Book Reviews
On Autonomy in L2 language learning

David GARDNER and Lindsay MILLER. *Establishing self-access: from theory to practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, xvii + 276 pages.

Self-access language learning (SALL) comes in many different forms. It has reached varying stages of development and is applied in diverse ways in a wide range of circumstances. *Establishing Self-Access* succeeds not only in providing a useful theoretical basis for SALL, in whatever its manifestation, but also in offering practical ideas that are easily adaptable for use in any particular set of circumstances.

The book is organised into three parts: Theoretical perspectives, Practical perspectives and Case studies. *Theoretical perspectives* looks at the pedagogic background to self-access learning and it examines teachers' and learners' attitudes to language learning in a more independent fashion. It also provides an original typology of self-access centres and considers management issues in relation to such facilities. The most extensive of the three sections is *Practical perspectives* and this looks at a range of issues, connected both with establishing a centre and with running one successfully so that it can be of most benefit to learners. In the final *Case studies* section, the book describes five specific centres of quite different types.

The book is helpfully designed for anyone who may be using it for practical teacher training purposes as each chapter concludes with the same three sub-sections: a summary, a set of tasks and some additional pointers for discussion. The chapters are also convenient for the student in that they are organised under informative sub-headings and in their provision of a range of clear tables and diagrams.

For academic courses, the initial theoretical part of the book is likely to be most heavily drawn on. A particularly interesting aspect of this part of the book is the typology of self-access centres (SACs). This uses a shopping metaphor and categorises different types of self-access centre as being, say, a supermarket, a cash and carry, a department store, a mobile shop, a market stall, a boutique or a bring-and-buy sale, among others. It is an interesting metaphor although it seems a little laboured at times as one or two of the 15 types of SACs identified make less neat matches with shopping venues than the majority do. This shopping metaphor is referred to throughout the book and serves as a useful reminder of types of self-access provi-

sion which are very different from those we may have personal experience of.

However, the book is not just for the teacher trainer or post-graduate student with an academic interest in self-access. It is full of practical suggestions for those who are involved in the provision of self-access language learning. There are many ideas which I should like to be taken on board in my own institution, the private language school dealt with in the final case study. These include a range of tasks to help students to assess their own work in the self access centre, a methodology for conducting an evaluation of the work of the centre and some worksheets for staff development seminars.

The sub-title of the book is *From theory to practice* and it is particularly apt. Throughout, I feel this book gives useful illustrations of how theory and practice can combine to lend weight to each other. One example of this is a section in Chapter 1 which deals with justifying self-access. This will be of much use to organisations considering the establishment of self-access resources and will be especially helpful for those staff who have to justify expenditure on self-access centres to their management. As in many sections of the book, the aspects of this topic are laid out in tabular form presenting the advantages and disadvantages of self-access centres under various headings such as Authentic target language, Materials, Learner involvement and Motivation. The table also makes the clear and important distinction between SACs in native and non-native speaker environments.

Another section where there seems to be a particularly happy marriage between theory and practice is that which focuses on materials in self-access centres. The advantages and disadvantages of commercially available resources and specially produced in-house materials are similarly weighed up in concise charts. These are followed up by suggestions as to how

any in-house production of materials can be as cost-effective as possible.

Discussion of self-access centres often centres on resources and how they are organised. Yet issues relating to staffing are possibly of even greater importance. My own main experience of self-access centres has been largely limited to that of one UK private language school. Having worked in the self-access centre there more or less since its inception in 1984, I have become convinced of a couple of principles behind the successful provision of self-access centres. The first of these is that it is essential for there to be proper management of the centre. It is not enough for the centre to be managed by someone who has a range of other duties within the school. I find it reassuring that my own inevitably subjective attitude to management is borne out by Gardner and Miller who maintain, on the basis of their much greater experience and research, that institutions which fail to staff their self access centres adequately have effectively wasted the money that they spent on resources.

The increasing competitiveness of TEFL as a business –in the UK at least– has led many organisations to feel that it might be enough just to provide the resources. SACs can, then, be left to run themselves with minimal management. While the need for management may to some degree decline once a SAC is established, it is certainly not removed altogether. Cutting back on management and staffing may help with short term financial problems but should not be undertaken without an awareness of other consequences. *Establishing Self-Access* deals with such issues in a detailed and convincing way.

My other favourite staffing principle is that the class teacher has a key role in the successful exploitation of self-access centres and an institution needs to pay attention to teacher training in this area so that teachers can adequately carry out

this role. On the importance of the teacher's role, Gardner and Miller point out that teachers can do a great deal in the classroom to initiate discussions and activities which will help learners to make the most of time later spent in the SAC in self-access mode.

On this issue too, Gardner and Miller follow their theoretical discussion with practical suggestions. Thus, they discuss the ways in which attitudes may need to change and skills may need to be learnt and they have many recommendations as to how to prepare students successfully in class for self-access work.

The authors of this book are clearly proponents of self-access language learning. Yet, it must be emphasised that this is an objective study. The authors do not shy away from dealing with the limitations and difficulties of self-access work. They tackle thorny issues like costs, learner expectations and work on the productive skills and, where possible, suggest ways of minimising the problems associated with these. Once again, there is an appropriately close relationship between theory and practice in the treatment of such issues.

There have been many good books and articles on self-access language learning in the twelve years since Leslie Dickinson published his seminal *Self-instruction in Language Learning* in 1987. However, most of these have focused on one particular practical or theoretical aspect of the field, inevitably tending to concentrate on problems arising and solutions found in individual sets of circumstances. It would not, of course, have been possible to write a book like *Establishing Self-Access* without the insights provided by such individual or smaller-scale studies. Yet, in my opinion, this book takes the field of self-access language learning a major step forward. Its theoretical perspectives give depth and its practical perspectives offer breadth and together they make this volume satisfyingly complete as a state-of-the-art reflection of self-access language learning at the start of the twenty-first century.

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Andrew D. COHEN. *Strategies in learning and using a second language*. Harlow, Essex: Longman, 1998, xii + 295 pages.

Much emphasis has been put on learner autonomy in the field of English Language Teaching in the past 15 years or so. This has been apparent at teaching conferences, in teaching journals and in the attempt by text book writers to include some kind of learner training in the materials they are producing. The volume under review is aimed at teachers, administrators and researchers into second and foreign language pro-

grammes. In his short introduction in chapter 1, the author sets out his aim: to bring together different themes concerning strategy use in language learning by including in the same volume previously published studies along with themes which are in print for the first time.

In chapter 2, Cohen makes the distinction between second language learning strategies and second language use

strategies. The former refer to the identification, grouping, retention and storage of linguistic material whereas the latter are used to refer to retrieval, rehearsal, cover (or avoidance) and communication strategies. All the above can also be differentiated according to whether they are cognitive, metacognitive, affective or social. He also distinguishes between learning strategies and learning styles, the latter involving personality factors which include field independence/dependence, holistic/analytic styles, extroversion/introversion and so on. The author points out that these may clash with a teacher´s instructional style and thus cause conflict, which is something all teachers would be wise to bear in mind when planning classes and implementing materials with learners.

In chapter 3, the author looks at methods for investigating language learning and language use strategies, discussing the pros and cons of six different approaches: learning strategy interviews and questionnaires, observations, verbal report, diaries, recollective studies and computer tracking. In particular, Cohen defends the use of verbal report and this chapter focuses on the fine-tuning of this method to improve its methodological rigour. Indeed, he very much favours more work being carried out to better tap what students can tell us about the strategies they engage in when doing learning tasks. This is undoubtedly a strong point of the book, and of special interest for researchers involved in the field, as well as teachers who have the time and know-how to carry out 'action research' in their own classrooms.

If strategy training is to work, then obviously the teacher has a key role to play. In chapter 4, Cohen advocates teachers giving explicit strategy-based instruction as part of the learning curriculum. The writer emphasises the role of the teacher as a "change agent", that is, the student´s partner in the learning process. The goals of strategy training, therefore, are to recognise what works for each student and build on that basis, as well as to promote learner autonomy. Here I cannot help but harbour doubts. Given the range and diversity of strategy use, it is unclear to what extent teachers can identify all the strategies available, let alone point out the most appropriate for each *individual* learner.

A study carried out by the author along with other researchers into the impact of strategies-based instruction (SBI) on speaking in a foreign language takes up the bulk of chapter 5. Although the author recognises that follow-up research would be required to determine if learners continue to use the strategies focused on in the medium and long term, the results were interpreted as suggesting SBI had a positive effect. I cannot help but take a critical stance here. The author calls for SBI, which he describes as involving presentation, practice and evaluation of strategies, apparently expecting student uptake to be measurable in the short to medium term, thus speeding up the learning process. Looking at the list of speaking strategies in Appendix 5 of the chapter, which spans three pages or so, as a teacher I would immediately fear an information overload for learners, which could have the opposite effect to that desired. What is more, a contradiction seems apparent: the whole concept of learner autonomy and individualisation is based on the idea of the learner´s own in-built syllabus (Corder, 1967), which does not necessarily correspond to the teaching syllabus. In fact, the two may well be at odds. I do not see why this might not also happen in the case of overt strategy training.

Indeed, it seems to me that the key question is whether or not learners can be trained to use strategies and whether there is a close correlation between learner strategy training and ultimate success

in the target language. Skehan (1990) has referred to the "strategies as causal vs. strategies as caused" question. In other words, as Reeves (1994: 62) has asked: are strategies "...logically prior to and necessary for learning" or do they "...emerge simultaneously with the development of second language proficiency" and "...represent the way in which a learner progressively solves the different problems that mastering the second language holds for him". McDonough (1995:101) warns that "great care has to be exercised in moving from a descriptive and taxonomic position to an interventionist one". He would question Cohen on the reliability of experiments evaluating whether intervention has been successful or not, suggesting, amongst other things, that cultural preferences in learning behaviours may be stronger than the effects of strategy teaching, that we are lacking studies into the long-term effects of strategy teaching, and that motivation is closely linked with strategy use, so measures of differences in attitude are also needed (McDonough, 1995).

The chapter I found most interesting was the following one, where the author considers the question of "inner speech", and whether or not it is beneficial to try to think in the L2. I am sure that most language teachers would advise their students to try and think as much as possible in the target language and to attempt to avoid constantly translating mentally into their mother tongue. However, according to Cohen, trying to think directly in the L2 when writing may actually lower the standard of the written work produced, an observation which has also been suggested by previous research (Friedlander, 1990). Indeed, when studying immersion programmes in the USA, Cohen addressed the question of why it is that second language

learners fall behind natives in the regular school curriculum. He suggests it may well be beneficial to give such learners training in developing cognitive processing in their own L1. All in all, the author feels that thinking in the L2 enhances the learning process but not at the expense of using the L1 when it is comforting or even necessary, especially at lower levels of language proficiency.

Finally, in chapter 7, the writer considers strategy use in tests, stating that by looking at these we can help learners to improve their own results as well as helping to achieve better assessment instruments. He feels that curriculum planners should consider not only how to test learners but also how to be more familiar themselves with the test-taking strategies required to perform well. This is nothing new, since teachers are familiar with published materials which aim to develop the strategies students will need when facing examinations like the Oxford Preliminary Test or Cambridge First Certificate. What is innovative about the content of this chapter as well as the previous one is that strategies are dealt with in relation to test-taking techniques and cognitive thinking, a relationship which has not been explored to such an extent before.

To sum up, the book under study gives broad coverage of strategies used in SLA, with detailed descriptions of research carried out in the field. As a result, teachers might find the going a little hard, especially since, as the author admits, an attempt has been made to bring together different themes from different sources, including previous papers and research undertaken with fellow researchers. Consequently, perhaps the latter, along with students on post-graduate courses in Applied Linguistics, would get more from the study[1].

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1. For practising teachers interested in the subject, McDonough´s work cited in the bibliography would be an easier introduction to the field before they read Cohen´s book.

Undoubtedly, Cohen´s work could serve as a useful reference text for administrators and curriculum designers involved in the recent reforms introduced here in Spain in foreign language studies in primary and secondary education, since there exists explicit reference to the development of learning skills and learners taking responsibility for their own learning in the curriculum.

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Phil BENSON & Peter VOLLER (eds.). *Autonomy & independence in language learning.* New York: Longman, 1997. vii + 270 pages.

Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning is a compilation of articles contributed by some of the most outstanding figures in the field. As stated in the introduction, one of the main objectives of the book is "clarifying and problematizing" the meanings of autonomy and independence, two concepts which have caused a great deal of uncertainty in this area. The term autonomy has been used to refer to situations in which learners study entirely on their own, for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning, or, following Holec (1981:3), for "the ability to take charge of one's learning". In this sense, the general introduction by Benson and Voller makes an extremely useful contribution to the field as it helps to clarify the differentiation between these ideas.

A second aim of this book is to explore the "discourses and applications" of these two concepts for language learning, merging the theory and practice in this field. These applications are, nevertheless, brought to scrutiny in this volume, presenting not only suggestions for implementation but also pointing out the problems that may arise. This aspect will surely be much appreciated by language teachers who often find the implementation of autonomous learning in the classroom rather difficult. As the authors put it in the introduction: "whenever autonomy and independence figure in concrete language education projects, there is always a risk that underlying conceptual differences will emerge in the form of conflicts over the practical steps to be taken" (Benson & Voller, 1997: 2).

The fact that the book has many contributions from different authors does not make it simply an anthology of autonomy in language learning. It is obvious that the authors worked careful-

ly on the organization of the different articles, since the book is so coherent that it seems as if a single author had written it. Besides, a large number of interconnections between the different issues and chapters give the book a clear sense of unity. A good example of this can be found in chapter 6, where William Littlewood refers to some teaching methodologies that are reconsidered and expanded all through Part III. This makes the reader feel that the different authors' contributions have not been brought together for the sake of forming a collection of articles on autonomous learning, but that they have been selected to constitute a book with an introduction, a body and a well-connected conclusion.

Altogether the volume is composed of seventeen chapters, divided into three parts, which reflect "the major questions that need to be addressed if the gap between theory and practice is to be narrowed" (p. 2-3). Part I, namely "Philosophy and practice", introduces the first question to be considered: *What kinds of autonomy or independence are aimed at and how can they best be achieved?* The answer to this question is provided by Phil Benson (chapter 2), Alastair Pennycook (chapter 3), Susan Sheerin (chapter 4), Gill Sturtridge (chapter 5) and William Littlewood (chapter 6). While the first two authors establish the theoretical grounding of concepts, the rest concentrate on the methods of implementation, self-access and self-instruction. The issues handled in chapters 4 and 6 are taken up again in Part III; whereas Sturtridge's chapter points forward to the concerns of Part II. In this way, Benson and Voller start to establish the already mentioned interconnections between the different articles that compose the book.

While the first part provides the necessary theoretical background to the field, the second part, "Roles and Rela-

tionships", opens a more practical path; that is, it gives different alternatives to traditional classroom teaching, while addressing the second question, namely *What changes are envisaged in the roles and relationships of teachers and learners?* The five chapters in this part recover Sturtridge's claim about "a re-evaluation of the roles of both learners and teacher, the relationship between them, and the relationship of both to institutions of learning" (p. 93). Peter Voller (chapter 7) and Philip Riley (chapter 8) provide an overview of the two terms that concern this second part, evaluating the variety of teacher roles and the nature of counselling for autonomous learning, respectively. Along the same line, Michael Breen and Sarah Mann (chapter 9) are interested in the development of a pedagogy for autonomy in the classroom, taking into account both learners' and teachers' perspectives. They see autonomy as an innovation and as a "reaction against the 'culture of authority'" (p. 95). As Nunan (1997) puts it in his book, *The Learner-Centred Curriculum*, "autonomy is like a step forward to this type of curriculum, where students have an active participation in preparing its content and how it is taught» (Nunan, 1997: 2). The issue of the collaborative effort of students is taken up again and extended by Nunan in this volume in Part III. Finally, Part II is closed by Felicity O'Dell (chapter 10) and Edith Esch (chapter 11), who present case studies on the roles of teachers and learners respectively. The presentation of actual data makes the book more reliable and accessible, and helps to achieve its second aim, namely, to conciliate theory with practice.

After having reviewed the theory and having seen some actual implementation and observation of the mentioned issues, Part III, "Methods and materials", aims to provide an answer to the last question, *What specific methods and materials might*

best contribute to overall goals?, an issue which was already raised by some of the contributors to the two previous parts. Andrew Littlejohn starts this section arguing that self-instructional materials should be open-ended and should encourage creativity, rather than just engage learners in reproductive language use. This is a key point for those who claim that self-access facilities do not help students develop their productive skills. In chapter 13, David Nunan follows on by looking at textbook materials to promote autonomy and independence. He believes not only that teachers should produce materials, but also that learners should break the barriers between the classroom and the world beyond it by producing their own working resources. Guy Aston (chapter 14) promotes negotiated self-access work with electronic text corpora, thus immersing students in an environment of authentic language, rather than letting them choose from a selection of pre-constructed materials. The importance of authentic materials is stressed again in chapter 16 by David Little, who strongly believes in the interaction between learning and use. In between these two chapters, Stephen Ryan presents his experimental course in a Japanese university. Again, Ryan suggests that students should be encouraged to go beyond the classroom and develop methods of working with authentic resources. He mentions many of the resources that were available for the learners in Japan and how these materials were taken advantage of. Finally, despite all the controversy raised by the use of new technologies in autonomous learning, John Milton's conclusive contribution aims at giving a positive view on materials of this type. He suggests that "new computer

technologies, especially the Internet, hold the potential to create 'virtual target language communities' for communicatively isolated students" (p. 180). Milton emphasizes the importance of keeping these tools under the control of their users, so that they represent a positive instrument in developing learners' autonomy as writers.

To conclude, this book is a useful tool for researchers who want to broaden their knowledge of autonomy and independence in language learning, as well as for those teachers who would like to foster autonomous learning with their students. Despite the book's major focus on one specific type of implementation, self-access learning, most of the insights revealed in each of the chapters can be easily transferred to other self-directed learning schemes as well; that is, the case studies and experiences presented by the different authors provide enough information for guiding teachers –or even proficient learners- through their way to independent language learning. Hence, apart from being an obligatory work tool for both teachers and researchers in the field, this book should certainly be included in second language teaching methodology courses as compulsory reading.

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Michael D. BUSH and Robert M. TERRY (eds.). *Technology-enhanced language learning*. Lincolnwood, IL: National Textbook Company, 1997, xviii + 378 pages.

The complexity inherent in computer assisted autonomous second language acquisition is clarified by the abundant resources in this text designed to facilitate implementation of technological advancements. The target audience being adult language educators, the volume is in current use in American university training of second language teachers and researchers; and may also serve autonomous learners by providing a structure for plotting learning strategies using technology-based applications.

Topics within the domain of technology–enhanced language learning (TELL), range from program implementation to software review and laboratory design. The organization of chapters is not progressive, allowing users to consult according to their specific needs; and the index is sufficient to commend this text as a valuable reference.

Technological advancements in multimedia presentations of language and culture allow input and intake to take center stage in the language acquisition process. In chapter one, Pusack and Otto offer websites and research which demonstrate a paradigm shift away from teacher-centered learning toward autonomous language learning. By guiding students initially with clearly defined tasks, then gradually encouraging independent interaction with complex information databases, they present a model for education reform based in computer assisted language learning (CALL), grounding theory in application through authoring systems, databases, and language learning programs.

In chapter 2, *Multiple, mixed, malleable media*, Chiquito, Meskill and Renjilian-Burgy investigate learner interaction with multimedia. They propose that in using random-access text-control, students exercise and develop learning strategies such as semantic categorization. Twenty-six computer screen images illustrating actual language software applications are presented.

The vastness and versatility of materials available on-line require autonomous students to cultivate self-discipline in language learning (Harrell, 1999), yet accessing the target language to facilitate learning about target culture produces a positive language learning effect. In Chapter 3, *Teaching listening: How technology can help*, Joiner praises digital recordings which provide opportunities for multiple representations of meaning. Documenting experimentation of CALL theories, she stresses how learner control of input, facilitated by digitized instantaneous random access, increases indepth listening practice. Repeated viewings of video presentations (advised due to distinct processing of auditory and visual stimuli) can increase intake (Hoven, 1999). Theories of sufficient input are addressed and self-testing, an essential tool in autonomous language learning, is discussed.

Martinez-Lage in Chapter 4, *Hypermedia technology for teaching reading*, sites how explicit instruction can increase student interaction with text. She details research of incidental vocabulary acquisition and the effects of glossing which supports the use of hypermedia technology in foreign language reading (Chun and Plass, 1996).

Interactive technologies as a means to communicative competence (Egbert & Hanson-Smith, 1999) take prominence in chapter 5, *Computer-mediated com-*

munication (CMC): Technology for improving speaking and writing. Beauvois implies that since "language cannot be learned in isolation" (p.314), complete autonomy is not always desirable or effective in second language learning. Similarly, Scinicariello (Chapter six: *Uniting teachers, learners and machines: Language laboratories and other choices*) focuses on the changing face of language laboratories, and their importance as a meeting place where teamwork counters autonomous isolation.

For strength in immediate application, Chapter 7, *Learning language and culture with Internet technologies* appears most useful. Lafford and Lafford analize the pedagogical value of several content-based materials currently available online. Instructions for using a web browser with both interactive and non-interactive technologies are clearly detailed so that an autonomous learner could access them independently. The term interactive here means that the operation and learning "require oral or written production in the target language," (p.221). They provide site addresses for radio and video-based media; and suggest ways to achieve higher frame rates to improve esthetic quality and speed display time so as to limit learner frustration. Anticipating autonomous learning of non-romance languages, detailed instructions are included for installing special font-support software.

In Chapter 8, *Meeting the technology challenge: Introducing teachers to language-learning technology*, Kassen and Higgins provide guidelines for implementing technology training for in-service or pre-service teachers. Assuming an audience of professionals, the syllabus focuses on application and implementation rather than theory by directing pedagogical expertise towards CALL applications.

In the last chapter, *Implementing technology for language learning*, editor Bush discusses the dangers inherent in technology (such as early videodiscs) which, although rich in quality of input, can be both expensive and quickly out-dated. In the face of continual change, re-evaluation of language instruction in technical contexts serves to keep goals in focus (Muyskens, 1997).

Across the chapters technical terms are used freely, yet do not exceed the expectations of an average language learner with a moderate degree of computer literacy. Although a glossing might assist technical novices, all authors displayed both expertise in the field of CALL and concrete readability. Overall this volume serves as a useful reference and compendium of TELL, encompassing a variety of media used to promote foreign or second language acquisition. Whether a guide for autonomous language learners or a source book for language teachers, the articles cover a broad spectrum of technological applications in language learning.

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Leni DAM. *Learner autonomy 3: from theory to classroom practice.* Dublin: Authentik, 1995, ii + 84 pages.

Learner autonomy 3: from theory to classroom practice, as the name suggests, is the third in a series of books about learner autonomy published by Authentik, a campus company of Trinity College, Dublin. The book is intended to be a practical guide for teachers. It is easily accessible and clear in terms of its practicality based on real teaching situations, with ideas directly transferable for teachers at all levels interested in developing learner autonomy in their classrooms.

The book is the result of 15 years teaching experience of putting learner autonomy ideas into practice, with a particular emphasis on working on the learners' involvement in their own learning process. The author, Leni Dam, is a pedagogical adviser and teacher in Copenhagen, who teaches English at a comprehensive school, and has given lectures and seminars on learner autonomy. The ideas were practised with literally hundreds of pupils over this period, not only in Denmark, but also in Norway, Sweden, Great Britain, and Spain. As a consequence, the book is a sort of 'live' and practical diary of these experiences, supported by background theory and description, plus feedback on the successes and failures of the various activities.

The volume is divided into six chapters, plus suggestions for further reading and references. It begins with a reflection on learner autonomy, including some background theory. The first chapter, *Developing learner autonomy in a school context*, suggests five changes that exist between a teacher-directed teaching/learning environment and a teacher/learner-directed learning environment. These are stated as the shift in focus from teaching to learning; a change in the learner's role; a change in the teacher's role; the role of evaluation; and a view of the language classroom as a rich learning environment. The rest of the book, therefore, aims to cover these five defined changes, mainly through practical teaching and classroom ideas. In my opinion these ideas are clearly directly applicable for most teaching situations, but, moreover, I think they also help teachers to order the ideas and concepts in their own minds.

The next four chapters include two describing a step by step approach for actual class experiences at two different levels: beginners and intermediate, and two chapters describing a more general approach, one looking at the organisation of classroom work, and the other describing methods of evaluation in learner autonomy. The final chapter, *Developing learner autonomy in a school context - with what results?* is a broader reflection on the development of learner autonomy in a school context. The author concludes that the development of learner autonomy can be both hard

and painful, but that through the experiences covered, she feels that the successes outweigh the sum of the problems. These conclusions are not only made by the author but also by teachers and students who have put many of the ideas into practice.

Chapter two, *Beginning English - the first year*, works very thoroughly through a series of lessons aiming to develop autonomy right from the beginning, as can be seen from the title of the chapter. As well as actual lesson plans, this chapter includes both ideas for activities in class and for follow up homework. The chapter states clearly "what to do" by giving feedback on "good things" and "bad things", and concludes with a very illustrative diagram suggesting a "Simplified model of a teaching/learning sequence". The fifth chapter looks at how this experience can be developed and maintained as the courses progress at a higher level, namely, at *Intermediate English*. Similarly organised to the beginners unit with a series of practical ideas, this chapter also questions how the layout of the classroom with different activities on different tables can also be an important factor in the development of learner autonomy.

In chapters three and four, the focus is broader: chapter three looks at the question of organisation, *Important elements in the organisation of classroom work*, and then chapter four discusses the question of evaluation, *Evaluation – the pivot of learner autonomy*. In chapter 3, the author suggests a series of "criteria for choice of homework", a model which looks at "communicative abilities seen in relation to communicative activities", that is to say the specific skills needed to perform communicative activities, as well as discussing the use of diaries, posters and group work. This leads to an extremely clear and thorough diagram called "The Flower", a "negotiation" model which inter-links the learner's

role, the teacher's role, materials, aims and objectives, evaluation, and activities. In chapter 4, the author compares evaluation in general with evaluation in an autonomous setting. This includes a learner's reflection model that covers objectives/plans, outcomes, the learner's role, the teacher's role, materials and activities, and a reflection on evaluation approaches in general.

Chapter 5, *Intermediate English*, is a case study of an intermediate group, which takes us from the beginning of the first term, and includes a number of specific classes during various stages of the year. The planning of the year is based on the above mentioned model called "The Flower", and the chapter shows how the various elements of this model can be incorporated into a year's work. It starts with a clear description of "The Flower", with bullet points (Aims/objectives, Activities, Materials, Evaluation, Learner role, and Teacher role) which help to clarify the six aspects mentioned in the previous paragraph. In the form of a diary, it then gives specific lesson plans for specific and key classes, along with feedback both in terms of the results of the activities and the comments and thoughts of both the teachers and learners involved. The ideas work well in terms of showing how the model can work, and by explaining the background to this approach. However, I believe teachers in other learning situations would find it difficult to put some of the specific class ideas into practice. Nevertheless, I think the ideas could be sufficiently well interpreted so as to be transferred to other teaching situations.

The final chapter, *Developing learner autonomy in a school context – with what results?* is fundamentally a reflection in the form of quotes by teachers and students alike on the changes of approaches experienced, and finishes with a list of concluding remarks. The areas covered include a description of the "Successes

experienced by teachers when developing learner autonomy", "Problems encountered by teachers", "Learners' views on their English lessons", and "Concluding remarks". This chapter maintains what I find is one of the best aspects of the book as a whole, and that is the honesty of the reflections which include a good balance between the description of the successes and the failures.

The book is useful for all teachers, both experienced and starting out, and, as well as the many practical suggestions, it acts as a useful opportunity to reflect on the reality of ideas and proposals for developing learner autonomy amongst our students. For this volume to be seri-ously practical and useful, it requires teachers to be willing to experiment, and to accept that it is not a book of recipes, and is neither a coursebook, nor a source book. For me it is a clear guidebook for teachers already interested in the topic of learner autonomy but who have so far not developed a systematic approach to the development of learner autonomy amongst their students. And this systematic approach is for me the key contribution that the book makes to the field of learner autonomy.

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On Language Acquisition

Neil SMITH & Ianthi-Maria TSIMPLI. The mind of a savant: language learning and modularity. *Blackwell: Oxford, 1998, XVIII + 243 pages.*

The mind of a savant: language learning and modularity is aimed at providing evidence concerning the modularity of mind, invariant principles of language and their role in first and second language acquisition, and the interaction of pragmatic and conceptual factors in language use. Smith and Tsimpli undergo this task through a careful study of an individual with remarkable linguistic abilities but otherwise limited capacities. This book not only provides insight into the mind of one unique individual, but simultaneously it casts light on the nature of language and thought in general. By exploiting recent developments in both linguistics and psychology, the authors have made an essential contribution to the field of cognitive science and secondary language acquisition (SLA).

The way in which the book is structured –five independent although interrelated chapters– facilitates the reader's understanding of the reasoning followed by the authors. In the first chapter, and after introducing Christopher –personally, medically, psychologically and linguistically– a range of the theoretical assumptions that Smith and Tsimpli presuppose is outlined. In chapter 2, they provide a detailed account of Christopher's performance in English, concluding that his competence in his native language is flawless, and that apparent exceptions to this generalisation can be accounted for by reference to extra-grammatical considerations. The third chapter documents the results of a battery of tests on a sub-set of Christopher's 'second' languages, paying particular attention to Modern Greek and the Romance languages: French, Spanish and Italian. The next chapter discusses the authors' attempts to teach Christopher languages with which he was previously unfamiliar, so that they could study his learning process while they controlled the input to him. The languages chosen were Berber, spoken in North Africa, and Epun, a language they invented in order to test Christopher's reaction to structures which, by hypothesis, could not occur in the world's real languages. The final chapter takes a closer look at Christopher's translational expertise –the talent that first brought him to attention, and then attempts to provide a general account of the full range of his mental abilities. By blending insights from cognitive psychology, the philosophy of mind and theoretical linguistics, Smith and Tsimpli produce a revised model of the mind in terms of which they can describe, and in part explain, both Christopher's exceptional, albeit flawed, talent, and by implication the abilities of normal people. As further evidence, they provide documentation of the standard psychological and linguistic tests they used throughout the project as

well as of supplementary data included in the appendices.

To make possible an understanding of Christopher's case from both a psychological and a linguistic perspective, Smith and Tsimpli introduce certain fundamental notions of current linguistic theory, and embed them within a more general framework of a theory of cognition. They outline the *innateness hypothesis* as it relates to language. The theoretical background on which their claims are based is that of the *principles and parameters* model. The authors maintain that the set of functional categories constitutes a submodule of Universal Grammar, namely the UG lexicon. Each functional category is associated with an entry specified for relevant functional features. Parameterisation is then defined in terms of a set of alternative values with which a functional category can be associated. Cross-linguistic variation is thus restricted to differences in the parametric values of functional categories. These assumptions, in conjunction with a maturational approach to language acquisition, have certain implications: first, the inaccessibility of the functional module at the early stage of acquisition; and second, the lack of cross-linguistic differences in early grammars. They also claim that if the *critical period hypothesis* is correct, maturational constraints on the functional module can be interpreted as entailing its complete inaccessibility after the end of this period. The importance of this suggestion is that it has clear implications for adult second language learning: UG may still be available but parameter-resetting can not be.

Furthermore, they refer to Fodor's (1983) *modularity hypothesis* (according to this hypothesis, the human mind is not an unstructured entity but consists of components or modules which can be distinguished by their functional properties), as reformulated in the light of Anderson's (1992) *cognitive theory of intelligence* (this theory is an attempt to formalize properties of central systems within a modular theory of mind. Anderson's model is explicitly designed to be compatible with the Fodorian distinction between modular input systems and putatively non-modular central systems) and Sperber and Wilson's *(1986) theory of relevance*. Relevance in a technical sense is defined as a joint function of the achievement of contextual effects and the amount of effort needed to achieve them. The 'principle of relevance' states that communicated information creates an expectation of relevance: engaging someone's attention by speaking to them guarantees that you think what you are saying is worth their attention.

With this book, Smith and Tsimpli have made a splendid contribution to the whole field of cognitive science. It casts light not only on the nature of language but also on that of thought in general. Furthermore, as far as second language acquisition is concerned, the combined results from the experiment to teach Christopher new languages under conditions of controlled input are more than suggestive. It seems clear that, while there is no evidence for complete mastery, there is support for the directing role of transfer from the first language and for the importance of UG; there is clear indication that the learning of the morphology and the lexicon is different in kind from the learning of syntax; there is evidence that, at least in this natural context, second language learning exploits inductive strategies as well as modular capabilities; and of course there is yet another demonstration of Christopher's remarkable talent in mastering (parts of) the structure of new languages. Although the bulk of the book was intended to be accessible to the general reader, the need to provide technical analyses and explanations to justify their conclusions has prevented the

authors from achieving their original intention. Only those who have some familiarity with current linguistic theory and psychology are able to follow and evaluate the reasoning put forward. Other readers can either skim the technicalities or run to the nearest university to take an accelerated course in Linguistics. Both options are quite inappropriate, but the thing is that this book deserves more than just being read: it must be understood and, hence, enjoyed as a whole.

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Alessandro DURANTI, *Linguistic anthropology.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997. xxi + 398 pages.

Linguistic anthropology is a welcome text-book that focuses on the cultural importance of language and speaking, that is, it studies language as part and parcel of our lives. The insightful ethnographic approach to linguistic fieldwork provided by the book is really appealing and extremely useful to anyone interested in carrying out research in first and second language acquisition. Divided into ten chapters, the first three are devoted to theoretical issues, whereas chapters four and five focus on how to carry out effective fieldwork. Chapters six, seven, and eight present different trends within the field of Linguistic Anthropology in the last decades. Finally, in chapter nine, Duranti develops his interest in the role of participants in speech events, which is followed by his conclusions summarized in chapter ten.

On the whole, the book is well written, clear and neatly organized. Perhaps the only exception is the discussion of certain theoretical concepts which are complex due to their multiple meanings. For example, the terms 'culture', 'linguistic relativity' and 'speech community' have been differently defined by various authors and, therefore, the reader may find problems when trying to figure out which specific definition the author is referring to.

In the first chapter, Duranti points out that Linguistic Anthropology is mainly concerned with language use and three theoretical notions, namely performance, indexicality, and participation. Performance has to do with the power of words because words do things as Austin's notion of performative verbs shows. For instance, when a person says (i) "*I promise I'll be good*", the uttering of these words is the act of promising itself. This notion displays a 'creative' and 'dynamic' view of language, which is the one assumed throughout the book. In relation to indexicality, the author mentions Gumperz's concept of 'contextualization cues' which are features of talk (not only linguistic) that contribute to the interpretation of sentences and situations. For instance, intonation of an utterance gives the hearer clues about the meaning that the speaker wants to convey. Thus, the utterance (ii) '*You don't know him'* would be interpreted as a question if spoken with a rising intonation. However, the same utterance pronounced with a falling intonation is an assertion meaning 'you do not know what he is capable of'. Participation takes into account that the participants in linguistic interaction are crucial for its development as a social activity. Therefore, these three concepts are important, but a notion that has been left out is that of context. Context both in the fixed and dynamic sense is also essential for inter-

preting social and linguistic behaviour. Since it is closely linked to the notion of participation, the reader misses its development in the book.

Since Duranti defines language as a 'cultural resource', a whole chapter is devoted to the notion of 'culture', in which several theories of culture are presented. All these theories share an important focus on language as a conceptual and social tool which is a product and an instrument of culture. Duranti manages to make the reader realize how complex the notion of culture is. This chapter is very useful for researchers or students who are not familiar with this term and its diverse implications.

The author also highlights the importance of 'linguistic diversity'. He stresses the fact that formal grammarians have always taken for granted that speech communities are homogeneous whereas Linguistic Anthropology is precisely interested in studying the differences within them. Since diversity is the main point in chapter three, Duranti deals with concepts such as 'variety', Gumperz's 'linguistic repertoire', and different definitions of 'speech community'. When trying to explain 'linguistic diversity', he discusses Whorf's notion of 'linguistic relativity'. It refers to different worldviews responsible for variation among languages. Nevertheless, according to the author, linguistic relativity is not the only issue to examine when studying language in culture; an anthropological study of language should be concerned with language as both a product and a process.

In chapter four, the reader finds a helpful piece of writing about how a linguistic anthropologist should undertake fieldwork. This chapter focuses on the ethnographic principles and methods that may be used by linguistic anthropologists to concentrate on the cultural part of linguistic exchanges. The author successfully illustrates the problems one may encounter when carrying out fieldwork with conflicts he himself or other well-known researchers had to face. Linguistic Anthropology uses, on the one hand, methods such as participant-observation, interviews, 'identifying and using the local language(s)' and writing interaction, and, on the other, technological material such as video and tape recorders and digitized images. After this 'theoretical' introduction to fieldwork, chapter five is concerned with the outcome of such practice, namely, transcriptions and other representations of linguistic practices. The main point of this section is that words are important in any transcript but actions should also be present in records of interactions by using different symbols or digitized images and sketches. A problem readers may find is that some of the transcription symbols Duranti uses are not explained for the reader. For example, Duranti presents a system devised by Rudolph Laban to match words with action. Nevertheless, the symbols that represent actions are neither explained nor exemplified.

On the whole, the ethnographic methods and transcription systems described in these two chapters, together with the appendix at the end of the book, which provides the reader with useful tips on recording interaction, should be of great value for both L1 and L2 acquisition researchers. One should note, however, that whereas some of these methods, such as interviews, are widely used in L2 acquisition research, they may not be suitable for research in L1 language acquisition because of the limited mental development of children at the early stages of their language learning process.

Duranti goes on to review grammatical descriptions over the past decades. He focuses on structuralism and analyzes each one of the linguistic subfields to show how systematic grammatical analyses are undertaken. The author develops morphology largely due to its creative

power that makes it substantial for the dynamic view of language assumed here. This development simultaneously highlights the importance of use in the organization of grammatical systems.

Pragmatic approaches to language, performance, and the power of words are also discussed in the book. 'Speech Act Theory', the first pragmatic approach taken up by Duranti, is a theory developed by Austin and Searle. This model states that words not only describe the world but can also change it. This view is excellently exemplified by Austin's 'performative verbs'. The basic tenets of Speech Act Theory are followed by a critique of some of its key concepts such as truth, intentions and 'speaker as a social actor'. Duranti succeeds in proving the culture-specific nature of these concepts by referring to an ethnographic work carried out in a community in the Philippines. A discussion of Wittgenstein's notion of 'language game' as part of larger activities is included to provide more evidence against the universality of these concepts but Duranti does not manage to make a clear point. Then, 'Conversation Analysis', a field that studies the structure of talk, is discussed. The author points out that linguistic anthropologists do not generally make use of Conversation Analysis because it is primarily interested in 'conversational sequences' whereas Linguistic Anthropology is more concerned with 'social actors'.

Due to the importance of participants in linguistic interactions, Duranti dedicates a chapter to discussing this issue. His treatment of participants and his discussion draw from Goffman's analysis of talk from the point of view not only of the speaker and the hearer but also of any person present during the exchange. Therefore, he calls all these people 'participants'. Thus, Duranti concludes that if participants and the place and time where and when interactions take place seem to be crucial for an analysis of talk,

we should analyze something more than just words. With such a conclusion, The author here seems to suggest that Conversation Analysis on its own is not very suitable for linguistic anthropological studies because it just focuses on structure. However, the combination of both Conversation Analysis and ethnographic methods would be a good way to undertake linguistic anthropological research, if the analysis does not impose the researcher's point of view.

Chapter ten provides unity to the book. Duranti's general view of Linguistic Anthropology is clearly shown in the following quotation:

"From the view of language as a system of classification, a window on mental reality and hence an instrument for the study of culture as a system of knowledge, linguistic anthropologists have been moving toward a notion of language as an aggregate of features, tendencies, and acts that are sometimes the background and other times the foreground for the constitution of the social world in which we live" (Duranti, 1997: 338).

This textbook is addressed to sociolinguistic, pragmatic and anthropological students interested in both First and Second Language Acquisition. No doubt, it will be useful for these readers as well as for researchers of disciplines other than Linguistic Anthropology eager to enter this field of study. This book is highly recommended to people who want to understand why we say what we say in given situations and how we can change the world by using our species-specific feature called language.

Reference

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