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STUDYING FOREIGN LANGUAGES BY DIFFERENT GENERATIONS

Generations come and go. They all have their unique characteristics. Depending on social changes, different generations have different abilities in understanding foreign languages learning. Among these generations as the scientists have researched are baby boomer, X, Y, and Z. People who were born between 1927 and 1945 are called a “silent generation” or “traditional generation”. Those between 1946 and 1964 are “baby boomers”. In order to increase the number of American people following the World War II, American government supported and advertised definite polities and as a result a population boom took place with developing economy. Such a program was called a “baby boom” and the population boom was a “baby boomer”. Those born between 1965 and 1979 are named as “X” while those between 1980 and 1999 are “Y” and those after 2000 are a “Z” generation children (UNJSPF, 2013). Each generation differs from the others in terms of qualities and attributes. For example, the traditional generation shows such qualities as inability to communicate directly, respect for authority and taking responsibility. Moreover, baby boomers do not like conflict and are more optimistic. While an X generation is for a global idea and pro-freedom, a Y generation is more sociable, self-confident, and flexible in work, a multi-tasker, tolerant and interested in technology. A Z generation grows up with modern technological tools such as the Internet, smart phones, Ipads and netbooks and lives constant novelties in technology (Minet, 2013). The scientists of Atatürk University paid much attention to researching this phenomenon. The findings showed that a generation Y shows a profile self-confident, tolerant, open to experiences, efficient in solving problems and able to act independently in foreign language learning.

In foreign language learning, a generation Y learner differs positively in know-how related to personality and learning ability and has difficulties in knowledge and skills at verbal comprehension and expression. They are more successful in written comprehension and expression. When it comes to competences related to personality, a generation Y learner is self-confident, tolerant and extroverted. They are not afraid of making mistakes learning a foreign language, obsessed with the negative criticisms, prejudiced with the foreign language, find the cultures and native speakers of that language strange and cast them off. In addition, the learner seen in this group is said to have more learning skills. The learner is also able to observe new experiences, mix new knowledge

with what it already acquired, and struggle more effectively and independently with the problems in learning a language. Such a learner desires to express himself in the language he is learning but is rarely successful in creating opportunities to use the language. This being the case, it is necessary for him to acquire foreign language using skills.

Generation Z or the Millennials, are no different when it comes to the skills they need to understand English. They are different when it comes to teaching style. Generation Z (or Millennials) is a social classification of people born since 2000. The usual characteristics of Generation Z are social, good at multitasking, and speedy and are more inclined to instant gratification. They like to experiment and learn. They prefer learning by doing rather than being told what to do or reading static books. Students can intuitively use a wide range of technology. They like to tinker with the latest electronic gadgets. They use the Internet to learn new material, to research what they don't know, to meet new people and make friends. They are creative on social media. They take the initiative to learn new tools and apps. If they don't know something, they ask the digital world such as Google, Wikipedia, etc.

To be a good teacher it is necessary to use more technology in the teaching strategies. Teachers need to update their teaching strategies. They need to adopt more technology-based tasks, include visual content and give students opportunities to give and receive feedback. It is very important to bring movies into the class and get the students review the movies by taking notes and discussing their findings in class. Generation Z are multi-taskers so you can incorporate pictures, sounds, video into all your teaching activities. You can have listening, drawing and speaking activities at the same time. Let them record, upload their presentations, reports on a social media video channel, and establish an online communication by bringing different cultures and countries together. Teachers are advised not to throw away all the traditional methods in favour of the new technology based teaching strategies. The most practical way to look at this is for teachers to innovate, technify, change within reason. As one saying goes, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it." The traditional method of teaching EFL/ESL isn't broken, it just needs updating and upgrading.

1. Bozavli E. Understanding of Foreign Language Learning of Generation Y. URL: <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1115863.pdf>.

2. Teaching English to generation Z students. URL: <https://ebc-online-tefl.com/blog/teaching-english-to-generation-z-students/>.