

# Language Teaching and Learning for Gen Z

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**Abstract:** *This paper aims to provide a brief overview of language teaching and learning for generation Z (Gen Z). It is mainly organized with two main parts. Firstly, the paper shortly introduces what Gen Z is with some definitions of Gen Z, and the comparison between Gen X, Y, and Z. The second part generally describes 'language teaching and learning for Gen Z'. This part is divided into two small sections consisting of language learning strategies for Gen Z and language teaching for Gen Z. In the section of language learning strategies, direct and indirect strategies are analyzed in order to support Gen Z students' language learning. The section of language teaching for Gen Z lists some good techniques of language teaching for teachers who are teaching Gen Z, and suggests some adaptations supporting teachers in teaching and motivating Gen Z in language learning.*

**Keywords:** *Digital natives, Gen Z, language teaching and learning*

## 1. Introduction

Nowadays, teaching and learning a language is a necessary requirement for both teachers and learners. Teachers, when considering how to teach and how to motivate students in learning, need to understand their own students' characteristics in order to design appropriate lessons with good methods and enhance students' learning. Every generation of students has different characteristics because they were born in different periods of time with different development of society's standard of living. It is very important for teachers, especially language teachers, to understand the differences between generations and the learning preferences of each generation of students in order to create good learning environment for each one. The generation that teachers are teaching now is called Generation Z or Gen Z. They were born with the development of high technology and Internet. They are quite different from the previous generations. Language teachers who are teaching Gen Z need to realize the differences, the characteristics of Gen Z in order to give good strategies in teaching and support students in their own learning. The writer of this paper is really interested in finding out these things, and that is the reason why she chooses the title "Language Teaching and Learning for Gen Z" for this paper. The aim of this paper is to present what Gen Z is, some characteristics of Gen Z, language learning strategies for Gen Z, and some adaptations in teaching language for Gen Z.

## 2. An overview of language teaching and learning for generation Z (Gen Z)

### 2.1. What is "Gen Z"?

The term "generation (Gen)", as Scott and Marchall (2005) explain, refers to the product of age sets, identifying that people who were born in specific defined period of time. However, in the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century, the meaning of generation became closer with social attributes and did not depend so much on biological or medical characteristics. Generation Z or Gen Z refers to the generation born after 2000, the first generation born into the Internet connected world (Cilliers, 2017). As Prensky (2001) writes, technologically, Gen Z is the most advanced and the best suitable for the name "Digital Natives" because they have used different kinds of technologies from a very young age, and it is a very necessary part of their lives, so they are tech-savvy and prefer using technology to communicate rather than direct contact with people. Rothman (2016), in his recent study, shows that Gen Z usually use their smartphones for many activities, such as searching information, checking the time, or taking photos. Obviously, Gen Z is the generation living in a world with the development of the Internet. It affects their lifestyles in all aspects and become a natural part of their lives. They use technology, especially "google", to find information about different topics in their work and education. It cannot deny that Gen Z life is based on technology and the development of Internet. In short, Gen Z is the generation born after 2000, they are fully-technology communicators and ready to use technology and Internet to control their lives, work and study.

## 2.2. Language teaching and learning for Gen Z

### 2.2.1. Language teaching strategies

Teaching language for Gen Z students requires the teachers or educators to have good knowledge and good skills in using high-tech devices and Internet. Teachers need to understand Gen Z's characteristics as mentioned above in order to adapt new methods and appropriate approaches.

Accordingly, Terzioglu (2013) suggests some tasks that might get Gen Z students' interest:

Combining showing movies and the paper lesson, then asking learners to take and share notes.

Integrating pictures, sounds, and video into all activities (because Gen Z students are multi-taskers, they can do many tasks at the same time), then ask students to listen, draw or write and speak at the same time.

Encouraging students to record and upload their presentations or reports on YouTube, Microsoft Teams, etc., then asking them to give online comments and discussion for their friends' work

Combining teaching directly in classroom and teaching online by assigning online work and making online discussion to encourage students to participate in.

Bringing games or some entertainment activities into classroom in order to make an interesting language learning environment

### 2.2.2. Teacher's adaptations in teaching language for Gen Z

Reilly (2012) suggests some adaptations for teachers in teaching language for Gen Z. These adaptations are designed based on some special characteristics of Gen Z students.

Gen Z students are true digital natives

As mentioned in the previous part, the term "digital natives" refers to people who are really know and use technology efficiently. Gen Z students are tech-savvy. Google, Instagram and smartphones are convenient tools and necessary parts of life. Generation Z expects to be connected to the Internet and able to access information at any time. They bring this to education as well.

*How can teachers adapt?*

Teachers should consider how they can use technology to provide information and engage students in learning. The following tips are for teaching digital natives:

*Use educational software:* There are some good

educational software that help to encourage Gen Z. For example, Google Classroom allows teachers to create and manage lessons, send and receive feedback, and communicate with students quickly. Teachers can use Google Classroom on phone or laptop to create assignments, tests, post announcements related to the lessons, share information and links, video, YouTube, etc. Google Classroom can be integrated with Google Drive, Slides, and Docs. Teachers can use these applications for storing, sharing and receiving students' work easily and students can get feedback or evaluation from teachers so quickly. Socrative is another example of educational software. It is considered an efficient way to monitor and evaluate learning. Kahoot is also useful in teaching language. Students are motivated and really interested in the lessons because Kahoot lets them go into a world of language games with pictures, video, sound, etc. It is suitable for designing games like multiple choice questions, challenging in words, structures, sentences, and knowledge in real life through language.

*Use visual aids in teaching language:* Visual aids are instructional devices used in the classroom to encourage students' learning and motivation. Some examples of visual aids are pictures, television, projectors, maps, models, charts, graphics, etc. They are really helpful in making the teaching easier, creating an interest learning environment, increasing students' vocabulary, and thus enhancing students' motivation in learning language.

Gen Z students are diverse

Gen Z students are diverse because, like the previous generations, Gen Z comes from many regions with different cultures and local languages. Some of them are racial or ethnic minorities, and they're going to colleges or universities at higher rates than previous generations. It is a very normal thing and it can help to make social relationships between members of Gen Z when they learn and work together.

*How can teachers adapt?*

When interacting with different kinds of Gen Z students, teachers need to understand their culture and local language in order to teach and communicate with them. Here are some tips from Reilly (2012).

*Explore differences in different cultures:* Teachers need to understand clearly and fully about their own cultures, then explore and compare with other

cultures in order to see the differences. From that, teachers have a good sense in communication and behavior when facing with diverse students.

*Make an effort to understand other cultures:* After understanding the differences between different cultures, teachers try to make effort to identify how Gen Z students' diversity influences how students see themselves and the world around them.

*Think carefully about language:* Language is the key in communication. Teachers should think and consider carefully in using and teaching language in order to help diverse Gen Z students use the language in a meaningful way and avoid misunderstanding.

*Use diverse books and materials:* Teachers need to bring different kinds of books and materials related to general language and local languages into classroom in order to help students have a chance to work with diverse books, and understand more about something around them. Thus, Gen Z students, although they come from different cultures, they can sympathy and get closed to others.

Gen Z students experience high rates of depression and anxiety

Gen Z students are tech-savvy, and their lives depend so much on technology. Technology can help Gen Z do a lot of activities of work and study, in online and offline ways. However, technology brings some harmful effects on Gen Z students' health, physical and mental health. Gen Z mostly uses technology to control real activities, so they rarely do something physically.

*How can teachers adapt?*

Reilly (2012) offers some techniques that teachers can use to support Gen Z students struggling with mental health issues and overcoming the problems of depression.

*Sensitively work with Gen Z students:* It is very important and necessary to understand Gen Z students' psychology and sensitively communicate with them. In teaching language, teachers need to consider the balance between using physical activities and technological activities in order to help Gen Z feel comfortable in learning. Combining physical games and online work will help Gen Z overcome the pressure in learning and motivate them in discovering a language.

*Use techniques that focus on positivity:* Teachers should use techniques making students feel happy in learning language. One of the techniques is praising and giving presents when Gen Z students get high

marks or present a good idea. If students cannot get good mark, cannot practice and use language well, teachers should not shout or give bad behavior, but encourage them by guiding them how to learn better and motivate them in interesting activities.

### 3. Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has given an overview of language teaching and learning for generation Z, which includes what Gen Z is, and some language learning strategies for Gen Z students, some strategies supporting teachers in teaching language for Gen Z. It is hopefully that the paper helps teachers get useful information about Gen Z, and teaching language for Gen Z. From what has been presented in the paper, teachers, especially language teachers, can apply some strategies in their real teaching, and try to find out more about new methods to teach Gen Z, and do future researches to introduce more useful techniques in teaching and learning language for Gen Z.

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