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 programmes. 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].

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-