

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

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**A WORD FROM THE EDITOR**

Welcome to the 1997 newsletter of the AILA SC on Learner Autonomy in Language Learning (LALL). As most of you will receive this newsletter in electronic format, here is a guide to the contents to help you navigate your way around it:

- 1 Report to the Membership
- 2 Learner Autonomy Project Inventory
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**REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP: Review of 1993-1996 Activities  
Anita L Wenden**

**Membership**

There has been an increase in the number of people interested in learner autonomy with 160 on our mailing list; most of these are members of an AILA affiliate.

**Publications**

- 1 A special issue of SYSTEM, Learner Autonomy in Language Learning, co-edited by Leslie Dickinson and Anita Wenden, was published in May 1995.
- 2 Learner Autonomy Project Inventory 1 (LAPI)
- 3 Two newsletters

**AILA 96 Congress Events**

Symposium  
Special Session

**Scientific Commission Organizational Structure**

At its first meeting (AILA 10th World Congress, Amsterdam, 1993), the Scientific Commission (SC) elected two convenors. At the SC meeting in Jyväskylä in 1996, it was decided that, in future, convenors should be elected on a rotating basis. Every three years, one of the convenors, usually the person serving for the second term, will step down and one or two new members will be chosen to fill the vacated post. When there are three convenors, they will form a steering committee responsible for joint decision-making in matters that pertain to the SC. In addition, they will assume responsibility for separate SC activities.

**Members of the SC Steering Committee (1996-99)**

Sara Cotterall (elected 1996), Leni Dam (elected 1996), Anita Wenden (elected 1993).

**Electronic Discussion Forum**

A new electronic discussion forum, which aims to promote communication among members globally, was launched in February 1997. Persons interested in the forum are subscribed into the list. This allows them to post announcements, questions, and short (or longer) papers for the members of the list. Postings are automatically sent to all members, who may choose to read them, respond or delete without reading. In contrast to a web page, the forum is more interactive, allowing for immediate response to what one reads.

Moreover, while it can become an opportunity to share information about other groups, upcoming events etc, its main purpose is to promote ongoing discussion among the subscribers. It is accessible to anyone who has e-mail; it is not necessary to have access to the Internet. The forum is moderated by Anita Wenden and the computer facilities provided by York College, City University of New York. Anyone wishing to subscribe should send a message to Anita at the following address: WLDYC@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU

### **Special Thanks**

We would like to extend special thanks to Leslie Dickinson, who served as co-convenor from 1993-1996. Together with Anita Wenden, Leslie worked to establish the SC. As co-convenor, he coordinated publication of the SYSTEM special issue on autonomy and the Special Session held at AILA 1996.

### **Projects 1996 - 1999**

The Steering Committee held its first meeting on August 8, 1996. The following decisions were reached regarding projects and the allocation of responsibilities:

Sara Cotterall - Newsletter editor; publication of Symposium papers (11th World Congress - Finland); membership list.

Leni Dam - Organization of Symposium for the 12th AILA World Congress (Japan) 1999; LAPI.

Anita Wenden - Liaison with AILA Board; liaison with AILA International Congress Organizing Committee; moderator of electronic discussion forum.

### **New Role for Scientific Commissions**

Recently a memorandum was received from Kees de Bot, the Coordinator of AILA's Scientific Commissions. In it, he reported that the newly-elected Executive Board had discussed ways of enhancing the role of the Scientific Commissions (SC's) in AILA. The memorandum emphasised the need for the SC's to be conveyors of information on their area of expertise to their members, students and young researchers, as well as to national and international organizations. The Board proposed the following projects for each SC:

- 1 Setting up a data base of major publications and names, addresses and special topics of researchers and organizations in the field.
- 2 Developing information sheets on various topics of special relevance to the field.
- 3 Producing overview articles of the field every three years.

The Board also suggested that SC's should have two convenors, one from a Western European/North American country and one from another part of the world. Convenors would be responsible for coordinating the proposed projects. Kees de Bot indicated that a limited amount of money would be available to support the proposed projects.

### **Information for the LALL SC Data Base**

As noted in the Report to the Membership, the Executive Board has suggested that SC's develop a data base of publications, researchers and organizations in the field and information sheets on topics of relevance to the field. To make this data base as comprehensive, accurate and useful as possible, we need your cooperation in sending information you have on any of the topics listed below:

- 1 titles of publications (include names of publishers and of authors for books and articles, and for print, video or electronic materials)
- 2 area of research in which you are involved
- 3 purpose of materials or methods you are developing
- 4 names of organizations (academic and non academic) involved in research and education in the area of autonomy and learning strategies
- 5 topics for information sheets

The information should be sent by e-mail, fax or snail mail to Anita Wenden (WLDYC@CUNYVM.CUNY.EDU or 97-37 63rd Rd. #15e Rego Park, N.Y. 11374, United States of America, or Fax: + 1 718 262 2087)

### **LEARNER AUTONOMY PROJECT INVENTORY (LAPI)**

Leni Dam

## **WHAT is the LAPI?**

LAPI is a list of project descriptions to be used primarily by the members of the Scientific Commission on Learner Autonomy in Language Learning. The LAPI is intended to meet the need for information about what is going on in the field of learner autonomy as well as to encourage exchange among those who are working in the field. The inventory is not intended to be comprehensive, but rather to provide a general overview of projects carried out. More information can be obtained from the contact person, whose name and address are listed with the description. The first LAPI was compiled in 1994 by Anita Wenden. Two of the entries in the 1994 issue describe classroom projects for promoting autonomy (Huttunen, Savage). Two others refer to some aspect of the development of self-access centres (Lin, Wright/Piper). Five of the projects describe research either documenting the strategies used by specific groups of learners (Reinoso, dos Santos, White) or the effectiveness of learner training (Cohen, Dam/Legenhausen, Thavenius). Two of the projects, already referred to above, (Cohen and Huttunen) also focus on teacher education.

## **HOW does the LAPI work?**

The first list set up by Anita Wenden will now be updated and can be obtained by contacting Leni Dam by E-mail or snail-mail (DAM@DLH1.DLH.DK or Leni Dam, Vårgyvelvej 42, DK - 2690 Karlslunde, Denmark, Tel: + 45 46 15 09 24; Fax: + 45 39 69 31 10)

If YOU would like to be on the list then please return the following information to Leni Dam marked "LAPI":

Name/Address (E-mail/fax/snail-mail)/Institution/Tel/Project Title/ People or institutions involved in the project/ Short description of project/ Beginning and end dates of project. Please also state whether you already are a member or would like to become a member of the SC on LALL.

## **AILA 12th World Congress, Tokyo August 2-6 1999, AILA SC Symposium on Learner Autonomy Leni Dam**

Although it is not long since some of us met in Finland, it is not too early to start looking ahead to the next AILA conference in Tokyo 1999. Below you will find outlined some preliminary ideas regarding the symposium aims, content and format. It is my hope that, within the coming year, SC members will actively contribute reactions as well as new ideas. It is furthermore my hope that decisions regarding the final programme as well as the organisation of the event, will take place in close cooperation with JALT Learner Development N-SIG, the Japanese Association of Language Teachers' SIG on learner autonomy. The programme will also take into consideration the organizational framework and possibilities provided by the organizers in Japan.

For information on the Congress, contact:

Secretariat for the 12th World Congress of Applied Linguistics (AILA '99 Tokyo) Simul International, Inc.  
Kowa Bldg. No.9,1-8-10, Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107, Japan. Phone: 81-3-3586-8691 Fax:  
81-3-3586-4531  
WWW: <http://langue.hyper.chubu.ac.jp/jacet/AILA99/>

## **Symposium Aims**

- 1 To set up a programme of interest to experienced practitioners, researchers and novices within the field.
- 2 To clarify the various concepts used within the overall concept of learner autonomy.
- 3 To share practice, i.e. to gather as many people as possible actually working with the concept of learner autonomy in practice at all levels - as well as in theory.
- 4 To see to it that participants get a state-of-the-art view of what is going on in the various parts of the world within the topics chosen.
- 5 To give participants a chance to take in and discuss the ideas brought forward and relate them to their own situation in order to initiate or support new research areas and topics.
- 6 To give people a chance to take part in special interest groups, to make new acquaintances and perhaps set up projects across borders.

## **Symposium Content**

"Interventions to Promote Learner Autonomy" is proposed as an overall title for the symposium. I also consider it important to continue where we left off in Finland. The three major areas touched upon in Finland

were Defining Autonomy, Strategic Learning Behaviour and Awareness, and Intervention to Achieve Autonomy.

In order to decide on the content of the symposium in Tokyo we need to consider: What was covered? What was not covered? What kind of questions came up? What remained unsolved? Which new projects concerning the implementation of autonomy have emerged? However, the final content of the programme will of course depend on the proposals coming in.

### **Symposium Format**

I feel that our experience from Finland should be used here as well. Positive feedback from both sessions in Finland shows that we should be aiming at:

- a As many short inputs as time allows, describing the state-of-the-art" within defined topics.
- b A combination of theory and practice.
- c Interaction between speakers and audience.
- d A coherent programme which at the same time leaves participants free to choose which sessions they attend.

Finally, in Amsterdam in 1993 it was suggested that the poster-sessions should be closely connected to the rest of the symposium. In order to achieve these aims I would like to include three types of sessions. All three sessions would be interrelated in terms of content:

- 1 The more traditional format of a symposium where a number of people give short (10-12 minutes ) papers and answer written questions from the audience at the end of a session dealing with a similar topic.  
Advantages: The possibility of many short inputs on theory as well as practice. A session for people interested in getting an overview of what is going on within the field of learner autonomy as well as for people working within the area. Active audience participation when coming up with written questions which can be used in a final report.
- 2 An open forum with "Show and tell sessions"/ Poster sessions, where people can come and go, but physically in close connection with the two other sessions.  
Advantages: This session will give space for a lot of input on practical experiences with learner autonomy. The posters/practical ideas will be "on hand" during the whole event.
- 3 A session where experienced practitioners and researchers in the field of learner autonomy are given the chance to share their experiences and insights. The format could be similar to the Special Session in Finland with a few animateurs leading to group discussion, the outcome of which would be reported back in plenary. However, other formats might be possible.

The three sessions could be nicely interwoven by a SHORT opening talk - trying to fit the various contents of the joint event into a coherent framework, looking back as well as ahead. I feel that three half days would be a minimum for a programme like this. What do you, members, think? Once again, I am very much looking forward to any reactions, comments, suggestions you might have on these first ideas on "Tokyo `99". Don't hesitate to contact me either by E-mail or by snail-mail (see address under LAPI above).

### **CONFERENCE REPORT: SYMPOSIUM ON LEARNER AUTONOMY (AILA 11th World Congress, Jyväskylä, Finland, 4-9 August, 1996) Alison Hoffmann**

An innovation of the 11th World Congress of the International Applied Linguistics Association (AILA) congress was to group many of the presentations into over 100 symposia of related papers. The intention was to bring together people in a particular field for continuous discussion illuminated by various points of view. The Symposium on Learner Autonomy provided one such afternoon of intense discussion and lively interaction. Papers were grouped around five areas: concepts relating to autonomy, strategic learning behaviour and learning awareness, teacher behaviour and autonomy, learning dialogues for autonomy, and evaluations of pedagogy for autonomy. Presenters were asked not to read their papers, but rather to give a short oral summary based on their written text, previously circulated amongst participants - an excellent idea worth exporting.

With 15 presenters, it was a packed afternoon but an excellent way to meet up with and to hear from a good cross-section of colleagues working in the field. While the tight time frame allowed only limited audience

participation and discussion amongst presenters, on the positive side, there was no flagging of interest. Presenters will have the opportunity to put their claims and the evidence for these claims in more detail in a conference proceedings which David Crabbe and Sara Cotterall, the symposium convenors, are preparing.

In summary form, here are a few of the key points made by presenters:

- 1 There are certain universal cognitive learning processes which we can tap into as educators interested in fostering autonomous language learning behaviours.
- 2 We need to develop new forms of discourse for working with learners if we teachers and educators want to foster autonomy.
- 3 We should not jump to conclusions about innate characteristics of learners (e.g. Japanese passivity) but rather examine the educational environment.
- 4 There are guidelines available now for implementing strategy-based language programmes.
- 5 Such programmes could have a progression from simpler to more complex and demanding strategic learning, which may help to move the learner towards ever-increasing autonomy.
- 6 If we observe teacher behaviour, we may find that the classroom management style is inimical to the development of learner autonomy.
- 7 Changing style to foster autonomy is not just a matter of learning a few techniques - it is a matter of changing the way in which we relate to learners.
- 8 The dialogue we have with learners, in order to help them move towards self-direction, will need to vary according to individual differences and will require sensitivity to a variety of variables.
- 9 Teacher and learner evaluations of autonomy-fostering approaches to a variety of instructional programmes indicate positive outcomes, and particularly a tendency to increased self-reflection on the part of learners and teachers.

The above are just some of many ideas to emerge from current research and critical reflection on the implementation of autonomy in language teaching and learning around the globe.

## **CONFERENCE REPORT: AUTONOMY 2000: THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEARNING INDEPENDENCE IN LANGUAGE LEARNING**

**(Bangkok, November 20-22, 1996)**

**Leslie Dickinson**

A conference was organized by the School of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Thonburi, Bangkok, Thailand, in association with the British Council, Thailand in November, 1996. The proceedings of this conference were published in February 1997 and have been sent to all participants. Additional copies may be available from April 1997. Further details may be obtained from Nuantip Tantisawetrat (Faculty of Liberal Arts, King Mongkut's Institute of Technology Thonburi, Bangmod, Rasburana, Bangkok 10140, Thailand, or Email: [inuatrat@cc.kmit.ac.th](mailto:inuatrat@cc.kmit.ac.th)).

The purpose of this conference was to explore the meanings, development and implementation of autonomous learning modes in language learning. Two themes emerged besides the central theme of autonomous learning; these were the function and importance of knowledge, and especially task knowledge, in autonomous learning, and secondly, the constraints of cultural values, especially those prevalent in South East Asia, on the adoption of learner autonomy. These and other issues were discussed in seven plenary sessions and about 50 parallel sessions attended by approximately 160 participants from 12 countries. The plenary sessions addressed all three themes thoroughly as can be seen from the very brief accounts which follow.

### **Dr Krissanapong Kirtikara, Dean of Engineering KMITT: Autonomy Rediscovered**

Early education in Thailand was both autonomous and determined by necessity. With the introduction of western-style learning (the 3 "R"s), autonomy in learning all but vanished. It was only in recent times that both the formal and non-formal education sectors in Thailand have begun to appreciate the value of autonomous learning. Firstly, research institutes are realising that traditional knowledge needs to be documented and, in some cases, subjected to the new technologies available. Secondly, a number of dedicated rural teachers have taken the initiative to equip their charges with non-formal education more meaningful than western style learning.

### **Assistant Professor Nantha Gohwong, Acting Dean of the School of Liberal Arts, KMITT: Learning Independence and Workplace Managerial Problems**

Using insights from a study on the causes of student learning dependence on the teacher, suggestions were made on how to decrease students' learning dependence. The speaker speculated that these suggestions could result in producing a more competent workforce from students moving on to full employment, and consequently help to improve future workplace management in multinational companies where the ability to move within different cultural backgrounds is vital.

### **Anita Wenden: Learner Representations in Language Learning: Relevance and Function**

Dating back to the early 80's, the learner training literature has recognized the need to develop learners' representations about language learning i.e. their metacognitive knowledge, which is viewed as key to autonomous learning. This paper made explicit what is implied in the concern of learner trainers - the relevance and function of this knowledge in learning. Does what a learner knows make a difference? Is it expected to influence a learner's approach to learning? Will it enhance her potential for autonomy?

### **Philip Riley: BATs and BALLs: Beliefs about Talk and Beliefs about Language Learning**

The paper first discussed Beliefs about Talk, showing that there is considerable intercultural variation; then recent studies on learners' Beliefs about Language Learning were presented and their pedagogical implications examined. Finally, it was argued that such work throws interesting light on the question of whether certain societies are intrinsically more or less receptive to self-directed learning.

### **William Littlewood: Autonomy in Communication and Learning in the Asian Context**

The speaker argued that there was no contradiction between autonomy and "relatedness" - that is contact with and support from others. This view of autonomy is important in Asian societies. The high value attached there to interpersonal relationships and group support may provide the foundation for environments which provide strong support of autonomy with relatedness. Why is it then that Asian students are often viewed as lacking autonomy in classroom settings? The paper reported on views expressed by students themselves as well as their teachers.

### **Gill Sturtridge: New Roles for Learners: Developing Learners as "Learner-Teachers"**

The provision of self-access learning resources confronts learners with having to take up many of the tasks that teachers have traditionally undertaken, for example, choosing materials, selecting and setting tasks. Can Learner Development Programmes foster the teacher-like skills that such learners need? Such development needs to be integrated with care into the language learning materials design to make it acceptable and easily absorbed by learners.

### **Leslie Dickinson: Culture, Autonomy and Common Sense**

A frequent assertion nowadays is that learning autonomy is inappropriate for Asian students. An equally frequent assertion is that learning autonomy is a necessary condition of effective learning. The resolution of this paradoxical situation is through common-sense examination of what is meant by learning autonomy and its liberalisation from the image of the individual student working alone on self-selected objectives using authentic materials.

## **PAPER IN RESPONSE TO IDEAS DISCUSSED AT "AUTONOMY 2000"**

### **"From Asian views of Autonomy to Revised Views of Asia: Beyond Autonomy 2000"**

Richard C Smith, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies (ricsmith@fs.tufs.ac.jp)

#### **Background : The "autonomy in Asia" debate**

Recently there has been a lively debate regarding the appropriateness of autonomous learning as an educational goal in non-western, and, specifically, Asian contexts (cf. Farmer, 1994; Aoki, 1994; Jones, 1995; Ho and Crookall, 1995; Pierson, 1996; Aoki and Smith, 1996; and Little, 1996b; also, a number of papers at the November, 1996 Autonomy 2000 Conference at King Mongkut's Institute of Technology, Thonburi, Thailand, discussed further below). Here are some of the doubts which have been raised (emphases added):

1) "...concepts of autonomy and individual responsibility and freedom, as they figure in social as well as educational contexts, **come laden with Western values.**" (Jones, 1995: 229).

2) "To make autonomy an undiluted educational objective in a **culture where it has no traditional place** is to be guilty at least of cultural insensitivity." (ibid.: 229). "(Hong Kong Chinese students are) from a **cultural background that is almost diametrically opposed to autonomy.**" (Ho and Crookall, 1995: 240).

3) "This **characterization of the Cambodian learner as dependent and authority-oriented** does not seem to be a promising basis for development of self-access and autonomy" (Jones, 1995: 229); **"It is .... easy to see why Chinese students would not find autonomy very comfortable."** (Ho and Crookall, 1995: 237).

4) "...no matter what guise autonomy may take, it remains a Western idea, and may come upon the traditions and conventions of Cambodian education with the force of ideological imposition, promoting **a type of behaviour that conflicts with the national culture at a deep level.**" (Jones, 1995: 230).

A number of counter-arguments supporting the view that development of learner autonomy **can** be appropriate in Asian contexts have also been made, and might be summarized as follows (emphases added) :

5) **There are forms of autonomy within "traditional" Asian cultures** (Aoki, 1994; Pierson, 1996).

6) **"If the potential for autonomy is a human universal** and the purpose of education is to help learners to develop tools for critical reflection, it follows as a matter of principle that learner autonomy is an appropriate pedagogical goal in all cultural settings. .... (But) it must grow, quasi-organically, out of the ongoing encounter between the critical goals of the educational enterprise and the particularities of cultural context." (Little, 1996b).

7) There may be a **prevalent misconception that autonomy is equivalent to individualism.** Autonomy entails interdependence as well as independence, indeed group-orientedness may be a strength in developing autonomy, no less than individualism may be. (Aoki and Smith, 1996; cf. also Aoki, 1994, and Benson, 1995).

8) It has been reported that **learners readily engage in collaborative group work arrangements intended to foster learner autonomy,** in various Asian contexts (cf. Farmer, 1994, Ho and Crookall, 1995, and Aoki, 1995).

9) **Arguments against the aspirations of people can easily be hidden within arguments against cultural imperialism** (cf. the discourse on "human rights"). (Aoki and Smith, 1996).

10) **Cultures are not necessarily co-equal with "nations," nor are cultures static;** we should be careful not to limit students' potential through cultural stereotyping. (Aoki and Smith, 1996).

11) **Educational arrangements rather than "national culture" may play the determining role in (re)producing passive attitudes towards classroom learning.** (Pierson, 1996: 55; Aoki and Smith, 1996).

#### **Autonomy 2000 : Asian views of autonomy**

Several papers at the Autonomy 2000 conference lent further weight to arguments indicated above in favour of the validity of autonomy as an educational goal in various Asian contexts. Thus, Krissanapong, on the first day of the conference, argued that - ironically, perhaps - it was the introduction of "western-style (formal) learning" which caused a decline in traditional forms of autonomous learning in Thailand. However, "formal learning has become oppressive," with students being "spoon-fed, to regurgitate at exam time from texts," and Krissanapong suggested that it is now important to "rediscover" autonomy in the traditions of Thai rural contexts. At the same time, two Hong Kong-based presenters, Benson and Littlewood, emphasized (in separate papers) that autonomy does not need to be conceived of as excluding values such as collaboration and interdependence, and that social conceptions of autonomy may be particularly required in Asian contexts. In this connection, both Benson and Littlewood lent weight to the view that autonomy - appropriately defined **does** have the potential to be seen as a universal educational goal, and they both referred with some approval to Little's (e.g. 1996a) universalist position which emphasizes the inevitably **social** nature of autonomy in language learning. As Benson perceptively argued, "the possibility of cross-cultural dialogue is opened up by the rupture of the link between universalism and individualism ..... offered in a version of autonomy that is simultaneously universal and collectivist." As my own paper was also intended to suggest, Asia-derived emphases on more social, less individualistic versions of autonomy (including those presented - with undue pessimism, it may now appear - as involving "limits on independence", a "retreat" from autonomy or a possible "break" with local traditions by Farmer (1994), Jones (1995) and Ho and Crookall (1995), respectively) might thus be seen as catalysts in an ongoing

revision of over-individualistic, "universal" conceptions of autonomy. Benson showed additionally in his paper how the debate over the cross-cultural appropriateness of autonomy as educational goal parallels - and can draw inspiration from - the debate at a more self-evidently political level over the universal validity of Western-inspired notions of human rights, and touched in this context on argument 9 above. At the same time, a number of contributors (e.g. Littlewood, Robbins and Smith) added their support to the claim that learners in different Asian contexts may - in practice, not only in theory - respond well to collaborative, group-based arrangements for the fostering of learner autonomy.

### **Beyond Autonomy 2000 : towards revised views of "Asia"**

At Autonomy 2000, then, there was a large degree of support for the position that appropriately revised conceptions of autonomy can be valid in Asian contexts. However, with attention focused on the need for "Asian" (or, in more universal terms, "social") views of autonomy, the notion of "Asia" itself came in for relatively little critical scrutiny, and some important questions remain to be investigated in this area. For example, when we talk about "Asian" contributions to revision of universal notions, or propensities of "Asian" learners, what do we mean exactly? How can we ("outsider" or "insider" teachers/researchers) say with confidence that students in particular Asian contexts are, for example, relatively group-oriented, and therefore, perhaps, tend to respond well to collaborative, interdependent arrangements for development of autonomous

learning, as is being suggested more and more frequently? Is there not a danger here of replacing negative stereotypes relating to learners in Asian countries (e.g. that they are "dependent and authority-oriented" (Jones, 1995 : 225)) with positive, but no less stereotypical characterizations of their supposed interdependence and ability to work independently of teachers, in groups? Similarly, in generalizing about propensities towards autonomy in students' cultural backgrounds, are we not at risk of replacing one polemical position (that these backgrounds may be "diametrically opposed to autonomy" (cf. Ho and Crookall, 1995: 240)) with another (that they are unproblematically supportive of (revised conceptions of) autonomy)? As Benson suggested in his paper, it may be necessary not only to problematize the notion of autonomy itself but also that of "culture" if we are to move beyond over-simplistic, rhetorical distinctions such as that between "the West" and "Asia" (viewed as monolithic entities), and closer to appropriate characterizations of and arrangements for our own students in various Asian contexts.

In this connection, relevant sources of empirical data might appear to include cross-cultural learning style surveys such as those summarized by Oxford and Anderson (1995), or more wide-ranging investigations of "cultural propensities" such as those by Hofstede (e.g. 1983), the latter having been frequently referred to at the Autonomy 2000 conference in the service of generalizations about "Asian learners." Such surveys potentially have the merit of differentiating to some extent between particular Asian contexts, but - even if used to this purpose - they may tend to be based on over-simplified and over-generalized views of learners' "culture." In other words, they tend to equate cultures with nations, ignoring the various other forms of culture (e.g. class, religious, gender-related, generational or institutional) in which individual learners participate (cf. arguments 10 and 11 above and Holliday, 1994:21); in addition, such surveys may tend to present cultures as static determinants of learner behaviour rather than as "dynamic systems subject to change through internal and external dialogue" (Benson, 1996; cf., also, Pennycook, 1997).

Acknowledging these kinds of concerns, Littlewood suggested at the Autonomy 2000 conference that, rather than taking survey research results at face value, we can use them as a basis for hypotheses, or "predictions" about Asian learners, but that we then need to test these hypotheses against the realities of individual students in particular contexts and their reactions to particular arrangements for autonomous learning. Given the limitations of survey research indicated above, an alternative, though complementary approach to further development of theories of autonomy in cultural context might additionally be suggested: one which is more bottom-up, ethnographic and **generative** of hypotheses, with theory deriving in the first instance from "thick descriptions" of self-directed language learning as engaged in by particular (groups of) Asian learners, rather than from more generalized survey results.

In line with this suggestion, it seems to me after attending the Autonomy 2000 conference that by engaging in and thoroughly describing/evaluating particular approaches to the development of autonomous learning with their own students, teacher-researchers with experience in Asian contexts have an important contribution to make, from the bottom up, to theorizing about autonomy/ies and learners' culture(s) in Asia. With revised, more social and apparently appropriate conceptions of autonomy provisionally "under our belts", it may now be time to move the debate about "autonomy in Asia" beyond polemical generalization and into empirical, for example, ethnographic investigation of learners and their capacities for autonomy, in various Asian contexts.

[Acknowledgements: Many thanks to Andy Barfield, Bill Savage and Peter Voller for their helpful comments on the draft of this article.]

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## WEB SITE ON LEARNER AUTONOMY

The "Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning" WWW page is currently being maintained by Phil Benson of Hong Kong University. It has collected together information on contacts, publications, conferences, learning centres etc. related to autonomy, independence, self-access and self-instruction in language learning. This was always intended to be a collaborative effort and there are several ways in which you can add to the page: you can leave your name and information on projects you are involved in, you can leave a question or discussion point on the message board, or you can add titles to the bibliography. Visit the page at: <http://www.hku.hk/engctr/autonomy/autonomy.html>

## WEB SITE ON LANGUAGE ISSUES IN ASIA

Ken Keobke (City University of Hong Kong) reports from Hong Kong that he and Professor Christopher Candlin have just put the finishing touches to a new WWW site (called "Bamboo"). The purpose of the web site is to encourage Asian and international academics to explore common research interests in English Language Education and Linguistics research in Asia. Hopefully this can lead to further sharing, contacts and collaboration. Ken encourages you to visit the WWW page to search for and submit abstracts of research since 1994. Visit the page at: <http://www.cityu.edu.hk/lib/bamboo/>

## **PUBLICATIONS ON LEARNER AUTONOMY**

### **Publications available from AUTHENTIK**

Authentik Language Learning Ltd, a campus company of Trinity College Dublin, is publishing a series of short books on learner autonomy. To date the following five titles have appeared:

#### **LEARNER AUTONOMY 1: DEFINITIONS, ISSUES AND PROBLEMS**

by David Little

March 1991; reprinted April 1995; 62pp; ISBN 1 871730 02 3

#### **LEARNER AUTONOMY 2: LEARNER TRAINING FOR LANGUAGE LEARNING**

by Leslie Dickinson

November 1992; reprinted December 1996; 67pp; ISBN 1 871730 06 6

#### **LEARNER AUTONOMY 3: FROM THEORY TO CLASSROOM PRACTICE**

by Leni Dam

April 1995; 84pp; ISBN 1 871730 17 1

#### **LEARNER AUTONOMY 4: THE ROLE OF AUTHENTIC TEXTS**

by Dee McGarry

September 1995; 54pp; ISBN 1 871730 19 8

#### **LEARNER AUTONOMY 5: THE ROLE OF MOTIVATION**

by Ema Ushioda

September 1996; 68pp; ISBN 1 871730 23 6

The books cost 7.25 Irish pounds each, including postage and packing. They may be ordered direct from Authentik, 27 Westland Square, Dublin 2, Ireland, by post, fax (++ 353 1 6771196) or e-mail (sales@authentik.ie). If ordering by post, please enclose payment (bank draft in Irish pounds) or give your Mastercard or Visa number and expiry date. If ordering by fax or e-mail, please give your Mastercard or Visa number and expiry date.

### **Publications available from CILT (20 Bedfordbury, London, WC2N 4LB)**

#### **LETTING GO - TAKING HOLD, A GUIDE TO INDEPENDENT LANGUAGE LEARNING BY TEACHERS FOR TEACHERS**

Brian Page (ed.) CILT, London (1992)

### **Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning**

**Peter Voller and Phil Benson (Eds.) Longman, 1997**

A new book entitled "Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning" published by Longman in their Applied Linguistics and Language Study series (general editor: Chris Candlin) has just been published by Longman. Here is an excerpt from the publisher's comments:

"[The book] offers new insights into the principles of autonomy and independence and the practices associated with them... The editors' introduction provides the context and outlines the main issues involved in autonomy and independence. Later chapters discuss the social and political implications of autonomy and independence and their effects on educational structures. The consequences for the design of learner-centred materials and methods are discussed, together with an exploration of the practical ways of implementing autonomy and independence in language teaching and learning. Each section of the book opens with an introduction to give structure to the development of ideas and themes, with synopses to highlight salient features in the text and help build upon the material of previous chapters."

There are three sections to the book. Part 1 deals with philosophy and practice and includes chapters by Phil Benson, Alistair Pennycook, Susan Sheerin, Gill Sturtridge and Bill Littlewood. Part 2 investigates roles and relationships and has chapters by Peter Voller, Philip Riley, Mike Breen and Sarah Mann, Felicity O'Dell and Edith Esch. Part 3 looks at methods and materials and has chapters by Andrew Littlejohn, David Nunan, Guy Aston, Stephen Ryan, David Little and John Milton.

### **Language and Development: Teachers in a Changing World**

**Brian Kenny and William Savage (Eds.), Longman, 1997.**

"Language and Development: Teachers in a Changing World" is a collection of 21 accounts of language education in the context of international development work in Cambodia, China, India, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Singapore and Vietnam. An effort by 35 contributors, the book's three main sections are "Coping with Change", "Teaching and Learning in Different Worlds", and "Responding to the Players". The concluding section, "Language and Development" by William Savage, characterizes the language-and-development practice described in the earlier chapters as being pro-autonomy, as well as change-oriented, experiential, collaborative and communicative.

**Goethe Institute Volume on Autonomy**

Michael Muller-Verweyen of the Goethe Institute, Munich (Email: mueller-verweyen@goethe.de) informs us that a new volume on autonomy will appear in June 1997. It is entitled "Neues Lernen - Selbstgesteuert - Autonom/New Developments in Foreign Language Learning - Self-management - Autonomy". The collection will include contributions in English and German from L. Dickinson, D. Little, R. Kussler, S. Papaefthymiou-Lytra, A. Raasch, U. Rampillon, P. Schulze-Lefert, F. Vieira, D. Wolff and A. Wenden. Here is an extract from the Preface:

Introverted attitudes toward life, which make the self the focus of thought and action, have superseded extroverted attitudes." - states German sociologist Gerhard Schulze. Inasmuch as changes in society are reflected in education, this development is also evident in the following collection of essays. Just as Gerhard Schulze writes that "man becomes the manager of his own subjectivity", so it can be said of foreign language learning that the student becomes the manager of his own learning process.

But how does this take place? What does an educational process which views learning solely from the standpoint of the learner look like? How can learning methods be changed so as to keep pace with this societal development? These are basic questions which the authors in this collection seek to address. Success at learning a new language is becoming increasingly subjective in scope.

The Goethe Institute organised two international workshops on foreign language learning based on learner autonomy. The papers presented at these meetings are included in this volume as are a number of invited contributions. All the contributors to this volume are convinced that the success of language learning as a process depends crucially on the learner him/herself and his/her autonomy.

Orders to: fmv-distributor, Gutenbergstr. 11, D-82205 Gilching, Deutschland (Germany).  
ISBN: 3 - 930220 - 30 - X, Fax: + 49 - 8105-24869.

**Edited Collection of Papers Presented at AILA 96 Symposium on Learner Autonomy**

David Crabbe and Sara Cotterall are currently preparing an edited volume of papers presented at the AILA 96 Symposium on Learner Autonomy (see conference report earlier in this issue). The collection will present a coherent overview of research activity in the field, and then present the papers as instantiations of each area of activity. Each paper will be accompanied by a commentary on the claims it makes and the need for further investigation (or otherwise) of those claims.

**RESEARCH IN PROGRESS - CALL FOR CONTACT**

Joan Rubin is spending the year at the National Foreign Language Centre in Washington looking at Best Practices in Teaching Learner Strategies. She expects to establish a framework for defining best practices and then to survey/interview teachers and programmes that illustrate comprehensive and innovative ways to teach learner strategies. She would very much like to hear from others who are working on learner strategy instruction curricula or learn the names of teachers or programmes that are doing an exceptional job of teaching learner strategies. Joan is also interested in innovative techniques of promoting the monitoring and evaluation of learner strategies. In other words, what classroom-based techniques or activities do teachers use to encourage learners to compare the value of particular strategies for particular tasks?

Please contact Joan via e-mail (MELLON2@mail.jhuwash.jhu.edu) or FAX at + 1 202 667 6907 or at National Foreign Language Centre, Johns Hopkins University, 1619 Massachusetts Avenue, Washington, D.C. 20036, USA.

### **Membership Details Update**

The newsletter editor, Sara Cotterall, asks that you inform her of any changes to your e-mail or conventional address. Where members have an e-mail address, newsletters and other notices will be forwarded electronically, to minimise costs. In particular, you are requested to contact Sara and confirm whether you are a member of an AILA affiliate in the country in which you reside or not. This information is required to update our membership records. If you do not have access to e-mail, could you please complete the tear-off form below and return it to Sara at the following address: Sara Cotterall, English Language Institute, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand. If you have access to e-mail, please send Sara a brief message at <sara.cotterall@vuw.ac.nz> indicating whether you belong to an AILA affiliate or not.

### **AILA SCIENTIFIC COMMISSION ON LEARNER AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING MEMBERSHIP SURVEY**

Name:

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Are you presently a member of the Scientific Commission?

Is there an AILA affiliate in your home country?

If yes, are you a member?

Please return to:

Sara Cotterall, English Language Institute, Victoria University of Wellington, PO Box 600, Wellington, New Zealand (E-mail: sara.cotterall@vuw.ac.nz)

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