner autonomy

Discussion:

- **What is learner autonomy? Why is it important?**
- Autonomous learners have the capacity to take control over what they are learning.
- Autonomy is context dependent – it can vary according to each learner and each learning situation (Benson, 2013).

Background – Our context

- **Teen learners studying for IELTS – in-class study time was not enough to reach their goals.**
- **Lacking self-study skills / awareness.**
- **We incorporated a self-study component into our IELTS courses in Danang:**
  - Self-study plans + 2-hour Study club per week.

Supporting learner autonomy

- Scharle and Szabo (2000) proposed three consecutive stages of developing learner responsibility:

Raising awareness → Changing attitudes → Transferring roles

- Now, scan the QR code to join the Wordwall and match the features to the correct stage. Guess if you're not sure!
- Click on 'Submit' + 'Leaderboard' to enter your score.

D4 identify topic-specific vocabulary within a paragraph.

Skill	Can-do statement I can _____.	Study club self-study task	Study club reflection How did you feel about the task? Did it help you achieve the can-do statements?	Teacher's recommended (or student selected) follow-up task	Follow-up task evidence and analysis (copy and paste the link to your analysis form)
Reading	identify topic-specific vocabulary within a paragraph. use strategies to read a text and answer flow chart completion questions.	1st - Check your answers to the coursebook reading. 2nd - Complete the reading analysis worksheet. 3rd - Add new vocabulary to your vocabulary notebook.	Some new words were difficult and hard to identify the passage and the right meaning of the word. I have a problem of time management		
Listening	identify reference words. use strategies to listen and answer table completion and short answer questions.	1st - Listen again to check your answers to the coursebook listening - pause if you need to. 2nd - Read the transcript as a final check and complete the analysis worksheet. 3rd - Underline reference words used to locate the answer.	i can identify reference words i also use strategies to listen and answer table completion and short answer questions but i still want to regconise and hear all of the words in the test. there are lots of technical words in the listening test and i cannot understand it at all	Transcript analysis for new words: 1st - Add the new words you didn't understand from the transcript into your vocabulary notebook. 2nd - Review the words after 2-3 days. 3rd - Listen back to the audio after reviewing the vocabulary. 4th - Can you understand the listening more completely? Why/Why not?	Transcript analysis and vocabulary
Speaking	use a range of structures to tell a story. speak for 2 minutes about a change you made to improve your health and fitness (for speaking part 2).	1st - Record yourself answering the part 2 speaking question. 2nd - Listen back and check you used different structures correctly (write down your errors). 3rd - Record your answer again with your corrections.	I use a range of structures to tell a story , but i have trouble with the telling a story i spoke in about 2 mins but i need to improve my speaking fluency more		
Writing	write a conclusion for a task 2 cause and effect essay. plan a writing task 2 cause and effect essay. complete a 250-word writing task 2 cause and effect essay.	1st - Write down 5 feedback points made by the teacher into your analysis form. 2nd - Explain the feedback (in your own words). 3rd - Rewrite the essay with the corrections. 4th - Answer the self-reflection questions.	I can write more than 250 words but my conclusion is still lacking and repeating word from my introduction I will work on better paraphrasing in the conclusion next time	Paraphrasing for task 2: 1st - Review effective paraphrasing here: https://ieltsliz.com/how-to-paraphrase-in-ielts/ 2nd - Choose a sample essay question from your book (pages 116-120). 3rd - Plan out your main ideas. 4th - Write the introduction and conclusion only - focus on paraphrasing the main ideas in the introduction and conclusion.	My sample introductions and conclusions

Module 2a | Module 3a | Module 4a | Module 5a | Module 8a | Module 9a | Further review

Workbook Statistics

The self-study plans:

Integrate lesson focus with self-study material.

Incorporate spaced-practice and reflection.

Develop autonomous learning skills.

Skill	Can-do statement I can _____.	Study club self-study task
Reading	understand the overall meaning in a paragraph through the topic sentence and supporting ideas.	1st - Check your answers to the coursebook reading. 2nd - Complete the reading analysis worksheet. 3rd - Add new vocabulary to your vocabulary notebook.
	use strategies to read and answer matching headings questions.	

Study club reflection How did you feel about the task? Did it help you achieve the can-do statements?	**Teacher's recommended (or student selected) follow-up task**	**Follow-up task evidence and analysis** (copy and paste the link to your analysis form)

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What our students said

Survey questions	Agreement rate
1. My self-study plan helps me to understand the course content.	1. 81%
2. Completing my self-study plan motivates me to practice at home.	2. 78%
3. My self-study plan helps me to reflect on my progress.	3. 74%
4. Study club tasks prepare me to self-study for IELTS.	4. 85%

Analysing the plans

In your group, look at our first and second versions of the self-study plan and discuss these questions:

- *Focus on the table headings, what are the main differences between the two plans?*
- *Look at the 3-stage model again, What stages of learner autonomy does each plan permit?*
- *Why do you think the changes were made from the first version to the second?*

Nominate one spokesperson to report back after 5 minutes.

Main changes

The updated self-study plans provide:

- clearer strategy instruction.
- more opportunities for reflection.
- more learner support – through assigned analysis tasks. For example:

Listening Analysis Form

No	Correct Answer	Signal Words	Evidence & Paraphrases	Distractors	If you were wrong, explain why	New Vocabulary
Q1	Library	"Actually, it's just opposite..." *(→ the word actually signals a correction and the real answer)*	**Evidence:** *"At first, many students think the library is next to the cafeteria. Actually, it's just opposite the main entrance,*	*"Next to the cafeteria"* (false clue, corrected later)	I chose "cafeteria" because I didn't pay attention to the correction "actually." I need to listen carefully for self-corrections in the recording.	**Facilities** /fəˈsɪlɪtiz/ (n) → services/buildings for people to use (cơ sở vật chất). *The new facilities include a library and a gym.*

Creating lesson objectives / Can-dos

- **In pairs, choose a unit from the book.**
- **Write two can-do statements for each skill or sub-unit (in NEF).**
- **One can-do = One lesson. Remember to make them:**
  - Specific.
  - Actionable.
  - Relevant (to what's on the page).
- **Add a 'Self-study task' if you have time and be ready to share your ideas in 5 minutes.**

Creating lesson objectives / Can-dos

- **Swap your can-do statements and book pages with another pair.**
- **Give them feedback. Are their statements:**
  - Specific?
  - Actionable?
  - Relevant?

Suggested process

1. Start by building in the **lesson objectives** (‘can-do’ statements).

2. Provide a space for the **self-study tasks** - developed by the learner or teacher, depending on your context.

3. Provide a space for **learner reflection** on the self-study tasks.

4. Provide a space for teacher **feedback and follow-up actions** (based on learner reflection).

5. **Incorporate the plan into lesson time** and make **ongoing changes** to it when needed.

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DISCUSSION:

- How might you use self-study plans in your classroom?
- Would you make any changes?

Questions?

References

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Thank you

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