

**NEWSLETTER OF THE AILA SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION ON
LEARNER AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING (LALL)**

Editor: Anita L Wenden

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Issue #1

SC ON LEARNER AUTONOMY FORMED AT AILA '93 CONGRESS

At its August 1993 meeting, the AILA International Coordinating Committee established a Scientific Commission on Learner Autonomy in response to a proposal developed by Anita Wenden and Leslie Dickinson and presented by Ross Steele, the Coordinator for Scientific Commissions.

As stated in the proposal, the purpose of the Commission is (1) to develop and establish a methodology of language learning; (2) to stimulate further research in the area of learner strategies, self-directed learning, and self-instruction; (3) to encourage the development of curricula, including appropriate materials and tasks to incorporate language training with learner training in a variety of instructional contexts, and to evaluate these projects.

REPORT ON FIRST MEETING OF THE SC ON LEARNER AUTONOMY

The first meeting of AILA's Scientific Commission on Learner Autonomy was held at the AILA Congress in Amsterdam on Thursday 12 August, 1994.

Leslie Dickinson and Anita Wenden were elected as co-convenors for 1993-1996, and it was agreed that they would look into the formation of a steering committee to share in the decision-making and responsibilities of the SC.

The following were identified as areas of interest as they relate to the promotion of autonomy:

- (1) teacher education
- (2) learner beliefs (metacognition)
- (3) methods for implementing autonomy
- (4) relationship between learner strategies and learner autonomy
- (5) relationship between educational/cognitive psychology and learner autonomy

The following research concerns were identified:

- (1) replication of studies
- (2) intervention studies (rather than descriptive studies)
- (3) longitudinal studies
- (4) definitional problems

#1 Membership project

Being a new SC, our first project for 1993-1996 is to build up our membership, i.e. identify individuals and groups who are interested in being members of the commission. This project was begun at AILA, with 40 persons filling out the survey distributed during the symposium. This number needs to be expanded as one of the criteria for the reappointment of commissions is the representativeness of membership.

Therefore, you are urged to reproduce and distribute the enclosed survey to individuals and/or groups who may be interested in the purposes of the Commission.

#2 **Learner Autonomy Project Inventory (LAPI)**

Reflecting the interest in networking that members of the SC voiced at the first meeting, the second project we hope to initiate for 1993-96 is the development of an inventory of projects involving research or implementation of learner autonomy. Therefore, if you are involved in such a project, please write it up using the categories listed below. Also, please send your suggestions regarding categories of information not included here and any other feedback.

LEARNER AUTONOMY PROJECT INVENTORY

1 PERSONAL DATA

Name(s) (if more than one person is involved) Institution/place of work

Mailing address

Telephone, fax, E-mail

2 PROJECT TITLE

3 KIND OF PROJECT (Indicate whether it is research, practical implementation.)

4 LEARNER GROUP (Describe the learner group. i.e. Which language are they learning ? What is the level of their proficiency ?)

5 PROJECT OBJECTIVE: If this is a research project, please indicate what it intends to find and how this is related to autonomy. If it deals with practical implementation, what are its specific objectives as these relate to the promotion of autonomy (e.g. to change attitudes ? If so which ones ? to learn to use strategies ? skills of self-directed learning ?) Which language skills does it focus on ? What learner needs? (3 - 5 sentences)

6 PROJECT DESCRIPTION: If it is research, describe briefly (1) how you collected your data and (2) what the outcomes were. If it is classroom implementation, describe briefly your materials and procedures.

It is important that you provide all this data if you wish your project to be included in the inventory.

PLEASE pass this information on to other individuals who may be interested OR collect the information for a project description from them yourselves.

Project descriptions should be sent to Leslie Dickinson and Anita Wenden. The information will be disseminated through a special issue of the newsletter or through a special publication.

#3 **SYSTEM Special Issue on Autonomy: CALL FOR PAPERS**

The SC on Learner Autonomy has been invited to prepare a special number of *System* on autonomy, to be edited by Leslie Dickinson and Anita Wenden. We would be grateful for offers of papers addressing the general theme of the relationship of autonomy to related areas such as strategy training, learner training, self access, and learner centred teaching. The paper might focus on a theoretical exploration of the relationship, an account of research looking at the relationship (e.g. the development of autonomy through use of a self access mode), and/or an account of attempts to promote autonomy through encouraging learning in one of these related modes.

Abstracts, of not more than 200 words, should be sent to both editors by April 10 1994. Papers selected for the Special Edition will be required by the end of July 1994.

SUGGESTED FORMAT FOR THE SYMPOSIUM (AILA '96)

The suggestion that the 1996 Symposium on Learner Autonomy should be much more interactive emerged strongly from the initial meeting of the SC on LALL and the co-convenors were charged with the task of developing ideas that were discussed. The following is an outline of the structure of our SC symposium for AILA '96. Please write to Leslie Dickinson with any feedback on the structure and suggestions for the keynote lecturer and the workshop animateurs.

PROPOSED THEME: Implementing Autonomy

STRUCTURE

KEYNOTE LECTURE

WORKSHOP 1:	WORKSHOP 2:	WORKSHOP 3:
Methods and Approaches of learner training	Content of learner training	Teacher Role & teacher preparation

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE

The structure will be the same for all workshops, which will be two hours long and run sequentially.

- 1 The keynote lecturer, whom we hope will be one of the Conference keynoters (and so be funded by the Conference), will be asked to take the workshop themes into account in his/her lecture.
- 2 For each workshop there will be three animateurs, whose initial task will be to set up one key problem related to the Workshop theme. There will be ONE problem for each workshop. Each animateur will have about five minutes in which to state, contextualize, and illustrate the problem. (15 minutes)
- 3 The participants will divide into small groups and seek a common solution to the problem. Each small group solution will be presented on a Poster and exhibited in the room used for the workshop. (60 minutes)
- 4 There will be a general discussion of the issue conducted by the animateurs, who will also summarize the points raised at the end of the session. (45 minutes)

Please send SUGGESTIONS to Anita Wenden for:

- (1) what you would like to see in the newsletter
- (2) a logo for the newsletter

Co-Convenors of the SC on Learner Autonomy

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