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**How to develop individual learning habits in a language learning context**

**Dissertation abstract**

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the methods of effective language learning, they lack good learning habits, they can't use and organise their study time efficiently and as a result of all of this, they fall behind, suffer failure, get discouraged and lose enthusiasm, which even more jeopardizes their chances of success.

To enhance effective learning and help our students avoid failure, from the beginning of their studies students have to be systematically assisted to develop study skills, to acquire the skills, strategies and methods they need in order to be effective.

#### **Aims of research - hypotheses**

The aim of the research is *to develop and introduce a special study programme which, embedded in classroom teaching, not only ensures effective learning but also provides an opportunity to promote students' development in self-regulated learning, prepares students for lifelong learning, teaches them how to learn foreign languages effectively and facilitates their autonomy.*

The aim is twofold:

- to develop a special program which ensures the fulfilment of the aims and objectives laid down in the programme on the basis of analysing the current Hungarian situation and the most recent research results of this field of study,
- to examine if the programme can be fitted into the school context and elaborate the possible ways of its introduction.

#### **Hypotheses:**

1. The program, embedded in the lessons, ensures that students parallel to acquiring the knowledge required by the curriculum, start to develop the skills essential to self-regulated learning, irrespective of the course book they are using, their length of study or their or their families' attitude to learning English.
2. The program provides teachers with the appropriate guidance how to implement the programme in their lessons and enhances their professional awareness and creativity without considerably increasing their work load.

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observation criteria were selected on the basis of the actual phase of the experiment, subordinated to the criterion of self-regulated language learning.

- semi-structured interviews with the teachers and students participating in the experiment about their experiences;
- analysis of documents reflecting the students' development in self-regulated learning;
- analysis of the students' oral and written performance (factual knowledge, skills);
- analysis of research meeting documents (meetings with the teachers, students and parents participating in the experiment).

The research data – in spite of the small size of the sample – were partly summarized in tables and analysed in quantitative terms. Greater significance was, however, attached to the qualitative analysis, to the analysis of the process and the individual events. This kind of analysis gave us the opportunity to study the nature of organized and spontaneous elements of the learning process and their interrelationship. The concept of self-regulated learning served as a basis for our content analysis.

## Results of the study and their interpretation

### 1. Theoretical background

The development of our *students' self-regulated learning skills* is a prerequisite to effective language learning and student autonomy. *The first part* of the dissertation presents the theoretical background, the theories and basic principles of self-regulated learning: the process and phases of self-regulated learning and the model of adaptable learning, which takes into account the interaction between affective and cognitive variables in learning situations and offers a comprehensive framework for analysing these interactions.

The chapter gives an overview of the research on self-regulated learning and autonomy in the field of language teaching, the different definitions of autonomy, the connection between motivation and effective language learning and the methods designed to promote autonomy.

The chapter puts an emphasis on *learner-centred methods*, which aim to promote learner autonomy by developing language learning and using strategies.

programme does not hinder the fulfilment of the requirements concerning foreign language learning, but supplements it by enhancing student effectiveness.

3. ***The methods devised and selected for the programme make it possible to implement it embedded in the lessons.*** The prerequisite to this is careful and detailed planning at the beginning of the school-year and before the lessons, proper timing and selection of activities in accordance with the characteristics of the students and the group.

4. ***The 'It's Up To Me' Programme can be well adapted to different course books and teaching materials.*** The detailed criteria system of the course book analysis designed by us helps us evaluate the opportunities the book offers in this area, find out what it focuses on, what is missing before finalising our programme. The criteria system also helps the teacher select the appropriate course book for the group.

5. In spite of its shortness, ***the research data gained during the two-year period of the experiment showed the effectiveness and success of the programme.*** The observation of the students, the information gained in personal interviews, the students' self-evaluations and the results of our different surveys served as the basis of our analysis. These methods proved appropriate to assess our research data and experiences and to define the directions for further research.

6. The analysis of the teacher interviews and the summary of the results of the two-year period proved that ***the implementation of the 'It's Up To Me' Programme promotes the fulfilment of our objectives.*** The development of the students can be observed and recognised in several areas.

7. The feedback received from the teachers affirms that the material drawn up by us (the content elements, objectives and methods of the 'It's Up To Me' Programme) and the detailed outline of ***the programme offered appropriate guidance for the teachers on how to implement the programme effectively.*** At the same time, it gave them the opportunity to tailor the suggested methods to their personality and teaching style and to carry out their own ideas, several of which were built into the final version of the programme.

Although during the two-year period of experiment we received quite a lot of positive feedback on the effectiveness of the 'It's Up To Me' Programme, ***to draw more comprehensive conclusions we need further research, surveys and a wider-scale implementation of the programme.***

## ***2) to develop effective language learning skills***

These skills on the one hand, include the special skills of language learning, on the other hand they promote the development of the basic skills required for learning other subjects: observation, concentration, memory, thinking, problem-solving, information processing, etc.

### **2.2 The principles of the 'It's Up To Me!' programme**

We laid down the principles of the programme which offer guidance to teachers on how to introduce and implement the programme in school. These are:

- 1) the principle of student responsibility,
- 2) the principle of student involvement,
- 3) the principle of graduality,
- 4) the principle of systematic introduction and continuity,
- 5) the principle of choice,
- 6) the principle of regular feedback and evaluation,
- 7) the principle of the teacher's setting a good example,
- 8) the principle of low-anxiety atmosphere,
- 9) the principle of parallel introduction,
- 10) the principle of adaptation to the school setting,
- 11) the principle of parents' involvement.

### **2.3 The framework and the content elements of the 'It's Up To Me!' programme**

The content outline of ***the programme serves as a framework.*** It contains all those elements that the programme should include, but the actual programme is determined by the characteristic features of the students participating in it (their age, individual characteristics, previous knowledge, learning experience, etc.), the organisational context, the characteristics of the group, the school environment, the opportunities offered by the school (technical equipment, library, Internet access, etc.), the content and methodological approach of the course book, the teacher's experience and teaching style.

The programme developed by us ***provides general guidance, a framework within which the teacher can draw up the programme of his or her group.***

## 8) Cooperation with peers

The teachers reported positive experiences in this area, too. The students participated actively in the lessons, in different pair work and group work activities. While in their other groups it was quite common that students working without the teacher's supervision quickly switched to Hungarian or did not make use of the opportunities offered by the task, in the experimental groups *the students performed their tasks more reliably* and there were fewer problems. The teachers attributed this to the group discussions where, together with the students, they discussed the role of these activities in their language learning process.

Another very important step of development was found in the students' cooperation outside the classroom. Several *permanent learning partnerships developed among the students* – pairs of students practised together and designed task sheets, crosswords and puzzles for the group's self-access centre.

### 4.3 Summary of results

The evidence and results gained in the experience support our hypothesis: *with adequate preparation, taking into account the characteristics of the students, the group and the features of the course book, the 'It's Up To Me!' programme can be introduced in a school context and its objectives can be accomplished.*

Both of the teachers participating in the experiment found the 'It's Up To Me!' programme very useful and successful. Although both of them had put emphasis on developing their students' autonomy in their other groups, the programme provided a systematic framework for their work, which became more focused and conscious. The programme proved also very important in the students' development. It directed their attention to their learning process, encouraged them to plan and think their work over - both in school and at home.

One significant result of the experiment was that the teachers participating in it introduced the programme or elements of the programme in their other groups, especially the different strategies and techniques of acquiring, extending and systematizing their knowledge of English.

of the surveys carried out among the students preceding the experiment and our course book analysis.

### 3.1 Experimental period (2002-2004)

The programme aims to achieve its objective – to develop the students' individual learning habits in language learning – over a several-year process. *The first two years of this process are of utmost significance.* During this period, we start the process, as a result of which our students will gradually become more and more autonomous, and learn how to be effective language learners. We introduce the regular elements of the programme, we establish the necessary working methods, and taking into account the age characteristics and previous knowledge of our students we assist the development of our students' awareness and effective language learning skills. The results of this process can be followed and evaluated. Thus, during this two-year period, sufficient experience can be gained to examine our hypotheses.

### 3.2 Experimental groups

Two groups of fifth-form pupils in Budapest were involved in the experiment. Both schools are traditional eight-year primary schools. The number of students in the group: 16 (school A) and 12 (school B).

### 3.3 Surveys preceding the experiment

Preceding the experiment we conducted two important surveys in the groups:

#### 1) *Students' and their parents' attitude to English language*

We found it important to examine the students' family background. In order to finalise the programme we had to know what kind of help our students can get at home, what opportunities are available for them to improve their knowledge of English, and if their parents can speak any foreign languages.

#### 2) *Course book analysis*

Before developing the programme, it is essential to analyse the course book the students are using. We have to examine the ways it can develop students' study skills, if it contains any special tasks or advice to help students be effective language learners, if it presents the material in a way that promotes learner autonomy.

### 1) *Learning strategies and techniques*

During the first two years of the programme students learnt several learning strategies and techniques. The survey conducted among the students revealed that ***most of the students regularly use them when they work individually at home.***

The teachers participating in the experiment found that by the end of the second year, during the group discussions, ***the students were able to assess the different strategies more and more realistically and they had more original ideas.***

They used the learnt strategies and techniques in an increasingly effective way in the lessons, ***their confidence increased, their anxiety decreased.***

### 2) *Self-evaluation*

Our research evidence revealed that the students ***showed increasing accuracy*** both in their written and oral self-evaluation, and became capable of observing their results and identifying their problems.

### 3) *Setting objectives and planning*

After preparing their self-evaluation reports the students defined their objectives and drew up their plans. We can observe the same tendency in this area, ***their objectives and plans became more and more accurate and realistic.***

### 4) *Individual work, homework*

Comparison is quite difficult in this area. There were very few students not doing their homework in either group. The teachers, however, had the same experience in their other groups – their students did their homework regularly. They attributed this to the requirements they introduced in their groups and the age of the students. On the other hand, at this level, the amount of homework is relatively little and the students can prepare for the next lesson without any difficulties.

***Differences could be, however, detected in the quality of students' homework and the degree of their preparation for the lessons.*** If the teachers noticed any problems they talked them over with the students involved. To help students lagging behind the teachers offered them one-to-one or small group tutoring.

### 2) To *follow the students' development* we applied the following methods:

- observation of students in different learning situations (lessons, after class study groups) and during group discussions;
- analysis and evaluation of students' oral and written performance (language learning diary, self-evaluation sheets, tests, homework assignments);
- personal interviews on the basis of students' written work, in case of occurring problems and at the end of each semester to evaluate students' development and discuss their future plans.

3) At the end of each semester, ***we assessed the results of the previous period,*** summarised the experience of the teachers participating in the experiment. To do this, we used ***semi-structured interviews.*** The interviews were guided by a previously prepared set of questions, but we chose open questions to allow the teachers to talk freely about their personal experience and express their ideas without any restrictions.

On the basis of the research evidence and the feedback from the teachers we amended the programme during its course and incorporated these changes into the final version of the programme.

4) At the beginning of the school-year, we organised ***a parent meeting,*** where we presented the programme and asked the parents to encourage their children and help them become effective language learners. We discussed the ways of creating an optimal learning environment at home and the opportunities of autonomous learning.

## 4. Results of the experiment and their interpretation

***In the sixth chapter*** we analyse the results of the two-year experimental period on the basis of the participating teachers' experience and observations.

We can formulate the answer to the questions proposed in our hypotheses on the basis of the summary, evaluation and analysis of the research evidence gained during the experiment. The notes taken by the participating teachers based on their experiences and the observation of students constituted the main source for our analysis. We discussed their experiences in our monthly meetings and during the half-semester interviews.

## Introduction to the topic

The present dissertation aims to develop *a special study skills programme* for Hungarian language learners and introduce it in a primary school setting *with the aim of enhancing and fostering students' individual learning skills*.

A wide consensus prevails in Hungary on the importance of people knowing foreign languages. Since joining the European Union *it has become a vital issue to improve the foreign language knowledge of the population*. An appropriate level of proficiency in modern European languages is a prerequisite for exploiting the opportunities offered by the European Union and for exercising the right of free movement within it.

The European Union regards the ability to understand and communicate in other languages as a basic skill. Its policy on language teaching and learning has been set out in *Teaching and learning: toward the learning society*. This European Commission white paper includes action guideline proposals calling for the development of proficiency in three EU languages. (*European Community, 1995*)

The European Commission considers it *a very important issue to increase the efficiency of language teaching in schools*. On the basis of the major findings of research in language acquisition and teaching it states: to help our students become effective language learners and to make them be able to use what they have learnt, *we have to encourage the development of language learning strategies and autonomous learning*. (*European Commission, 1997:64*)

Developing study skills and autonomy is important not only in order to increase the efficiency of language learning, but it is also *a prerequisite to lifelong learning*. In order to achieve this aim high quality basic education should be provided for all young people to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills required in a knowledge-based economy. Parallel to this, we 'should also ensure that they have 'learnt to learn' and that they have a positive attitude towards learning.' (*Commission of the European Communities, 2000:7*)

*The task before school education is twofold: to provide effective language teaching, during which students acquire a high proficiency and at the same time, to prepare students for lifelong learning, to enable them to maintain and improve their knowledge and to learn a new language independently.*

My twenty-year personal experience supports this need. I have many times observed that one of the causes of learning difficulties is that students do not know

### Based on our hypotheses, we aimed to find the answers to these questions:

- how can the content of the programme be brought in line with the children's individual and age characteristics and requirements of the curriculum;
- what methods can ensure the fulfilment of the aims and objectives of the programme in a school setting;
- how can the programme be adapted to different course books and teaching materials;
- how can the efficiency and effectiveness of the programme be measured;
- does this suggested way of introduction of the programme really ensure the fulfilment of the aims and objectives;
- what guidance and help do teachers need to ensure the successful introduction of the programme?

### Research methods

In order to examine our hypotheses we chose an experimental strategy, *the natural experiment technique*. To ensure the validity of our study we applied a special variation of the one-group compound experiment: *we simultaneously studied two experimental subgroups* with different characteristics, and we not only evaluated the results of the subgroups separately, but also compared them with the results of the other subgroup.

Validity was also ensured by *a comprehensive research methodological control* which was exercised over the starting situation, the process and the results. The analysis of the starting situation (antecedent variable) comprised the document analysis of the course books used in the subgroups, collecting data about the students' prior language learning experiences and family background (questionnaire).

We tested our hypotheses on the basis of the assessment of the changes induced by the experiment (process variable) and the summary of the findings (outcome variable). For our assessment we used the following methods:

- participant observation by the teachers of the experimental groups and by the author. The selective observation data were recorded on recording sheets. The

### Publications by the author

1. SCHOOL BUS 1. (Maturáné Rátkai Rita - Szénásiné Steiner Rita, Lexika, 1996.)
2. SCHOOL BUS 2. (Maturáné Rátkai Rita - Szénásiné Steiner Rita, Lexika, 1997.)
3. SCHOOL BUS 3. (Szénásiné Steiner Rita - Tátrai Szilvia, Lexika, 1998.)
4. Tanári kézikönyv a SCHOOL BUS 1. tankönyvhöz (Maturáné Rátkai Rita - Szénásiné Steiner Rita, Lexika, 1996.)
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6. Tanári kézikönyv a SCHOOL BUS 3. tankönyvhöz (Szénásiné Steiner Rita - Tátrai Szilvia, Lexika, 1998.)
7. SCHOOL BUS 1. felújított kiadás (Maturáné Rátkai Rita - Szénásiné Steiner Rita, Lexika, 2004.)
8. SCHOOL BUS 1. munkafüzet (Maturáné Rátkai Rita - Szénásiné Steiner Rita, Lexika, 2004.)
9. SCHOOL BUS 2. felújított kiadás (Maturáné Rátkai Rita - Szénásiné Steiner Rita, Lexika, 2005.)
10. SCHOOL BUS 2. munkafüzet (Maturáné Rátkai Rita - Szénásiné Steiner Rita, Lexika, 2005.)
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13. Gyakorlati útmutató angol szakos tanárjelöltek tanítási gyakorlatához (társszerző) ELTE, Budapest, 2002.
14. Hatékony tanulási módszerek kialakítása az idegennyelv - tanulásban Mit? Kinek? Hogyan? Vezetőtanárok, - tanárok II. Országos Módszertani Konferenciája, Konferenciakötet (Gyakorlóiskolák Iskolaszövetsége, Baja, 2004.)



*The second part* presents the factors (National Curriculum, course books, European Language Portfolio, organisational context, language environment, the expectations of the society, family background), which, apart from the theoretical background and the current research in this field, determine today the content and methods of a study-skill programme in Hungary.

## 2. The 'It's Up To Me!' programme

*The third part* presents the programme designed for primary school pupils, its main *aims and objectives, the underlying principles, and the detailed plan and content* of the programme.

The 'It's Up To Me!' programme is a special programme that *aims to promote learner autonomy and develop study skills*. Its content and methods are determined by the previously outlined theoretical and research background, the current language teaching situation in Hungary, different documents concerning education, and our more than twenty-year teaching experience.

Our main objective was to develop a programme that can be introduced *in a school context, embedded in the lessons*. Partly because theory supported that this approach provides the most effective opportunity to promote our students' awareness and effectiveness in learning (Cohen, 1998), and partly because we wanted to find a way that guarantees to involve the most students.

We laid down the main principles and objectives of the programme on the basis of the previously presented theoretical background and determining factors.

### 2.1 Objectives

The main objectives of the programme:

#### 1) *to promote students' awareness and autonomy*

Students should be taught how they can consciously manage their own learning. It is necessary for them to know themselves as learners, the different learning strategies, the methods of self-monitoring and self-evaluation and the different steps of goal-setting and planning. They should be encouraged to plan their time and effort. They should be aware of what they are doing and why, and how, where and from whom they can get help.

### Directions for further research

On the basis of our research data, experiences and results we can define the directions for possible further research:

- The *implementation of the 'It's Up To Me' Programme in groups working in different circumstances* would provide more extensive experience of the necessary conditions of its implementation, the applicable methods and the effectiveness of the programme, and it would make the evaluation more comprehensive and objective.

- The *follow-up study of students participating in the experiment* would provide the opportunity to examine if the students can maintain their knowledge of the language after leaving school, if they use the different strategies learnt in the programme, and also the long-term effects of the 'It's Up To Me' Programme.

- To assist a wider implementation of the 'It's Up To Me' Programme, *a detailed teacher's guidance should be published*, which would enable teachers to draw up and implement their own programme without the contribution of a third party. As a summary of this dissertation, this handbook would present the objectives and principles of the programme and would provide a detailed methodological guidance.

- In order to promote a better student development, and help the introduction of the programme in schools, *a workbook, an 'It's Up To Me' Diary should be written and published*, which would supplement the lessons and would provide an opportunity for self-study for students who do not participate in a programme like this at their school.

- Teachers play a key role in promoting student autonomy. *Teachers should be prepared how to develop their students' autonomy and individual learning strategies*. Study skills, independent language learning strategies, self-evaluation, the importance of life-long learning and training in the use of the European Language Portfolio should be a key focus in teacher training. Teachers should be taught how to transfer the skills they have acquired to their learners and how to pass on the methods they have been taught.

*The results of our research and the two-year experiment appear to confirm our hypothesis: our programme, the 'It's Up To Me' Programme helps to develop students' self-regulated learning, promotes their life-long learning and offers help and methodological guidance for teachers working in primary schools on how to develop their students in this area.*

The outline of the programme contains the content elements in three groups:

**1) promoting students' awareness and autonomy**

- ways of developing self-knowledge,
- steps of goal setting and planning,
- self-monitoring,
- self-evaluation methods,
- affective and motivational strategies,
- social strategies,
- help-seeking strategies,
- the importance of the lesson in the process of language learning,
- learning at home,
- the importance of the homework,
- sources of learning outside the school

**2) developing effective language learning skills**

- vocabulary,
- grammar,
- listening comprehension,
- speaking,
- reading comprehension,
- writing,
- pronunciation,
- translation

**3) the importance of foreign languages and language learning**

We provide *detailed methodological guidance* for the 'It's Up To Me!' programme. It contains the regular elements of the programme and the suggested methods. We give an example how to adapt the programme to a group by presenting the implementation of the programme in the experimental group

**3. The experiment**

*In the fourth chapter* we present the detailed objectives and hypotheses of our research, the aim of which was to draw up and test a special programme to help our students develop their individual learning habits; we give the characteristics of the teachers and groups participating in the experiment; and we summarise the results

**Summary of research – directions for further research**

*In the seventh chapter* we assess to what extent our research objectives have been accomplished and on the basis of our experiences and results we determine the possible directions for further research.

**Research results**

The aim of the research is to develop and introduce a special study programme which, embedded in classroom teaching, not only ensures effective learning but also provides an opportunity to promote students' development in self-regulated learning, prepares students for lifelong learning, teaches them how to learn foreign languages effectively and facilitates their autonomy.

In order to accomplish our objectives we developed *a special study skills programme, the 'It's Up To Me' Programme*, which includes:

- *the preparatory steps for the implementation of our programme* (the study of the students' family background and learning environment, the analysis of the course books used in the groups, the definition of criteria for the syllabus)

- *the content of the programme* (topics to be discussed, skills to be developed, techniques and strategies to be acquired);

- *the suggested methods, organisational forms and activity types*;

- *the methods of programme evaluation and students' assessment*;

In our research, we aimed to find out if the 'It's Up To Me' Programme can be introduced in the school context and studied the ways of its successful implementation. On the basis of our research evidence and results *we can give the following answers to our research questions*:

1. *The 'It's Up To Me' Programme is appropriate to the age and characteristics of primary school students.* The methods used in the programme accomplish its objectives in a game-like form and with proper timing.

2. *The aims and objectives of the 'It's Up To Me' Programme are in line with the requirements of the National Curriculum*, which underlines the importance of developing student autonomy. With proper preparation and planning the

We developed a detailed criteria system for our course book analysis.

### 3.4 Methods used in the experiment

#### *Before introducing the programme:*

a) We organised *a short, four-hour preparatory course for the teachers* participating in the experiment. During this course we presented the objectives of the experiment, the theoretical background, the principles, the content elements and the suggested methods of the 'It's Up To Me!' programme and distributed the two-year plan of the programme.

b) Together with the participating teachers, we *examined and analysed the course books* and finalised the first year programme.

c) We carried out the *survey on students' and their parents' attitude to English language*. In some cases, the survey was supplemented by personal interviews in order to get a clearer picture of the students' ideas and to get to know the students better.

d) The results of the survey were supplemented by data concerning the *students previous language learning experience* (How long have they been learning English? Where? Which course book did they use previously?, etc.).

Before introducing the 'It's Up To Me!' programme, we *asked for the consent of the school administration and the parent organization*.

#### *During the experiment:*

1) We organized *a monthly meeting* for the teachers participating in the experiment, the topics of which included:

- the account of the experience gained during the given period;
- problems occurring during the experiment, seeking solutions;
- plans for the next period;
- elaboration of methods, preparation of the necessary teaching materials.

A *brief summary* was written after each meeting, which reminded the teachers of the regular tasks and gave detailed guidance for the upcoming month.

### 5) Active involvement in the lessons

The teachers found that students are very active in the lessons and they usually work enthusiastically. However, owing to the age characteristics of the students and the nature of the material, this phenomenon can be observed in their other groups, too.

In the second year of the experiment, the teachers observed that due to the regular evaluation at the end of the lessons, *the quality of students' involvement changed* – the *students participated* in certain tasks, e.g. listening comprehension, pair work speaking tasks *with deeper awareness and more and more consciously using the newly-learnt strategies and techniques*.

### 6) Individual learning

At this level, projects and different information collection tasks provide the opportunity for individual learning. These tasks were gradually introduced. The students, right from the beginning, enjoyed these tasks and eagerly participated in them. They got to know the available individual learning opportunities (reference books, dictionaries, television, films, Internet) and they gained some experience in their use – they did the first steps.

### 7) Self-confidence

The teachers found that *their students' self-confidence and self-assurance visibly increased* during the two-year period. However, this tendency can be observed in their other groups, too. Their important aim is to create an anxiety-free atmosphere in their groups which promotes active student involvement. They closely follow their students' progress, and if it is necessary, they encourage them and deal with them individually. They put an increased emphasis on developing their students' self-confidence.

The teachers underlined, however, that they observed a different kind of manifestation of self-confidence in their experimental groups. Group discussions, personal consultations encouraged positive thinking and helped students define their roles in their learning progress, fully experience their success and find the ways of progress when they suffer a failure. Their self-evaluation skills improved, they gained experience in assessing their school and individual work, their awareness and simultaneously their self-confidence increased.

*The questions in the semi-structured interviews covered all areas of the 'It's Up To Me!' programme and were divided into two sections:*

- the practical implementation of the 'It's Up To Me!' programme;
- students' development during the two-year period.

At the end of each school-year, *the interviews were complemented by a survey among the students*, the aim of which was to find out what strategies and methods students use regularly. The questionnaire used in the survey was closely linked to the II/1. question of the teachers' interview, it was designed to gather complementary information about students' use of strategy.

The following results and experience can be drawn on the basis of the interviews and the survey data:

#### **4.1 The practical implementation of the 'It's Up To Me!' programme**

The questions in this section aim to collect teachers' experiences of the regular elements of the programme and examine how the programme can be fitted into school context and to the curriculum. We also sought the answer to the question: How much extra work does the programme require of the teachers?

The research evidence in both groups confirmed that the regular elements of *the 'It's Up To Me!' programme can be successfully built in the learning process*.

The first step, the introductory period (a four-lesson period in the second week of the first school year) proved crucially important. The methods adapted to match the age characteristics of students, the game-like tasks evoked the children's interest in the programme. *The students accepted that learning about how to be an effective language learner is part of the language learning process*.

Our research experience and findings revealed that *the methods suggested in the programme are appropriate for students of this age*. The students actively participated in the group discussions, they eagerly talked about their experiences. They enthusiastically took part in different projects, information gathering tasks and in designing different practice exercises, crosswords and other puzzles.

*The presentation and practice of different learning strategies embedded in the teaching material proved highly successful*. The students enjoyed trying out new strategies and also used them when they worked at home on their own.

*The programme can be successfully fitted into the lessons, in the classroom routine*. The prerequisite of the successful implementation is accurate planning, the careful adaptation of tasks and methods to the characteristics of the students and to the teaching material.

Both of the teachers found that the implementation of the programme modified their pace of progress in the curriculum, as the material of the programme increased the amount of teaching material, but it *did not affect the fulfilment of the curriculum requirements*. The degree of deviation from their original syllabus was not higher than in their other groups and the difference could not be attributed to the 'It's Up To Me!' programme.

The implementation of the programme adds to the teachers' work load, increases the amount of time they spend on each group. The regular elements, the new-type activities, the continuous assessment of students require detailed and accurate planning and preparation, and careful execution of the plan in the lessons.

In the first year, to prepare the supplementary materials and visuals is also a time-consuming task, but most of these can be used later in other groups as well.

Personal interviews, following the students' work in their learning diaries, the teacher's written response to the students' end of term assessment also require time.

#### **4.2 Students' development during the two-year period**

We based our assessment of the students' development on the teachers' observation of students in different learning situations and the analysis and evaluation of students' performance. It is very difficult to accurately assess the students' progress, as we do not have a real base of comparison, we do not know what kind of progress the same students would have made if they had not participated in the programme.

If we accept that the students' individual learning habits in language learning can only be developed over a several-year process, the two-year period of the experiment is too short to draw final conclusions about the effectiveness of the programme. We can, however, observe common tendencies in the students' individual development even during this short period.