



LASIG

DIGITAL independence

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE LEARNER AUTONOMY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

FEBRUARY – MARCH 2016 Issue 66

- 02 From the editors – *Ruth Wilkinson, Spain; Irena Šubic Jeločnik, Slovenia; Djalal Tebib, Algeria; Carol Everhard, Greece & Diane Malcolm, Canada*
- 03 Letter from the coordinator – *Leni Dam, Denmark*

Conversations

- 04 Towards a unified policy for the development of learner autonomy – *Lesley Keast, Simon Thorley & Martin Goosey, Spain; Gail Ellis, France*

Articles

- 09 Developing a peer support network in a self-access learning center – *Chris Fitzgerald and Keiko Takahashi, Japan*
- 13 Contributions to Independence 2014 – 2015 – *Irena Šubic Jeločnik, Slovenia*

Columns

- 15 TechTalk: Reading: applications for accessing, sharing, listening, and training – *Lucius Von Joo, Japan*
- 22 Learners' Corner: Extracts from a learner diary – *Elena Sánchez Catalina, Spain*

Reviews & reflections

- 26 Reflections on the XII Nordic Conference, 27th – 29th August 2015, Copenhagen, Denmark – *Sandro John Amendolara, Finland*
- 29 Reflections on the second webinar in the IATEFL LASIG series: The value of experience in teacher education for learner autonomy, 17th October, 2015 – *Manuel Jiménez Raya, Spain; Ward Peeters, Belgium*
- 33 Beyond the language classroom – *Phil Cozens, Macau*
- 36 Developing online language teaching: research-based pedagogies and reflective practices – *Raymond Sheehan, UAE*

10:25	Opening of the day and welcome	
10:30-11:30	 Carole Robinson <i>Noticing language: promoting autonomy among our learners (talk)</i> In this talk, I will look at activities that exploit authentic language in our students' daily lives and discuss how noticing language can help learners become more autonomous learners.	
	 Michelle Tamala <i>Moving EAP students to metacognition and autonomy (talk)</i> This talk reports on the setting up, implementation and results of a project aimed at increasing student use of the learning strategies that encourage meta cognition and autonomy.	
11:30-12:05	Coffee Break	
12:30-13:00	 Gamze A. Sayram <i>An Innovative approach: The zen path to learner independence (talk)</i> Puzzle: How can we encourage students to become more active learners inside and outside the classroom? A fresh framework was developed to stimulate learners' understanding of the concept of 'independent learning'.	
13:00-14:20	Lunch break	
14:20-14:50	 Vilhelm Lindholm <i>Game-inspired course design: creating opportunity for agency (talk)</i> Game design and theory suggest creating agency is a real driving force in more immersive games. When transferring this concept to teaching, the result looks very different from playing games.	
15:05-15:50	 Wade Alley/Enrique Barba <i>Gamification for language learning (workshop)</i> Gamification is the use of game elements in nongame contexts. This workshop guides participants in creating gamified activities they can use in their own classes.	
15:50-16:25	Coffee Break	
16:25-17:10	 Frances Treloar <i>How do I get my young learners to think critically (workshop)</i> This workshop explores 21st century skills for young learners. Activities from Take Off with English demonstrate ways of developing creativity, world knowledge and the ability to think independently and work collaboratively.	
17:25-18:30	 David Nunan <i>Language learning beyond the classroom (talk)</i> Out-of-class learning experiences supplement classroom instruction and encourage learners to take control of their own learning. In this presentation, I will describe a framework for designing such experiences.	
	 Leni Dam/Christian Ludwig <i>Open Forum</i> In our Open Forum – immediately following the talk by David Nunan – the latest news from the SIG (committee elections, finances, memberships, etc.) will be presented and discussed. Furthermore, and as importantly, the forum will give space for members as well as non-members to come up with their ideas for the future running of the SIG.	

INDEPENDENCE

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Newsletter of the IATEFL Learner Autonomy Special Interest Group

From the Editors

As Leni writes in her letter, yes, hers alone, this time, we have started celebrating the 30th anniversary of LASIG. First with Issue 66 of *Independence*, which brings a variety of voices and dialogues from all over the world, then with PCE and LASIG days in Birmingham in April.

But most of all, we are celebrating having had Leni as the heart and soul of our LASIG: an acclaimed author, an education expert with an honorary PhD from the University of Karlskrona, Sweden, yet first and foremost a dedicated teacher and an extraordinarily warm person whom we have been privileged to know, to work alongside and – yes, to share our ups and downs with. The gratitude is all ours. *Weak in the presence of beauty* we all are and wish you, our dear Leni, many years of enjoying the fruits of your tireless work – in your cosy home outside Copenhagen, on your travels and with your family, as well as with your thankful friends around the globe.

This issue opens with a slightly different *Conversation*, a round table of British Council Madrid and Paris staff, discussing the need for and value of an institutional policy for learner autonomy. In their *Article*, Chris Fitzgerald and Keiko Takahashi report on networking among students in their university self-access centre, which enhances the students' experience and increases the benefits of using the SALC by creating a peer support network. Furthermore, we include our own backwards glance at work done: a report on the contributions published in *Independence* over the last two years. This is meant as our little gift to the LASIG and planned to become regular practice. Lucius von Joo's *Tech Talk* elaborates on the skill of reading which is a cause of concern to many an educator and parent. He introduces us to the numerous resources out there that can help our youngsters to develop this key competence. Our recently introduced *Learner's Corner* is developing ever so slowly but we are convinced it is of the utmost importance to include learners' voices as well. This time we are thankful to Elena Sánchez Catalina who shares extracts from her learner diary with us.

In our *Reviews and Reflections* section Sandro John Amendolara recalls the multifaceted aspects of the Nordic conference held in Copenhagen last August – he warns us against attending the event unless we take our best singing voice, and he even teaches us some Danish. Ward Peeters, on the other hand, thoroughly reports on our second webinar delivered by Manuel Jiménez Raya in October. A review of *Beyond the Language Classroom*, edited by Phil Benson and Hayo Reinders, is brought to us by Phil Cozens. This is followed by Raymond Sheehan's review of *Developing Online Language Teaching: Research-based Pedagogies and Reflective practices*.

Enjoy the reading and do consider contributing. Contact us via e-mail or personally if you are making it to Birmingham – although not all the editors are going to be there, any committee member will be happy to pass on membership requests and newsletter contributions.

Irena Šubic Jeločnik, Ruth Wilkinson, Djalal Tebib, Carol Everhard and Diane Malcolm



Letter from the coordinator

Dear Readers – Members and Colleagues,

When you read this, the programmes for our PCE event on 12th April as well as for our LASIG Day on 14th April in connection with the 50th Annual Conference of IATEFL will have been finalized (see the programmes in this issue). Further details about the speakers and their inputs can be seen on our website, <http://lasig.iatefl.com>. In celebration of LASIG's 30th anniversary, we think that we have managed to put together very varied and attractive programmes for the two days. We sincerely hope that many of you will make it to Birmingham, at least for the PCE. As in previous years, Clarity, the publisher, is kindly sponsoring us.

As usual, LASIG will also hold its annual committee meeting after the PCE on 12th April. Apart from discussing past and future LASIG events and issues, the committee for 2016/2017 will be decided. We already know that some reshuffling of committee functions will take place. One change which we already know is that, after 7 years as co-coordinator, I will step down from this post. Let me take this opportunity to thank all of you – former committee members as well as regular members – for the tremendous support you have given me during these years and the immense kindness and trust that I have always experienced, as well as for sharing with me your ups and downs. Thank you from the bottom of my heart! I imagine I shall stay on the committee for some time, but I am convinced that Christian will continue to do a marvellous job for the SIG! You will of course be informed directly about the outcome of the committee meeting.

One of the items on our LASIG Day programme, (to take place immediately after David Nunan's talk), is our Open Forum, including a brief business meeting where the new committee will also be presented. However, more importantly, time has been set aside to offer room for members' opinions and ideas for the future operations of the SIG. Before then, we will try to get in touch with those of you who can't join us in Birmingham in order to hear your views. By the time this reaches you, we will probably already have celebrated our most recent 'local' event in Antwerp, Belgium (3rd – 4th March 2016). Once again, it is important to stress the value of running these local conferences on a regular basis; partly because they give more people the chance to meet up with 'autonomy' enthusiasts at less cost than the annual IATEFL conference, and partly because they are a major opportunity for convincing a wider audience that autonomous language learning is the answer to many problems in EFL. As a result, we are hoping to attract new members to our SIG. We are therefore constantly on the look-out for members or members-to-be who are willing to host a 'local' event. If you are interested, please don't hesitate to get in touch with Christian Ludwig at lasig@iatefl.com.

With the many activities taking place officially (*Independence*, webinars, social media, etc.) as well as among our members, I am convinced that 2016 and beyond will be fruitful for developing learner autonomy. Together we will make it.

Best wishes, Leni – outgoing coordinator

lenidam@hotmail.com

Conversations

Towards a unified policy for the development of learner autonomy

Ruth Wilkinson talks with British Council staff from Madrid and Paris

<p>Simon Thorley</p> 	<p>Lesley Keast</p> 	<p>Martin Goosey</p> 	<p>Gail Ellis</p> 
<p>Assistant Director of Studies, British Council Madrid Adults' Centre</p>	<p>Trinity Diploma Course Leader at MYL and course tutor on the MA in TESOL, University of Alcalá de Henares</p>	<p>Assistant Teaching Centre Manager, Professional Development and Academic Programmes British Council Madrid Young Learners¹</p>	<p>Advisor, Young learners and Quality, EU Region, British Council, Paris</p>

It has long been my observation that, while there are many isolated enthusiasts (both in Spain and across many other countries) doing wonderful things for autonomy, and while Ministry guidelines pay lip-service to the concept, we lack a coherent, unified policy across institutions and regions such as would be necessary to make learner development possible in real terms. One teacher acting alone has relatively little long-term impact, and can hardly be expected to reverse the effects of a life-time of teacher dependency. It therefore seems imperative to encourage dialogue within institutions, and try to reach some common policy aims while still allowing room for diversity and creativity.

Within Spain as a whole, there is a huge gap between theory and practice in most institutions, but I had noticed at many teacher-training conferences that British Council speakers often chose to talk on questions of learning to learn and autonomy, and always presented practical suggestions. I therefore took the opportunity of a one-day event in Madrid, to ask if any staff members would be willing to be interviewed so that I could find out more about the British Council approach to learning to learn. Thanks to the support and organisation of Maureen McAlinden and the willingness of staff, we were able to put together a star-studded cast who agreed to participate in an informal round-table at the conference, including Gail Ellis, the invited plenary speaker (see the article with Nayr Ibrahim in the Teachers' Corner, issue 65, and their book, 'Teaching children how to learn', Delta Publishing). We managed to gather around a work bench in a science lab, I set the ball rolling and then sat back and enjoyed the conversation. What follows is an only slightly edited transcription of the discussion that ensued.

The questions on the table:

- 1) *What is the policy within the British Council and what practices are in use in the different centres to promote learner autonomy, to help learners take greater control of their learning? and*
- 2) *What problems have you run into, what constraints have you found, and how have you overcome them?*

Simon: Well, as far as the adult centre is concerned, we don't have a strict policy of learner training or learner autonomy, it's there in the TQS (Teaching Quality Standards) manual, but it is left very much for the independent sectors to do. We encourage it, we facilitate it, we provide opportunities throughout the course for dialogue to take place between teachers and students, during which advising students, helping them learn better should play a major role. So we have a counselling session between students and teachers that's time-tabled in, we have tutorials that students can sign up to so many times per course.

Ruth: These tutorials are standard recommended practice within the British Council?

Simon: Absolutely.

Ruth: These are specifically learning to learn tutorials?

Simon: They are more about reflection than strategies, which we do in other ways: we give teachers a lot of resources to develop strategies. But the counselling is more to encourage reflection on their own learning styles and preferences.

Ruth: Is there a particular format that the tutorial follows?

Simon: Well, we do give certain things like questionnaires, but it's very much up to the teacher how they handle it on the ground.

Gail: Within the British Council network we have 83 teaching centres in 50 countries doing 83 different things, so one of our big challenges at the moment is trying to align what we are doing, at least on a regional basis. As Simon was saying we don't have a British Council policy on this, but maybe this group should think about whether or not we should have one.

Martin: When I worked in Korea we had adults and children, and counselling was very much about having an opportunity, one to one, to talk about what they could do better ... but it was part of the package that was sold to the students, they expected it. How you do it, what you do with that short period you have depends on the teacher. Part of that is because the British Council theoretically tries to encourage creativity.

Ruth: Absolutely. And teacher autonomy!

Martin: Exactly ... and teachers share ideas. In the British Council there's the question of how much policy you want, and how much freedom... it's a bit like a seesaw ... things get a bit too loose, "Oh we need more policy", and then the policy is a bit too rigid, so we wonder, "Are we stymying creativity?"

Simon: I actually think we need to come to an agreement about what it means to develop learner autonomy, to come to a common understanding both of what it signifies and what its uses are, so that we can convince people that the outcomes are positive and worth spending class time on.

Gail: Also providing inset sessions for the teachers about how to do that. When I ran the teaching centre in Paris, I made learner autonomy quite an important part of our teaching approach, our lesson planning procedure, our methodology: we put it in the parents' guide so that parents knew that during the lesson children would be asked to reflect on their learning. So, it was quite an all-round approach, and it was good because it was a new centre, you didn't have to change teachers and convince them, and when someone new comes in, you just say, well, this is the way we do things here, and they say, "Well, ok, fine". But unfortunately, when we leave, someone else comes in, and they change it all ...

Martin: Just to touch on what Simon was saying about the common agreement about what learner autonomy means: we produced this booklet, 'Learning to Learn', with teachers' tips about learning to learn and activities they use to promote that (available online)². I'm the one who compiled it and twisted teachers' arms to get contributions for it. And the interesting thing is, we always do one of these booklets: we've done one on speaking, one on pronunciation, one on warmers and fillers, but with this one a lot of teachers said I don't really understand what you want from me ...

Ruth: Yes, and it's interesting, looking through, because there are many which are clearly autonomy-promoting, but there are others which are communicative activities and if you read into them carefully, you can imagine how, with a bit of reflection, they could promote autonomy...

Gail: Yes, if it was made explicit ...

Martin: Yes! That's what I found, everybody had a very different interpretation. To be honest, there were a couple which I had to reject, because they were helping students to learn, but not to learn how to learn. [...] And then there were the people who didn't contribute, the ones who said to me: "I don't know anything about learner autonomy, I don't know what it means," and when you get talking to them, they do very good things, but they don't really make the connection between what they do in the classroom and learner autonomy.

Gail: It really does highlight the question, what does 'learning to learn' mean? It's actually quite abstract and difficult for teachers to see how to put that into practice.

Lesley: If I can just put that into the context of teacher development: quite a lot of our diploma candidates choose to investigate learner autonomy as one of their research projects. Because it is perhaps nebulous until looked into, and you are forced to agree on a definition that you want to investigate, and then look into the classroom or out of classroom applications...and I think it's an area that teachers find quite rich to investigate.

Gail: I think it comes back to the fact that I'm sure none of us experienced that kind of approach at school, or during our own teacher-training. [...]

Lesley: But (at the same time) we've got the ELT world, and there's the state school mode of education where there's a lot of telling going on, whereas I'd like to think that in the British Council we are teaching some of these sub-skills, these strategies. Whereas I feel that students in their normal classrooms are just used to being told.

Ruth: But as far as the state schools are concerned, learning to learn is there in all the Ministry guidelines but teachers are very constrained by the curriculum, because the government is producing this impossible situation, where they have to cover 5 million facts

which the students have to memorise by the age of fourteen. It makes it very difficult even for teachers who want to promote autonomy.

Gail: Do any other schools have any policies on this?

Lesley: I'm sure they don't.

Ruth: I doubt it very much, which is why I thought the British Council was probably a good place to start... because it's built into the philosophy, but it's interesting to hear that it's not set in stone.

Simon: It's sold to students, it's recognised that it's good practice, to talk to your students occasionally (*laughter*). Students like the idea when they are buying the course... what isn't done, is the next stage: ok, we've got this time, students are expected to have this time, but what do we do with it... maybe we should come up with a kind of learner autonomy syllabus, for want of a better expression.

Gail: One of the things our students tell us is that they don't perceive their progress. If reflection were integrated systematically into lessons, explicitly, I think it would help them to perceive their own progress. It's expected to be a part of a teacher's repertoire of teaching skills, but it often isn't.

Simon: They often know very little about it, and the benefits of doing it. I've created or amassed a body of activities for teachers to do in the classroom, but I'm convinced it doesn't get the take up that it needs. I keep saying, "Have a look at this", and when teachers use it, they say, "It's a great activity"!

Gail: They see it as a one-off activity instead of a different way of teaching. What underpins this is that we need to lobby exam bodies like Cambridge and Trinity, for example, that we need to include more on learning to learn in their teacher training courses [...] but I feel it's not just a question of having materials on paper, it's the approach. That's transferrable to any learning context.

Simon:... often the only difference between what teachers are doing being a simple learning activity and it becoming a learning-to-learn activity is just a little tweak, it just needs turning around a bit.

Gail: This is why I think there is so little of it in course-books, because a lot of course-book

writers don't really understand it. Like the self-assessment things you see at the end of a unit, they are often just mechanical things: put a tick, put a smiley face. It's a start. But it's not enough.

Ruth: And so many teachers say we don't have time, or they don't take it seriously [...]

Simon: A number of publishers have started to put reflection and learner training activities into text books, but they are always stuck at the back.

Ruth: And they are still lock-step units, grammar, vocabulary. Lots of colour, but basically the same as ever.

Gail: What do you do (Lesley) on the diploma course?

Lesley: Well there is input on learner autonomy in the teaching practice module, but there is also a deliberate criterion where you have to identify when aims have been met and demonstrably so. [...] And it's interesting when you observe teachers, when you have that stage where learners are reflecting on what is going on, there's that articulation of learning taking place. It's such a valuable stage, and really doable, it's not a mysterious act.

Simon: You mention identifying the aim of the activity ... I've done training sessions where teachers have to match the aim to the activity... and you say, well, actually, this activity fulfils three different aims.

Martin: It's also fascinating to see all the research that's being done on teachers' perceptions of themselves, you know, what does it mean to be a teacher? And walking around our centre sometimes, you see teachers who act in a certain way because that's what it was like at school, 'that's what teachers do'. If the teachers that you had for thirteen years stood at the front and lectured you, can a four-week initial teacher training course overcome that? Probably not. It needs to be something that we have in ongoing professional development. [...] when I was in Korea, students responded so positively to the needs analysis and the counselling, they said we should do that twice a term, and suddenly the teachers are turning around and saying "When am I supposed to do the teaching"... that's a perception of what it means to teach: as if teachers need to be giving the students something, some input, to justify their existence in the classroom, to makethem feel valuabl ...

Simon: It's not just teachers who are resistant to this, it can also be students who are resistant.

Lesley: On the other hand, you do have students who are interested and who are doing extra stuff, so it's also about finding that time in the classroom to share what those students are doing.

Simon: There are some who are getting a lot out of it. And others who could maybe be won over. Of course, there are also parents who are resistant to what you are doing, who think, "You're the teacher"...

Gail: Often that's due to a misunderstanding ... we used to explain what it meant, so that there's no confusion, because in a private school situation, the kids come home and the parents say "What did you do today?" and they say "We watched a video" and the parents think "That's not a good investment of my money!" It was probably never made explicit to them why they were watching the video.

Martin: Yes, it's about how you present the activities, you need to say why it's a valuable activity.

Simon: People need to know why they are doing things. It takes a few minutes, but it's such a useful tool at the end of the class, "Why did we do that, what will you take away?"

Martin: Which I thought was such a normal thing to do, but it turned out not to be the case ... [...]

Simon: A lot of people come with the expectation that they can come to two classes a week, and then forget all about it. They say, I want the teacher to correct everything, but *my* position is, I'm not going to correct you at all, I'm going to tell you what you do wrong, you are going to have to correct yourself. They have to get the idea that certain things they must do for themselves ...

Gail: To get the maximum benefit.

Simon: And I've done surveys with lots of students over many years. Those students who do more out of class, progress more, but those who do better at what they are already doing ... well! That's the way to go.

Lesley: Of course, there's always going to be those who were doing it already, and others who will start, and others who will never do it, because life is full.

Gail:[...] So, do you think we should start up a working group to have a common understanding of what learning to learn means in the British Council?

Simon: Definitely. I think it should go on every methodology statement we have, and be brought to the fore in professional development.

Lesley: Having that link to what it means in the classroom, so that people can do it with confidence.

Gail: It should perhaps be one of the interview questions, among the recruitment criteria.

Ruth: That would sort the sheep from the goats!

Simon: Yes, yes. I actually think there are a few of the questions which are quite redundant.

Ruth: I imagine you have lesson plan observation sheets, they could include “What is the learning to learn aim of this lesson, how does it help them learn to learn”?

Martin: There’s definitely something on the probationary observation feedback form, there’s definitely something about “How did the teacher raise awareness of the learning aims of the activities”.

Simon: But it could be made more explicit.

Gail:So... questions for recruitment, observation forms, induction, professional development ...

At this point, we ran out of time ... but I felt more than satisfied by the answers to my questions, and more convinced than ever of the value of getting teachers together to seek a common understanding and way forward, to overcome the constraints we all face, if we are serious about helping our learners learn better. I wondered whether anything more would come of the discussion, so I was glad to receive the following feedback recently from Maureen McAlinden, who helped organise the whole discussion:

Maureen: I think it is worth mentioning that, (partly as a result of your opportune intervention!) Gail and I have continued this discussion and are trying to take this forward. We had follow-up discussions by e-mail, and a meeting in Paris with Nayr³ where we concluded with some action points. Gail has issued a call for interested parties to form a working party in Europe, so the British Council as an organisation is definitely taking this forward.

Does your school have a policy on learning to learn that teachers are expected to adhere to? Do write and let us know!

¹ *Young learners covers ages 2 – 17. The adult centre caters for learners from age 18 and occasionally accepts learners from age 16 with parental consent.*

² Available online at: <https://es.live.solas.britishcouncil.digital/sites/default/files/booklet-2015-web.pdf>

³ *Nayr Ibrahim, co-author with Gail of the book ‘Teaching children how to learn’ (Delta Publishing)*

Do you know what the IATEFL Associates do?

IATEFL has around 135 Associate Members. Our Associates are Teacher Associations from around the world. On the IATEFL website you can find information about all the upcoming Associate events. Network with other ELT educators from all over the world, from a range of diverse backgrounds and nationalities.

Go to <http://www.iatefl.org/associates/introduction> for more details.

Articles

Developing a peer support network in a self-access learning center

Chris Fitzgerald and Keiko Takahashi
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Since graduating from the MA in English Language Teaching at the University of Limerick, Ireland, in 2010 Chris Fitzgerald has been teaching and researching at various universities in Japan. He currently teaches in the Department of British and American Studies at Kyoto University of Foreign Studies where his main research interests are Discourse Analysis and Collaborative Learning.

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In recent years, the perception of Learner Autonomy as being acquired through solely individual activity has shifted towards the idea that it can be fostered through collaborative effort (Benson 2001, 2009). In keeping with this change in approach, learning institutions are seeing the value in implementing peer support networks to improve self-access learning, (Manning 2014). This article illustrates how the authors developed a peer support network in a self-access learning space at a Japanese private university, and, using qualitative data taken from student surveys, analyses how the program benefitted the students.

Context

In 2014, Kyoto University of Foreign Studies (KUFS) established a self-access learning space known as 'NINJA' in order to facilitate learners' awareness of their capacity to be autonomous learners. NINJA, which stands for 'Navigating an independent non-stop journey to autonomy', offers learning support and opportunities to realize its mission. Amongst other types of support offered at NINJA are speaking and writing sessions, in which learners can meet with an English teacher for 25 minutes to practise English conversation skills or to get feedback on their English writing.

We also offer advising sessions, which are consultations about learning, with a learning advisor. The sessions are conducted in Japanese

and last 45 minutes. The session themes are about different aspects of learning such as setting learning goals, raising awareness of learning strategies and materials, time management skills and how to prepare for language tests.

Sessions at NINJA proved to be popular with students, as evidenced by students lining up on Monday mornings to book sessions, and their disappointment when they were not able to reserve a session. This is clearly a strong indication of the need for such a facility in the university, but raises other problems. With speaking/writing and advising sessions almost always fully booked, some students who needed practice realized they could not receive support when they looked at the full schedule. It was apparent to us that there was a gap between what NINJA was able to provide for students and what they wanted and needed. With this in mind, we tried to think of ways in which students could use each other as resources to practise their speaking and work on their learning skills.

As we had perceived a noticeable demand for test-taking support, we chose to gear the workshops towards training for the speaking component of a standardized, four-skill English test. Through this approach, we also wanted to raise students' awareness of the fact that teachers are not the only people who can help them with their needs, but that they could also

form mutually beneficial relationships with their peers. Furthermore, forming study groups with peers could provide students with the motivation to focus on study that was specific to their needs. This could also provide an outlet to share study habits and practices that could make them more autonomous learners, an avenue which may not be as effective coming from teachers (Mellanby, Rees, & Tripp, 2000).

Given these observations, we developed a series of workshops designed to facilitate participants' self-directed learning processes while utilizing the services that NINJA offers. As an English language teacher with experience in standardized test examining and preparation, Chris took charge of the workshops which aimed to provide the participants with tips for improving speaking skills and opportunities for speaking and listening to their study-buddies in English. Keiko, as a learning advisor, worked with the participants on an individual basis using learning journals and face-to-face advising sessions. The following paragraphs give an overview of the program, explaining important elements such as workshops, advising sessions and a self-directed learning cycle.

Overview of the program

Workshops

In the first workshop, the participants did a diagnostic speaking activity in pairs in order to find their strengths and weaknesses. On the basis of their evaluation of their speaking skills, they decided what specific areas they would try to improve over the course of the program. The subsequent workshops began with students assessing and discussing a segment of a speaking test from an online video of sample speaking tests. Students were asked to identify the strong and weak points of the candidate in the video, which would hopefully help them, later, to assess themselves and their partners. Next, the participants were advised on how to conduct and take part in a speaking test. They then took on the roles of examiner and candidate in a speaking test. Each student kept a Feedback Log where their partner wrote an assessment of their strong and weak points. Students were encouraged to continue doing this between the workshops using a practice script which we provided, in order to give them as much practice as possible. In the final workshop, the students did a diagnostic activity again to find out to what extent they had achieved their learning goals. At the end of the workshop, we asked the students to give us their feedback on the program through a survey

written in Japanese. While the workshops were the main focus of the program, students who signed up for the program were also encouraged to engage in other activities such as advising sessions and speaking and writing sessions between workshops.

Advising sessions

After the first workshop, each pair was asked to book an advising session to work on their learning plan. The main focus of the first advising session was to help them decide their learning goals. They also thought about time management, reflecting on how they spent their time on a daily basis and how they should use their time to achieve their goals. They came up with ideas about learning resources and materials they could use and learning activities they could carry out.

In the middle and at the end of the program, the students took advising sessions in pairs. In these sessions, Keiko guided them to reflect on their learning processes with the aid of the *Wheel of Language Learning* (Yamashita & Kato, 2012; see appendix). This tool was adapted from a coaching tool in order to facilitate a reflective dialogue between a learner and a learning advisor. In the dialogue, each participant thought critically about their self-directed learning skills and how to overcome their weaknesses. The goal of the session was to come up with an action plan to improve their self-directed learning skills.

Self-directed learning process

Between the workshops, the students were supposed to implement their learning plans. We encouraged them to meet with their study-buddies to practice speaking and to use speaking sessions at NINJA to further practice what they learned. They also kept a learning journal in which they recorded what they did and answered reflective questions about their learning. Keiko read their journals, made comments and asked questions in order to support their self-directed learning process. They were allowed to use Japanese in completing the journal.

Results of the Student Survey

In order for us to assess the program by finding out how the students felt about it, we decided to conduct a survey. The survey included eight sections about the workshops, the self-directed learning cycle, learning journal, pair practice, advising sessions, speaking and writing sessions, and a section where students could give suggestions for improvements. Most of the

sections had both 4 point Likert scale questions and a descriptive question asking the reason behind their choice of answers. In the following paragraphs, we will highlight the findings of three areas of the questionnaire; the self-directed learning cycle, pair practice, and advising sessions.

Self-directed learning cycle

For most Japanese university students who may have experienced predominantly teacher-fronted classes, deciding their personal learning goals, making and implementing a learning plan can be a new experience. We were therefore interested in assessing students' feelings regarding taking part in such an activity. Three students out of nine mentioned that they were not proactive in utilizing the learning opportunity in this program. Two seemed to have noticed the importance of continuing the learning cycle for achieving their goals. The remaining four students' comments were positive about the advantages of maintaining their motivation by working with a study-buddy.

Pair Practice

According to the responses we received, five students out of eleven felt there was no change in their English learning. As a matter of fact, these five students did not practice with their study-buddies at all or even if they did, they did so less than three times. The other six students felt that there were changes in their English learning. The changes they mentioned in the questionnaire included: a decrease in anxiety when speaking in English; making a habit of speaking English with friends on a daily basis; having higher motivation as a result of learning new information and phrases; noticing more about their speaking by getting feedback from a study-buddy who is at the same level, and having a good rival for English learning. These answers suggest that the opportunity to practice with their study-buddies helped them improve the affective aspect of their learning.

Advising sessions

Five students completed three compulsory advising sessions, five students came to the session twice and one student only came once. Although the numbers using advising sessions are different, their impressions of the usefulness of the sessions were all positive. Four comments out of nine suggest that advising sessions motivated learners. The other five comments are related to the students' learning process.

As with pair practice, advising sessions appeared to have an influence on the affective aspect of students' learning, especially their motivation. Other comments explaining why advising sessions were useful for their self-directed learning identify benefits in terms of metacognitive aspects of learning such as being able to reflect and monitor their learning and finding their own weaknesses. One of the comments revealed that advising sessions worked as a dialogue which facilitated learner's awareness of their own feelings. Thinking about the problem together and learning about new learning techniques is another benefit that one of the students mentioned in the survey.

Practical suggestions for implementing this program

Having implemented a trial of this program we made a number of changes before carrying out the final version of the three month programme. For people considering adapting this program in their contexts, we recommend that the following issues be taken into account.

1) Time: Because we initially tried to fit workshops and information about self-directed learning into single 40-minute sessions during lunch-breaks, we found that time constraints caused us to rush over or skip parts of what we had planned to do. The second time we implemented the program, we addressed this issue by focussing the lunch periods solely on tips and skills for the speaking component of a standardized test and leaving the metacognitive aspect of the program for advising sessions. Advising sessions were made mandatory so that students could have face-to-face time with the learning advisor in order to reflect on their learning process.

2) Diagnostic activity: Self-evaluation skills are important for the implementation of self-directed learning. In the first workshop we decided to have the students complete a diagnostic activity. In this, the students completed a short section of a speaking test and analysed their strengths and weaknesses. This analysis formed the starting point of the first Advising Session, which led to the creation of a learning plan.

3) Mandatory weekly learning journal: In order for students to monitor their own learning processes they were asked to keep a learning journal which consisted of 2 parts; study logs and reflections. The learning advisor asked questions and gave specific suggestions relating to the students' needs in

the form of written advice, based on what they were doing and how they reflected on their learning process. With the aid of the learning journal, both spoken and written advising can better facilitate students' metacognitive awareness about their learning.

Through the most recent version of this program (fall 2015) we believe we were able to make students more aware of their learning processes, and through providing the opportunity to engage in pair practice we provided students with a facility to practice speaking to an extent that would have been otherwise impossible. As well as that, we observed students become more confident with participating in English spoken communication. Through students' comments, we were able to gauge that the program was successful in achieving its aims.

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[us/ebook/collaborative-learning-in-learner-development#readThisOn](https://store.kobobooks.com/en-us/ebook/collaborative-learning-in-learner-development#readThisOn)

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Appendix

Wheel of Language Learning

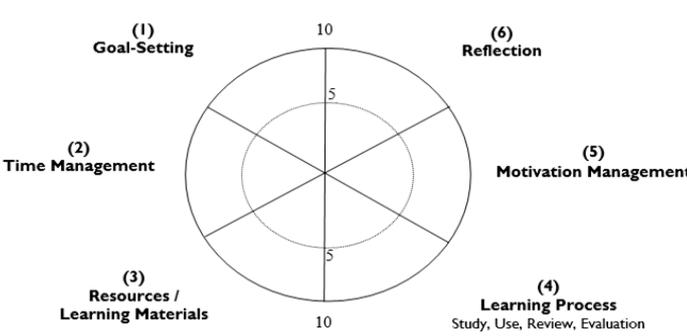
How long have you been implementing your self-directed learning? _____

How many times have you used Wheel of Language Learning? _____

Wheel of Language Learning is a tool which helps you reflect on your self-directed learning experience. Indicate your satisfaction level from 0 to 10 in regard to the important aspects of learning.

Satisfaction Level

10 = excellent
5 = somewhat satisfied
0 = not happy



What have you noticed in today's reflection?

What actions will you make in order to make your learning more effective?

Contributions to Independence 2014 – 2015

Reported by Irena Šubic Jeločnik

To echo Kurt Lewin’s observation that “There is nothing so practical as a good theory” (1951, p. 169; elaborated on in Ur 1991, with special regard to language teaching) we have been realising that, like theory, statistics do not serve their own purpose, but have an impact well beyond that. Statistics record our actions but also guide and initiate them. They reflect reality but also have the power to change it. In the light of this observation, the following comments constitute a retrospective on the number and type of contributions that have appeared in *Independence*.

Over the years, we have had periods when contributions were pouring in and others when we were struggling to scrape together an issue. However, we have always been conscious of the fact that *Independence* is nothing without its readers and that very often the readers will turn into contributors and the other way round. Given that all the editors who have been creating *Independence* over the years have our ‘day jobs’ and families and are also often involved in various other projects, progress in adopting a more systematic approach to monitoring, evaluating, and planning our work and addressing the readers and (potential) contributors has been slow. Nevertheless, we have now reached the stage where we would like to introduce a routine of reporting on the work done and trying

to reach out to a wider audience as well as the autonomy community– our regular readers, contributors, speakers at Learner Autonomy SIG events, our friends and supporters worldwide. What follows is an overview of the contents of *Independence* issues 60 to 65, which were published in the years 2014 and 2015.

Although our most loyal contributors are obviously LASIG committee members, event speakers and close ‘associates’ such as Lucius von Joo, Frank Lacey, Cem Balçıklı and Christian Ludwig, we go way beyond that. **The total list of contributors for the past two years includes 72 (!) individuals who have contributed 15 stories, 4 conversations, 13 articles, 9 columns, 1 learners’ and 3 teachers’ corner reflective practice accounts (a recent innovation that we are very proud of), 13 event reflections, 7 book reviews and one tribute.** Among the authors we are excited to find 6 students, some writing in collaboration with their teachers. We applaud that development and hope for more of the kind. It needs to be mentioned that the huge portion of stories in the pie chart below is due to the fact that Issue 60 brought a short story of their involvement with learner autonomy from each of the speakers at the Pre-conference event in Harrogate in 2014.

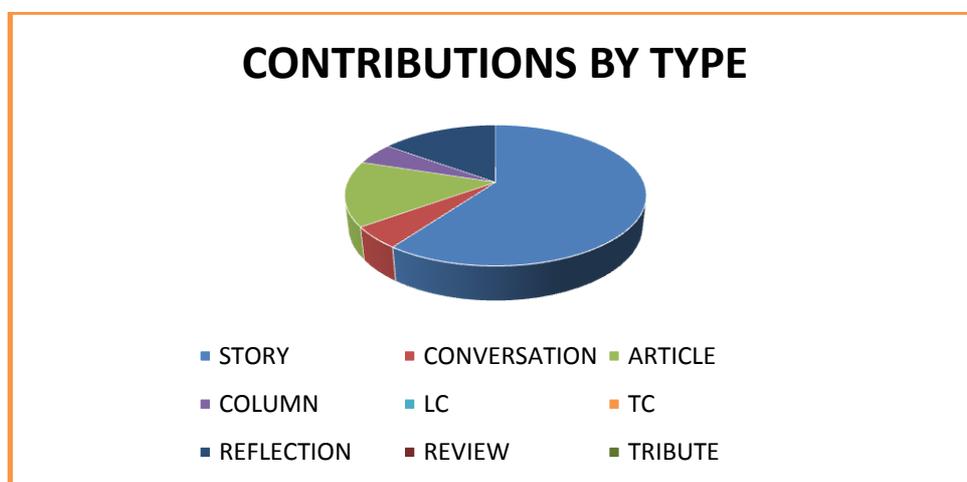


Table 1: Contributions by type

The country with most contributions by far is Japan, followed by Germany, Slovenia, Spain, the United Kingdom, Australia and Austria. This picture may be slightly misleading of course as it is often the result of very personal endeavours of enthusiastic individuals to promote autonomy in

their micro-environment. On the other hand, there are places where a high level of autonomy is practised routinely and widely but somehow the reports do not find their way into *Independence*.

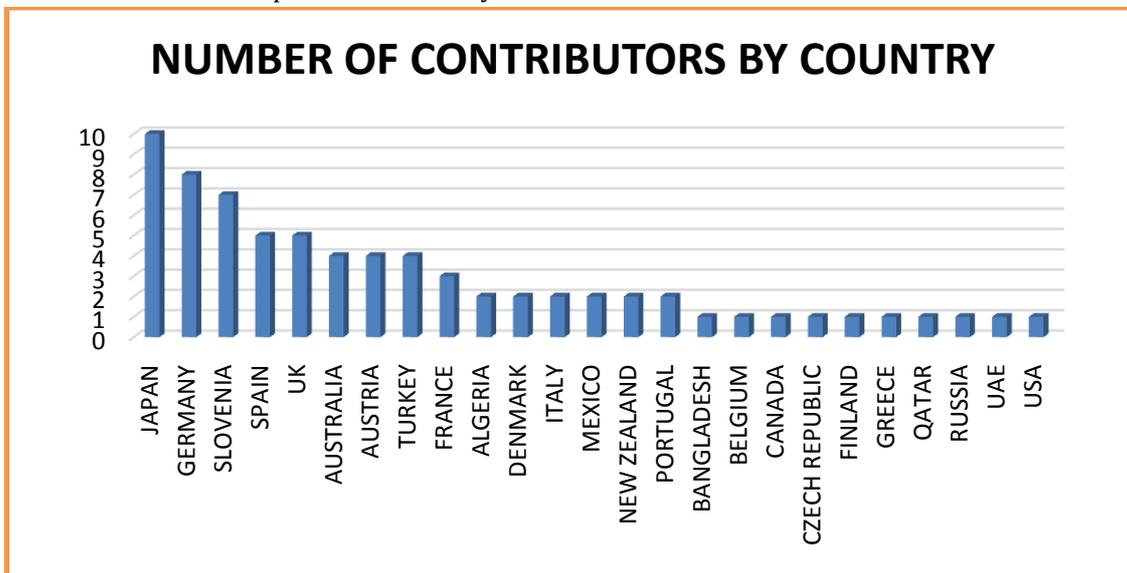


Table 2: Contributors by country

Again, a call to everyone involved: get in touch, contribute, share. We are stronger together and the frustration of breaking new ground is halved when shared, not to mention the inspiration as well as professional and personal bonds that are formed and strengthened as we meet, discuss, develop and work together.

What kind of contributions would you like to read more of? Can you articulate any of your own teaching or learning experiences, research or encounters into a contribution? Can you encourage your colleagues or other contacts in the field to do so? The more contributions we receive, the more we will be able to address the needs of the readers, and to network; and the more all of us will be able to find 'ways of doing' (Rinvolucri 1998) that will suit our learners,

ourselves as teachers and enable us to meet new challenges, because "the times they are a-changin'" (Dylan 1964).

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Erratum

We sincerely apologise to Carolin Schneider whose review on Managing Self-access Language Learning was published in Issue 63 of *Independence* but was not listed among the contents on the front cover.

Columns

Tech Talk

Reading: applications for accessing, sharing, listening, and training

Lucius Von Joo

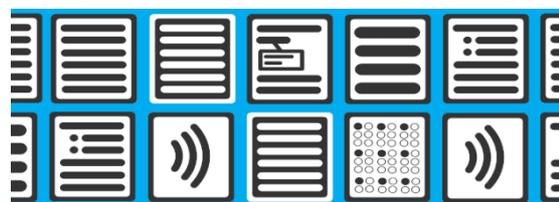
Kanda University of International Studies, Japan



Lucius Von Joo currently teaches at Kanda University of International Studies, Japan. He holds an Ed.M. in Comparative and International Education and has teaching experience in deaf education, elementary education and EFL/ESL in California, Japan and New York. His research interests include computer assisted learning, film and documentary content-based learning, student educational backgrounds and learning approaches, video-cued multi-vocal ethnography, and family and communities as educators. E-mail: lucius-v@kanda.kuis.ac.jp

In past Tech Talks I have shared resources for speaking, writing, and listening but have yet to do a column solely dedicated to reading. When I started to research and brainstorm applications that would help with reading, I was a bit apprehensive as I really enjoy the printed word and visits to the library. However, there are very good arguments for e-readers such as access and portability. Another concern I had was that many reading aids focus on the skill of reading and can lack quality content. I personally had a difficult time as a young reader and many of the reading aids available felt deprived of content, which made me want to read even less. When it comes to reading there are many different needs and interests so I have included multiple different types of applications that I feel have an appeal that ranges from struggling to avid readers.

This Tech Talk will be separated into 5 sections of reading applications: 1) Overall access to digital books and platforms for reading them; 2) Reading recommendations, book sharing and social networking applications; 3) Audio books and text readers; 4) Reading skills applications such as speed-reading and comprehension; 5) Game applications that incorporate reading. The sections can be read independently or as a set. For each section, I will be mentioning the best applications I have found and ways in which they could be incorporated for individual and classroom settings.



1) Overall Access to Digital books

Digital bookstores

There are many different places to get digital books and what is offered has vastly improved over the last few years. Here are a few of the big names that act very much like a book store in which you pay for each book individually: iBooks (iOS), Nook (iOS, Android), Google Play Books (iOS, Android), Kindle (iOS, Android) and Kobo (iOS, Android) to name a few.

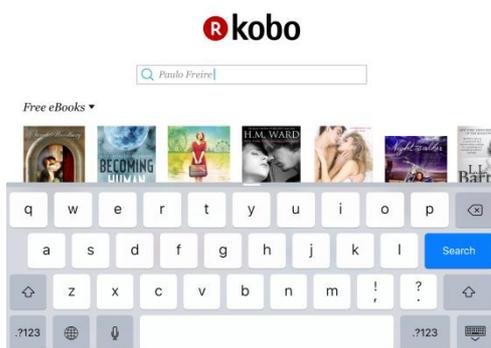


All of these online bookstores work very similarly. They all have many free titles and you can search for books in the search box. Many books offer a portion of the book free as a sample. However, there are a few limitations to keep in mind: firstly, copyright laws differ by country so the version or accessibility of the book you want may differ. Secondly, if you download a book it can be like buying the paper version, which means the digital copy will not change to a different edition. However the e-reader platform may not allow you to read it in every country. This restriction is very much like region codes on DVDs. The service you use depends on what account it is connected to:

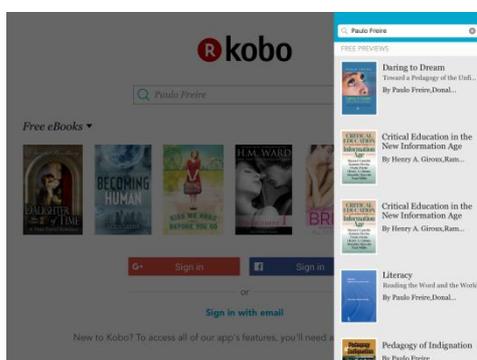
iBooks will be connected through your Apple account, Kindle will be connected to your Amazon account, and Google Play books with your Google account. If all this sounds confusing to you, just be sure to test your resources and make sure your students have access since accounts could differ.

Here is a quick walk through the Kobo iPad application to show an example of how digital bookstores work.

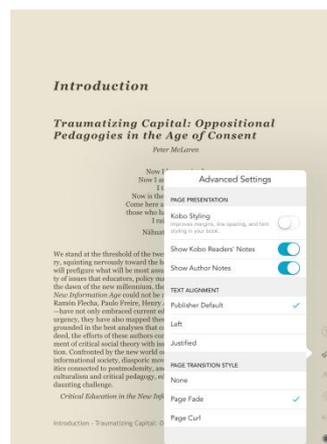
1. After downloading and opening Kobo you will have the option to set up an account or start searching for books directly.



Type in any search word title/author/genre and a list of results will come up.



2. Select the book you are looking for. If the book is a free title you will be able to download or stream the entire book. If the book is not free, you can often view a sample portion or choose to buy the complete book. Once you are in the book you can page through by flicking left or right or tap the center of the screen to get a list of options to adjust aspects like text, color, page turning as well as many other settings.



Almost all reading applications (Android & iOS) look and operate as in the example.

Digital Libraries

In the past, when many of the online bookstores were competing, many free titles were offered. This availability has however decreased drastically. There are many public domain books available for free and there are a few apps that offer these.



Free Books (iOS, Android) currently has over 23,000 titles. These titles might be dated because they are often the domain free original editions. These original editions may have less contemporary English, which can be challenging for second language readers.



There are two well-known applications that work with local libraries, which means that anything the library has in its digital inventory will be accessible to the user. If a library you belong to uses Overdrive (iOS, Android) and Aldiko (iOS, Android) you will be able to access digital readers and audio books that the library has.



There are also applications that allow you to check out unlimited titles by paying a monthly or yearly subscription. Scribd (iOS, Android) and Oyster (iOS, Android) are two examples. Subscription applications can be very helpful if you do not know what you have planned to read, but they may not work in the region you want to access them from, which can cause problems in a class.



Readability (iOS, Android) is not a book source application; however, the app is designed to clean up the clutter of online articles and

websites. The user can save the articles or download a clean version to any reader of their choice. This is extremely helpful to language learners who are battling the confusion of on-the-side ads and unfamiliar formatting.

2) Reading recommendation

Many applications are designed to catalog what you have read, and when you rate the books you will get recommendations. Apps such as Goodreads (iOS, Android), iReaditnow (iOS) or Oyster do this. This kind of application would be great in a class where students can log on and keep track of what they read and share ratings and reading journals with classmates.

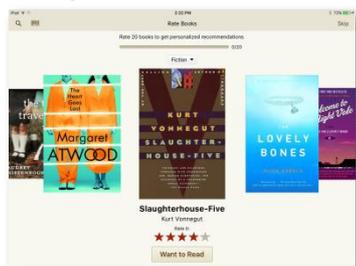


As an example, I will briefly explain Goodreads. You can access Goodreads from any computer at www.goodreads.com or download the app on any smartphone or tablet.

1. Sign up for Goodreads: you can do this through e-mail or Facebook.



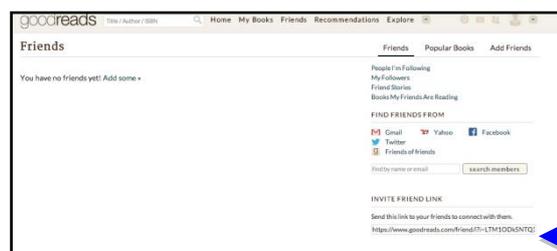
2. Once you are logged in, the app will ask you to rate books you have read so that you can get further recommendations.



After you have rated 20 or more books Goodreads will start to generate lists of recommendations. You can also write your own detailed review to accompany your rating. This would be a good way for students to keep reading journals.



3. There are many more features in Goodreads such as scanning your own books with your smartphone, or finding where to get the books you are interested in. However, one feature that could be really useful is setting up a network between classmates and friends so that books can be recommended and reviewed as a group. There are several ways to add friends to your Goodreads account. The version of Goodreads on the computer offers the most avenues for adding people.



A good way to create a class network is to have the students invite the teacher via the Invite Friend link.

After the teacher has added all the students to their network, the students could easily find

each other through the Friends of friends button option. If your students are connected through Gmail, Facebook or any of the other adding options this could also be a way to be connected. Getting a network set up always takes some time; however, once it is in place students will be able to share information and recommendations very easily. The network will not disappear once a class is finished, which could encourage students to keep reading or even connect with future generations of students found through the teacher.



Feedly (iOS, Android) is an application that is very similar to Goodreads in its recommendation process however, Feedly's content is online articles and websites. This is good for current events articles that match intensive reading practices. This would be great for

classes that are focusing on current events or perhaps training for English tests that have short reading excerpts.

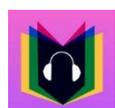
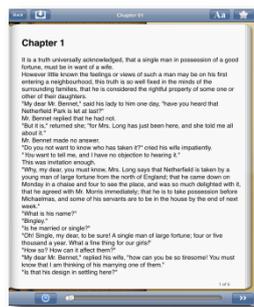
3) Audio Books

Audio books are a great way to get interested in reading and practice multiple language skills. There are countless audio book applications for smartphones and tablets. Many audio book applications have subscriptions that are paid monthly or yearly and offer 5,000 to 15,000 titles read and recorded by professionals. Many of the applications I mentioned in the digital bookstores and libraries section of this column have an audio book option. Two of the biggest audiobook services which offer some free and other paying components are Audible (iOS, Android) and Simply Audio.

When I was looking for applications to share in this Tech Talk I focused on free apps as well as applications that had features that would help language learners. These include features such as changing the speed books are read aloud or applications which simultaneously highlight the text as it is read, allowing the reader/listener to follow along. Three great apps that fulfill the criteria of free and helpful are Librivox (iOS, Android) Librivox Live (iOS, Android) and English Audiobooks (iOS, Android).

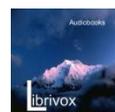


Librivox is a collection of public domain books read by volunteers from around the world. Many of the free audio book apps use these recordings, which means the source material is the same. The major difference is in the way the audiobooks are selected, shown and controlled. English Audio Books plays the audio from Librivox alongside the text of the original book. (Here is a screenshot of the application). The text and audio are not automatically synced so the reader has to follow along and manually turn the pages. The interface is very simple to use. The play button for the audio is on the bottom and then you can page through the text with a flick to the left.



Librivox (iOS, Android) does not have the original text but it allows the user to change the rate of speech

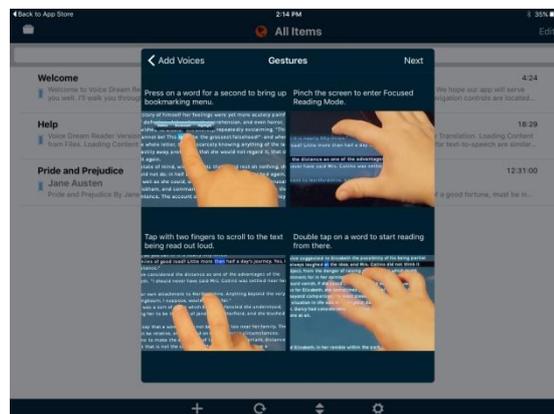
of the book. Slowing down the rate of speech is a great option for language learners, especially since each audio recording on Librivox is from a real human. The audio can be played in the background of other applications so the user could theoretically open a text version of the audio in a reading app while the audio is playing. Librivox readers recite the public domain version of the book, which would be identical to the edition most free-application readers provide.



The last app, Librivox Live, has a nice read-along feature for some of the books, which moves the text and audio simultaneously. If the read-along feature was offered for all the books, this would be my first choice: however, this feature only works for some of the titles (most being in the children's genre section). This application also asks for the user to pay for segments of some of the audio recordings, which are copyright free, so this means you are paying solely for the use of the interface.



Another application that is definitely worth mentioning here is Voice Dream Reader. This pay application is around \$10 but is well worth the one-time expense. This application allows you to seamlessly have any text read aloud by a digital (but realistic) voice-to-text application. The application also highlights each word as it is being read aloud. Perhaps because this application was initially developed as an aid for users with reading disabilities, such as dyslexia, the creators focused on universal user friendliness. This is a great tool for learning new text and the flexibility of reading any digital text makes this application extremely useful. The application also has the option of adding other dialects of English which is a great bonus for language learners.



If you do not want to spend the money on a professional application to read text, both the iOS and Android feature text-to-speech features in their respective accessibility settings.

4) Skills

There are many applications out there that promise to improve reading skills. For this Tech Talk I address applications that target speed reading and comprehension skills.

Many of the speed-reading applications build on meta-reading skills and aid the reader with a pointer, highlighter or by showing one word at a time at whatever rate the reader would like to read. All these features are not only good for quickening the reader's pace but can also help with comprehension and vocabulary building.

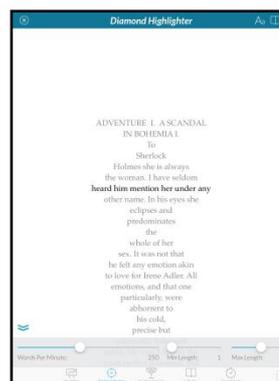


Acceleread (iOS) is one of many applications for speed-reading training. I will quickly walk through this application to give an idea of what these types of apps do.

When you first log on, you will be asked to read a sample article. After you finish reading and answer a few comprehension questions, you will be brought to a training session.



In this application you can also practice reading real text using the same reading training skills. There are a few classic titles to read for free and you can pay to upgrade and read your personal book files as well. Below is a passage from Sherlock Holmes being shown in the Diamond Highlighter, which scrolls the text in chunks, highlighting words as it goes along. This practice is designed to help with focus and flexibility of reading.



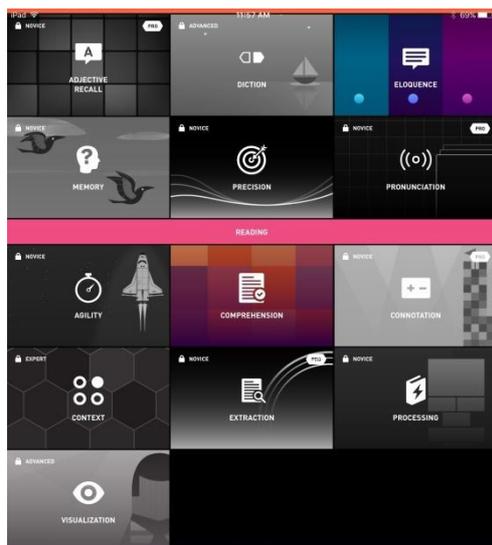
Boba (iOS) is an application that allows you to read websites and online articles one word at a time. The software flashes one word at a time in the middle of the screen at the word per minute rate chosen by the user. In the following image you can see an online article with the Spritz word by word method shown above it. In this screen shot the Boba is flashing the article at 250 words per minute.



Most reading comprehension applications focus on two levels: beginning readers or readers studying for undergraduate university entrance tests, such as SATS. The first type of applications include less content and the second type are test language specific which can be over-specialized with very little level flexibility. A few applications, marketed under brain training, have both interesting content and delivery for practicing comprehension.



Elevate (iOS, Android) is an example of this type of application. With Elevate, you can focus on specific skills such as vocabulary and comprehension. The free version of the application gives you three training exercises a day. Below are a few of the training games offered that practice reading skills.



This application has a good variety of training activities that are easy to follow.

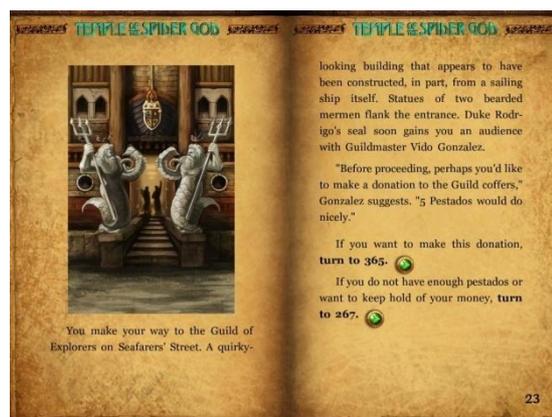
5) Games

Lastly, I would like to mention a few game applications which include reading. I am sure there are many applications out there that do this, but these are two types that I found as examples. The first is called *Zombies vs. Literacy* (iOS). This is a simple application for beginning level readers in which the player has to grow their brain by learning vocabulary sight words to avoid zombie attacks. A couple of more competitive apps are *Wordpress* and *Words with Friends* (iOS, Android). Both these word puzzle applications allow the user to compete against friends or strangers wirelessly. There are also less competitive and more creative puzzle apps such as *Sleep Furiously* (iOS, Android), an app that uses silly and inspiring prose to teach grammar.



These are a few examples of what is on the market for crossover games that are attempting to use pop trends to encourage literacy.

The second type of application is a Gamebook style app. These are very similar to the choose-your-own adventure books that were popular in the 1980s and 1990s. The reader can read a section of a story in which they then make a decision that will take them to a different place in the book. There are many different genres and language levels for these books. There are several paying and free versions of gamebook applications. Android (Google play) seems to have many more free gamebooks. Below is a picture of one of these gamebooks to serve as an example.



Summing up

Here are a few of the benefits and limitations for the 5 different types of reading applications I have discussed.

Digital bookstores and libraries

The digital book market is growing rapidly. Formatting a book for digital print can be much faster and the book can be downloaded in seconds. Certain interactive features can be added to books and edits and new additions can be made with a click of a button. Now the question comes up, why pay a publisher instead of the author directly? This is not to say that books in print do this either but it would be a lot easier to do this digitally. The level of control that digital bookstores have over copyright also means that digital books are not as universal as they could be. If your device dies, or you decide to buy a different type of device, your digital books may not be transferable.

Recommendations

In theory, an application that allows students to review and share lists of favorite books with each other is very useful. However, it takes time to set up a class, and if students are not reading many books in a

given semester, the work to set up accounts may not be worth it. Nevertheless, if students are trained in upkeep and continue to get recommendations after the class, this could be a great platform for lifetime reading.

Audiobooks

I was surprised by all the audiobook applications I tested. On its own Librivox is an amazing resource of books read by live readers. Each of the free applications had a bit of clumsiness to it when it came to reading along with the audio, however if the user only wanted audio, the apps ran relatively smoothly. If the class had the luxury of buying the monthly \$15 memberships of an application like Audible.com, it would be well rewarded with the up-to-date choices read and recorded by professionals.

Skills

I was most surprised and interested by these applications and could have easily written a Tech Talk on each. These applications have been well thought out and executed and I particularly like the idea of routine training for reading skills that would build any reader's confidence. When I tested these applications, I attempted to test at the lowest level to see where the accessibility of the training started. I found that it seemed attainable by most language learners at a beginning, intermediate or higher level.

Games

These applications may serve as inspiration for struggling or reluctant readers who would prefer playing games or perhaps need an aid for focusing. A gamebook paired with a skills training app would make a strong intensive and extensive reading plan. Ideally, game applications would lead to more reading without the need of extrinsic motivation.

Final thoughts

Take a moment to imagine your life without reading. Reading is an extremely useful long-standing skill for communication. The evolution of text has grown alongside its marketability. The printed book was designed for the mass distribution of ideas and sales. The app market follows this trend, bringing with it endless new ideas for literacy. While writing this Tech Talk it was easy to imagine many of these applications creating routines for learners that could easily extend beyond any class. There are many wonderful resources out there: the challenge is how to organize them. As educators, we can organize the resources into a reading plan that suits the individual or class. My suggestion is to try one application at a time rather than downloading them all at once. As smartphones and tablets become more ubiquitous amongst learners, it is useful to share ideas for what can be accomplished. This Tech Talk is meant to serve not only as a resource list but also a source of ideas that can be further researched to fit reading plans. Reading is a very enjoyable component of language that learners will grow from throughout their lives.

Dear Readers,

If you have any requests for future Tech Talks please feel free to contact me. Any request is greatly appreciated and can range from a specific program you want explained to a general lesson that you want to incorporate technology into.

Thank you,

lucius-v@kanda.kuis.ac.jp

Learners' Corner



Extracts from a learner diary

ELENA SÁNCHEZ CATALINA (with Ruth Wilkinson)
Madrid, Spain

Introduction

Many of us autonomy enthusiasts have experimented with learner diaries or logs as a way of promoting reflection and involving the learner in the planning and evaluation of their own learning. One of the benefits of this type of reflection is that process and content become mutually dependent (Dam 1995, p.6), and thus mutually reinforcing.

Whilst between jobs two years ago, I picked up a few private students. Eager to try out learner diaries, I asked one of my new students to keep a diary for me on a daily basis as part of her 'homework'. This student had just taken voluntary redundancy from a very stressful job and had two major goals: to get pregnant and to learn English to improve her future career prospects. She wanted to prepare the Cambridge First Certificate exam, but also to gain a broad sweep on the language, not just to study the book. That suited me of course. I advised her to use the 'Cambridge English – Compact First' book as a self-study resource, completing one unit a week, and to use our once-a-week two hour session to discuss her difficulties, get feedback on her written work and develop her oral skills. In her diary she was to log her learning and any other events that seemed significant. The following extracts are as written in Elena's own words. In the classes I did work with the language 'errors' she made: after all she was preparing for 'First Certificate' and her errors were typical of students at this level. However, her reflections as recorded below are uncorrected (except when errors seriously impede understanding, when they may be accompanied by an edit in brackets) as they evidence Elena's linguistic development and her own distinctive 'voice'. As the following paragraphs show, Elena starts by commenting on and analysing the exercises she was doing at home. I have added a few comments in italics on the value I see in her different reflections, but I hope that, for the most part, they speak for themselves.

Friday 10th January 2014

I have done my homework in English and I have found the following problems and difficulties:

I understand the statements but I had to continually refer to Google translator so there are much vocabulary I didn't know. I didn't know exactly which are the differences between trip-journey-travel. So I suspect the reason is the duration.

I have had many problems in understanding the listening, so I have had to resort to reading the text of listening or solutions. On the other hand, I have felt comfortable with the grammar questions. *(Very quickly Elena identifies her strengths and problem areas. She is able to hazard a guess at the reasons for differences between lexical items, which serves as a basis for discussing the real differences. She mentions her vocabulary-searching tool, which allows us to discuss the merits and de-merits of different dictionaries, online tools etc.)*

Monday 13rd January 2014

I have tried to do a practice exam related to the First Certificate and I have realised I'm not ready to take the exam, in fact I think I have a long road away (un largo camino por delante??) [literally 'a long road ahead'].

The exercises in which you have to fill in each space a word from a selection of them, I don't know what are the slight differences between the options given. I make many mistakes for not knowing the meaning of the words. Even though there are other exercises more intuitives where you have to complete a sentence with a similar

meaning to a first sentence given, here the problem I have is the correct use of tenses verbs. It takes me a long time to do the exercises. *(Elena uses her learning experiences to self-assess and to analyse the reasons behind her difficulties. This serves as a useful springboard to help us discuss and experiment with different strategies to overcome these difficulties).*

Saturday 18th January 2014

When I have done my homework about UNIT 2 I have found less problems than the before times. One of them is the correct use of the prepositions [...] and I feel sometimes unsure about using or not the article 'the' before nouns and adjectives. I have understood better the listening, it's also true that the story was easy to understand, it was an interview and the content of it was enjoyable. [...] *(Elena continues to pinpoint areas that she needs to focus on, but she also comments on progress, and recognises that content which is enjoyable is easier to understand).*

Up to this point, this is a fairly conventional learner diary, focussed almost exclusively on the learning process itself. Around this time, Elena started to suffer from severe morning sickness, and had to suspend lessons for a time. She took up her classes again a few weeks later, and this is what she wrote in her learner diary:

1st March 2015

Since I found out I was pregnant I felt so excited, but scared. I was aware because of my age I wouldn't have things easy. At the beginning I tried to take a normal life [...] Unfortunately, two weeks after I knew I was pregnant I started feeling really bad, with nauseas, vomiting and tiredness. I had to stop some if not all of the activities I had been doing and be almost in a state of rest during five weeks. At that time I felt very depressed, not wanting to eat, not wanting to go out, not wanting to do anything but hoping that in the future I would feel better. In the eighth week I saw my baby in an ultrasound and it seemed alright, someone with a heartbeat, someone who had movement. Time passed slowly and I continued with the same discomfort.

On 24th February, after a horrible morning feeling nauseas and vomiting, I decided to go to the hospital, it was the first time I was a few hours without eating. I packed a bag just in case they decided to admit me, so I went alone, because my husband was working and I didn't want to worry him.

The sad thing is I was so concerned about my shape *(Elena is referring here to her own physical condition - 'forma' in Spanish)* I didn't think the baby was wrong. When the doctor did the ultrasound, there were the longest seconds of my life,

until he confirmed what I knew, the baby hadn't heartbeat. I couldn't believe it, I was in shock and cried inconsolably.

The next step was awful too, I had to inform my husband and family. After that, I had to learn the surgical procedure. The doctors couldn't operate until the next day, so I had to go eight hours without eating. I went home and I had to be all the night with that horrible feeling of carrying something dead inside me. The next day was too long, hard and dark. We were waiting in the hospital a long time before going into the operating room. The operation went ok, and I started to get hungry immediately, but I felt sad and empty. That afternoon we spent sending messages to our friends about the new situation. That has been more or less my experience of being pregnant. Since then I try to be as hard as I can, but sometimes I come down, crying for a short time and no one sees me. People encourage us to keep trying but the feeling of guiltiness is still great and I don't want to think about that. I'm a pretty negative person, but even knowing there was a high probability this happened, I was very excited and I had created high expectations for the future.

8th March, Sunday

This week I've felt better. It's true that being with people helps me to see things differently. On Wednesday and Thursday I met with friends for lunch, it was good for me. I could tell them face to face what happened and have their support and understanding. I could also be fun and have my mind free at least for a while. They are my friends since a long time ago, we miss each other and they make me feel lucky and wanted. The only problem is as they were my colleagues in my before job, they tell me stories about

that, and it makes me feel unsure about the decision I took of leaving my work, now with more weight since I lost my baby. Now I have a little mess in my head about what I want to do.

9th March, Saturday

I like to be busy. Although I like to do my exercises in English, I'm very slow still, don't focus myself too much. I have noticed improvement in doing my exercises of Unit 2. I tried them without looking at the solutions and then correcting to really know how many I've done wrong. I think I have improved in vocabulary even though my memory is not as good as before. I'm afraid that my mind doesn't work like before work.

I bought a book in English called "The Forgotten". The author is David Baldacci. I have read several books from him and I like very much so he writes thriller and action books. But this one is the first I read in English and I'm finding it difficult so I'm boring and I may not be understanding what I read.

12-19 March

I felt very unsure with the exercises of the UNIT 3. I have realised maybe is not a convenient level for me, I failed in a lot of answers. But then I thought I was being very unfair with myself and little objective. Actually I had been a long time without studying English, so it shouldn't surprised me if I can't remember the knowledge I had. For example, in this Unit I couldn't remember the model verbs and overall in which situation you may use them. Also the adverbs of degree, I could understand the theory but when I tried to apply it in the practical exercise I didn't know identify the appropriate adverb in the sentence. Finally with the prepositions I better forget it! Later I have made a few schemes with the most important ideas to keep in mind and I got a little lively. It has helped me to relax.

07 April 2014

This time I've done my homework with a purpose, which is trying to do it in a specified time. (This strategy was put forward in response to Elena's concern that she took a very long time to do the exercises). The first exercise was an exam task about an extract from a novel in order to read it and answer the questions about it. I found the text relatively easy by the terminology used. The questions on it seemed to me ambiguous so that I realised that the understanding from the text had to be perfect, not just read it and have a general idea of the plot. [...] I've noticed improvement in listening exercises [...] Once you know the vocabulary according with every unit, is easier to understand what you're listening to [...] In short the feeling to do this unit is something more positive.

And so, after an interlude to pour her heart out on paper, Elena returned to analysing her learning. It fascinated me to see how

her personal experiences were interwoven among her comments on grammar etc. Her eloquence in retelling the events surrounding her miscarriage I found deeply moving. Although her English is not always conventional, the 'errors' she makes rarely interfere with her ability to express her thoughts and feelings. She herself confirmed that putting the story down on paper had helped her come to terms with the trauma, and the fact of re-telling it in a foreign language had to some extent made it easier for her to distance herself from what had occurred. As far as her learning was concerned, she remained a perfectionist, and tended to be quite self-critical, which impacted on her self-confidence, but, as she writes, she realises the need to be kind to herself and to recognise her achievements. Overall, her writing convinced me of the value which could derive from a learner keeping a record such as this.

Elena's account also reminds us of the complex personal agendas and circumstances of our students, which can interact with or distract from their learning whether or not we are aware of them. Despite the stressfulness of her experience, it is remarkable how she manages to return to focussing on her English, and even to find comfort in that return to the mundane. Her experience of loss and mourning is inherently human, and speaks to us of the universality of the experience of suffering and our ability to find ways to overcome and transform it, which is surely part of our growth towards autonomy. As a postscript, Elena continued with her classes for a few more months, but soon she was pregnant again, and I started my current job. Her second pregnancy was also difficult, so she didn't manage to do the First Certificate exam under my care... but readers may be glad to know that she was delivered of a beautiful,

healthy baby girl some months later. I don't think she has had much time to study English since then, but I felt like this interlude of learning and reflection had somehow played its part in helping her towards her goals.

References

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Reviews and Reflections

Reflections on the XII Nordic Conference 27th – 29th August 2015 Copenhagen, Denmark



Reflection contributed by Sandro John Amendolara, University of Helsinki, Finland

In April 2015, I attended the IATEFL Conference in Manchester, where my colleagues and autonomy mentors, **Felicity (Flis) Kjisik** and **Leena Karlsson**, (both pioneers in the sphere of autonomy at the University of Helsinki) introduced me to **Leni Dam**, a name that needs no introduction. Leni enquired whether we intended to attend the 2015 **Nordic Workshop** to be held in **Copenhagen**. Flis had, through the years, endorsed within our unit the importance of attending this particular event, given its role and prestige in the world of autonomy. Unfortunately, this time she would be absent due to her impending retirement and since someone would be required to step into her shoes, through circumstances the onus fell on me.

The Nordic Workshop, for those unfamiliar with it, has a deserved good reputation within the autonomy community. The theme of the 2015 workshop was **Young learners and language learner autonomy – practice, teacher education, research**. This constituted something of a challenge for those of us in Helsinki for we teach at tertiary level. Reflection ensued regarding how to implement a perspective of our approach into such a framework, and it was immediately apparent how what we do transcends the setting in which we do it – we simply needed to show this perspective. And, in any case, most of our students are **young learners**, at least compared to us!

Abstracts were sent and invitations were accepted. It was on a rainy day back in August

when, with some trepidation, I, together with Leena Karlsson, approached the workshop venue in Copenhagen. Approximately 30 participants attended, I believe an average number for the Nordic Workshop: the implicit centrality of complete interaction throughout the workshop benefits from the participation of a small number of people. A brief perusal of the dramatis personae revealed a remarkable cohort, which would prove to be a tangible stimulus more than a challenge.

All three days were methodically structured, with the introduction of a topical element, interspersed with metacognitive and meta-emotional reflection, followed up by group engagement and guided digression.



Beautiful Copenhagen on a lovely summer day

David Little was first up on the podium on Day One with a talk on *Language learner autonomy: From differentiation to inclusion*. David discussed the evolution of the concept of learner autonomy, with learner identity and learner agency being at the centre of his language proficiency paradigm. The talk was peppered

with Little's typically wry humour and insightful anecdotes.

Day Two's plenary speaker was **Déirdre Kirwan** with a talk on *Learner autonomy and inclusion at primary level*. Kirwan encourages children to share and develop who they are, and to bring their background, including their home language, to the process. This not only strengthens cohesion in the classroom, but also engages pupils into being involved in and contributing to their own education, with an underpinning of cultural awareness and understanding. This process has the added benefit of transcending the classroom and encouraging parents to be involved in their children's education. Kirwan had also filmed the students in action: their enthusiasm could clearly be seen. And all of this with no extra funding! Truly inspirational.

Day Two was also 'workshops' day, placed right at the centre of the event. Ours was on *Peer group mentoring as a tool for counsellor development and autonomy*. We had a good turnout and group engagement was excellent, as was, of course, to be expected.

Other workshops were perhaps more directly linked to the theme of the event: *Work with migrant children* introduced by Sanja Wagner; *Learner autonomy with young language learners*, presented by Annamaria Pinter and Leni Dam; *Benefits of simplification: from Japanese language portfolio to learning log with adult migrants* by Naoko Aoki and Yoshio Nakai and *Discussing critical pedagogy/social justice issues related to the importance of the co-construction of more democratic classrooms* by Hugh Nicoll.

Unfortunately, being the organizer of one of the workshops meant that I was unable to attend the others. But once the synchronized workshops ended, groups reconvened to report back on the workshops. These were explained in a thorough manner and gave a clear picture of some of the key content and discussion points.

At our Day Two dinner, held at the workshop venue, we were all asked to sing a song in our native tongues. Both my larynx and my psyche were unabashedly unprepared, resulting in a somewhat cacophonous rendering ('thanks' also

to my backing vocalists Christian Ludwig and Anja Burkert) of Modugno's 'Volare'. Others fared considerably better. No doubt, knowing what to expect, they had come prepared! Only subsequently, through a book on Danish culture and tradition, did I learn that singing in social contexts is something of a national passion. There is, of course, the risk of this transcending Denmark, so no matter where the next Nordic Workshop is organized, if I attend, I will remember to bring my throat coat tea with me. And, in any case, there will be no more Modugno from me. I believe my range is closer to that of my fellow Pisan, Bocelli. Prospective participants have been warned!

The plenary speaker of Day Three, the final day of the Nordic Workshop, was **Annamaria Pinter** with *From passive objects of research to active co-researchers: children developing autonomous skills*. The traditional approach with children has generally consisted of outsiders and/or teachers doing research **on**, and **about** them. According to Annamaria, there should be more research done **with** and **by** children. She discussed links between research **with** children and autonomous learning, offering a detailed account of how a group of 9-year-olds were not only successful at conducting research, but were also able to successfully reflect upon the process.



A typical Danish picnic lunch, in a box with compartments.

On Day Three we designed posters entitled *Where to go from here – practice and research*: this instilled awareness of what was going on within the community and offered the possibility of engaging in common projects with one another. This was followed by an evaluation of the workshop as a whole. According to all

those present, this year's Nordic Workshop had been organised to perfection: a common passion for and tangible dedication towards autonomy thoroughly compensated for the lack of personal space over three full days. New friendships were made and old ones consolidated.

We had one final afternoon to enjoy in Copenhagen, and a glorious sun to bask in. We headed for a nearby park for a picnic with Danish compartmental cubes, before fond farewells were bid. Many still wanted to explore and spent the remains of the afternoon walking through parks or conversing on a boat weaving its way through the famous canals of Copenhagen. Finally, we embarked upon the journey back home, whilst inevitably processing the experience – reflectively and autonomously.



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ECT IATEFL

Reflections on the second webinar in the IATEFL LASIG series: The value of experience in teacher education for learner autonomy 17th October, 2015



Delivered by Manuel Jiménez Raya, Professor of English and German Philology at the University of Granada, Spain



Reflection contributed by Ward Peeters, PhD Researcher and teaching assistant at the University of Antwerp, Belgium.

Professor Manuel Jiménez Raya gave a very interesting and enlightening LASIG webinar on developing autonomy through case pedagogy. Along with a detailed introduction to teacher and learner autonomy, he presented a series of cases which are part of his recently-published book co-authored with F. Vieira: **'Enhancing autonomy in language education: A case-based approach to teacher and learner development'**.

During the webinar, Jiménez Raya emphasised the fact that autonomy develops naturally, but that in order for it to flourish and to be passed on to others, it has to be fostered. This applies as much to teachers as it does to learners. He focused in his talk on teacher education and touched upon various aspects of teacher training, stressing the need to educate teachers to pay attention to the development of learner autonomy in their teaching practice, as well as to become autonomous themselves.

Autonomy should be the main goal of education; however, it is often absent from teaching practices and is not usually integrated into teaching education programmes. Jiménez Raya contends that what is needed for both teacher and learner autonomy is a pedagogy of experience. How such a pedagogy can be realized is outlined in the EuroPAL

project, in which Jiménez Raya was involved with other European partners.

Developing autonomy

Teacher and learner autonomy are accepted and regarded as being multifaceted concepts. The EuroPAL project has been at the forefront of developing these underlying concepts of autonomy. Its framework for a pedagogy for autonomy centres around three elements: 1. *The context*, which often consists of inappropriate educational and social conditions (there has to be room for innovation); 2. *The learners' ability to learn* (learners have to be encouraged to develop their learning competence, self-motivation and critical thinking) and 3. The teacher has to *have a critical point of view*, be able to *manage local constraints* and *re-centre the focus from teaching to learning*, and has to be *interactive*. These elements constitute the central aspects of a pedagogy for autonomy.

In his webinar, Jiménez Raya defines both learner and teacher autonomy as follows: in order to govern oneself, one has to be competent to act (cf. Jiménez Raya, Lamb, & Vieira, 2007). He considers both concepts, i.e. teacher and learner autonomy, as two sides of the same coin. In his opinion, autonomy can be regarded as being on a continuum which incorporates different roles and different degrees of control for both teachers and learners. Furthermore, autonomy is a social process of

interdependence and social mediation; therefore, teachers have to be able to reflect on their personal values, abilities and self-agency, e.g. willingness, ability and opportunity. These acts are crucial to defining and shaping activities in the classroom. Only then can teachers explore the 'space of possibility' by comparing 'reality' to the 'ideal', the 'what is' to 'what can be' in their classrooms.

Teacher education for learner autonomy

Introducing his case-based pedagogy, Jiménez Raya argued that as teachers and learners we all have our preconceptions, and that these conceptions need to be challenged in order to broaden our minds and be open to new insights. Reconsideration is necessary in order to teach teachers how to become autonomous. In other words, becoming a teacher necessitates enactment.

Creating a framework for a case-based pedagogy demands extensive research, as classrooms are multidimensional, as are learners and materials. The teacher is expected to react and adapt to changes, as well as to different wants and needs. Foreign language teaching (FLT) tasks have to fit the social context, school culture and curriculum, the types of knowledge which are central in the learning process, and the teaching itself. Jiménez Raya emphasised that teaching involves trying and thinking, trying and thinking again.

Concerning future practice, the questions that need to be asked are: "How can teacher education make students understand the complexity of teaching? How can it bridge the gap between theory and practice? Which goals need to be set in order for teachers to review their teaching?"

In teacher education for learner autonomy, knowledge, skills and confidence have to be nurtured, as well as critical thinking abilities and reflection. Learning to teach involves behavioural knowledge and should be regarded as an interpretative process. In other words, a good teacher requires both understanding and judgement.

How to teach autonomy: Case pedagogy

Jiménez Raya contends that cases are a particularly interesting way of understanding autonomy in context as they are an encapsulation of 'episodes' of

practice and lie at an intersection between theory and reality. Cases capture pieces of individuals' practice and understanding of particular classrooms and can form a basis for the exchange of experiences among teachers and learners. As teachers are expected to handle complex situations, they can craft knowledge through case-discussions which have a close proximity to actual teaching and learning processes.

In the webinar, Jiménez Raya suggests that teacher training has to move from the 'how' to the 'why' and 'what' of teaching. Personal meaning and reflection have to transcend the technicalities of teaching, which makes discussing pedagogy through cases a very effective approach. By applying this pedagogy of experiences, teachers' knowledge about practice also becomes a socially constructed quality, a trait from which they can benefit in their future careers.

During the webinar, Jiménez Raya presented two cases: one in which he explains an in-class exercise for the teachers in training, and one in which they have to implement an assignment in their teaching practice.

Examples of cases

Case 1. Pedagogy for autonomy

Approach:

1. Use of questionnaires: ask student teachers about their visions for FLT, about teacher and learner roles, their current situation and the kind of teacher they would like to be, as well as the reasons why they would like to become teachers. Let them explore their possible 'teacher selves' (similar to Dörnyei's (2009) motivation theory of learners imagining their future possible selves).
2. Make them plan their ideal language lesson.
3. Present the visions to the classroom. Use them to analyse the lesson plans.

Results: 95% of the visions follow a traditional, structural view on teaching with a focus on grammar. As a next step, student teachers' ideal language lessons should be revised throughout the module. The objective of this exercise is to make the

lesson plans more learner-centred. Discussions and cases are used to inform the proceedings.

In the second case study, Jiménez Raya zooms in on teachers exploring the 'space of possibility' through the use of portfolios and cases.

Case 2. Exploring the 'space of possibility'

Approach:

1. Use of portfolios, which enhances self-regulation and motivation, as well as brief narratives and cases for teacher training purposes. As an assignment, student teachers are required to integrate portfolios and cases into their teaching practice as well. Performing teaching tasks urges the teachers to make a plan, carry out the plans, reflect and plan again. By using interventions (e.g. integrating cases) and making learners reflect, different topics can be focused on in class, e.g. learning to learn, reading awareness, learning responsibilities, etc.
2. Teachers have to implement this experiment in their teaching practice, record and tell a narrative based on the outcomes. Teachers have to illustrate and show the materials used, and collect data on the students' reactions, materials and products/outcomes.

Results: By using portfolios and recording their experiences, they are able to reflect on their own teaching and receive feedback from their learners. Cases are used to open up 'the space of possibility'; thus, broadening teachers' minds which may lead to altering their personal (preconceived) ideas.

These cases are two of many in the book mentioned previously, edited by Jiménez Raya and Vieira: 'Enhancing autonomy in language education: A case-based approach to teacher and learner development' (2015). In their book they pay particular attention to 10 cases and 9 pedagogical approaches to putting autonomy into practice: from responsibility, choice and flexible control to reflective inquiry. All cases consist of 3 episodes: 1. Understanding the background, (teachers' professional and personal background, approach, context, and materials); 2. Examples of good practice (describing how a teacher enacts a

pedagogy for autonomy); and 3. Exploring possibilities (scaffolding and encouraging, planning, experimenting, and enacting a pedagogy for autonomy).

The cases document significant increases in teacher autonomy and report positive effects on pedagogy. These cases always try to capture the 'action teacher'¹ as a pedagogical principle.

Questions & answers

There was time for questions after the webinar. The most interesting and thought-provoking questions, as well as the responses given, are noted below. All responses were given by Jiménez Raya.

Q: Learner autonomy is absolutely dependent on teacher autonomy. Do you agree with this statement?

A: I fully agree. They are two sides of the same coin. If we define autonomy as a personal construct, we need teachers to take initiative and take responsibility for their learning and teaching. Remember that in the EuroPAL Project, we have, and not without causing some controversy, defined teacher and learner autonomy in the same way. We use the same definition.

Q: Do you think it could be useful to use only parts of the case methods in teacher education for learner autonomy?

A: You can incorporate it in any way you want to. If focussing on teacher education practice, it is possible to incorporate part of the cases. However, in the end, why not incorporate them entirely? It is worth it.

Q: Can we use the terms 'accountability', 'autonomy' and 'academic freedom' interchangeably?

A: No, accountability and autonomy are completely different terms. Some people do not like the term 'teacher autonomy'. Teachers have to be accountable for what they do, true, but they have to be facilitators in the first place. They have to create conditions to develop learner autonomy. Teacher autonomy incorporates both responsibility and license; accountability and the freedom to achieve

goals. But keep in mind that what might work for one group, might not work for another group.

Participants' reactions

All participants were very positive about the webinar and about Professor Jiménez Raya's presentation on case pedagogy. The cases sparked interest and various participants are "eagerly looking forward to the follow-up session" in which more cases can be discussed.

Besides showing gratitude and congratulating Professor Jiménez Raya for his "brilliant and meaningful webinar", many participants took away new insights from this experience. They indicated that they were keen to try new techniques and focus on encouraging learners and reflecting on their own teaching practice.

For more information on the cases or case pedagogy in general, I would like to refer once again to the book of Jiménez Raya and F. Vieira 'Enhancing autonomy in language education: A case-based approach to teacher and learner development' (2015). Since attendees found the section on case pedagogy particularly interesting and useful, there might be a follow-up LASIG webinar devoted to this topic.

Notes on the webinar presenter

MANUEL JIMÉNEZ RAYA is Professor of English and German Philology at the University of Granada, Spain. He has published extensively on pedagogy for autonomy and conducts research on the psycholinguistic aspects of foreign language teaching and learning, and modern language teacher education.

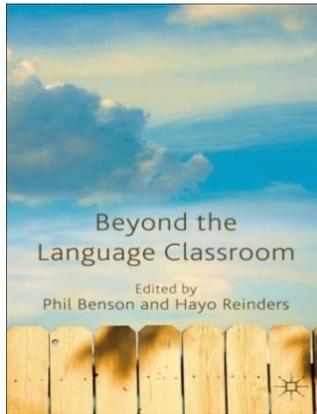
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¹*This term was used by Jiménez Raya himself when giving the webinar. The term describes the teacher as an active participant in the learning process of his/her students, and emphasises that they are conscious about what their role is (meaning that they are not only concerned with the 'how' of teaching, but also with 'what' and 'why' they put certain things into practice). Jiménez Raya used it to describe the use of a case-based pedagogy and the importance of motivated teachers who use hands-on materials and real-life examples (or cases) to improve their own practice.*

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Beyond the Language Classroom

ISBN: 978-0-230-27243-9 hardback

**Edited by Phil Benson and Hayo Reinders
Palgrave Macmillan, 2011**

**Reviewed by Phil Cozens
(Formerly) ELC, University of Macau**

Many language teachers try to encourage greater autonomy from their students and are always looking for new ways to do this, but worry that their suggestions may not be effective. They also need the support from research to validate their ideas. **Beyond the Language Classroom** can assist here as it provides both. Its 13 chapters present confirmation that learning cannot simply be confined to the classroom. At the same time, they offer new understandings of the plethora of research tools available to those involved in the study of learner autonomy. Several might be replicated as simple 'action research' ideas benefitting the students and teachers involved. While primarily European-based, the studies feature other areas of the world, and are not limited to EFL, but include the learning of other languages, too. **Chapters 2 to 5** describe the use of related theoretical viewpoints to investigate learning outside the classroom. **Chapters 6 to 8** focus on what is actually learned in them, while **Chapters 9 to 12** look at how institutions can provide options that assist autonomy in learning.

Phil Benson, in **Chapter 1**, identifies a possible theoretical structure for further related research into the acquisition of language outside the classroom, focussing on four areas: location, formality, pedagogy and locus of control. He adds to these the concepts of 'setting' and 'mode of practice', noting that individual events can take place in multiple settings, but are likely to be different in each. Benson believes that the choices learners make when learning languages are influenced by the above features.

In **Chapter 2**, **David Palfreyman** utilises Social Network Theory to indicate how female Emirati students' networks influence language learning and how the family's influence can provide affordances for learning. He shows how interactions among family members can provide both teaching and learning opportunities for both students and other family members and how personal motivation can encourage language learning as a personal goal, which can be influenced by both family and peers. Interestingly, **Leena Kuure's** investigation, in **Chapter 3**, shows how the internet and a home computer can both represent Benson's 'location' aspect. It features a Mediated Discourse Analysis approach to the way online games and the participant's community of practice provided interactive opportunities for language practice by her Finnish subject. Like Palfreyman, she identifies opportunities provided by the family, when her subject required assistance, not readily available elsewhere. A further Finnish-based project undertaken by **Paula Kalaja, Riikka Alanen, Åsa Palviainen and Hannele Dufva**, the authors of **Chapter 4**, gives details of how they used open-ended questionnaires from a longitudinal study to investigate how students studying either Swedish or English looked at language learning from both classroom and out-of-class perspectives. The attitudes towards out-of-class learning displayed similarities and differences in that, while both groups used similarly available media, those studying English appeared to take a more active role than those studying Swedish. As Swedish is an official language, students may have viewed it as 'obligatory' and, therefore, did not feel the same need to pursue the opportunities available.

Language learning histories from students in Brazil, Finland and Japan underpinned **Vera Menezes'** study in **Chapter 5**. It employs the concepts of ecology and niche to identify the affordances they provide to different learners. She uses their histories to show how subjects have reacted to different situations and the ways in which they have utilised the resources around them to improve their language skills. She also highlights how many of the respondents understand that the language classroom needs to be supplemented by 'real life' experiences to be successful.

The subjects described by **David Davita** in **Chapter 6** are older female Spanish speakers who relocated to France as economic migrants. Acquisition of their second language took place without the benefit of formal instruction, highly influenced by their own feelings towards the people, the language and their own prospects. Using ethnographic discourse analysis, Davita focuses on two subjects, identifying how their interactions with Spanish speakers often include codeswitching elements, related to both their multilingual associations with the languages and the contexts in which they learned their second languages. In **Chapter 7**, **Erica Zimmerman** uses Conversational Analysis in her study of Korean learners of Japanese in Japan. Her examples show how learning and teaching opportunities can take place in various settings and how the roles of teacher and learner can alternate. She demonstrates how discussions on language provide unexpected learning opportunities.

Chapter 8, by **Pia Sundqvist**, describes a study of Swedish students' 'extramural' English. She used questionnaires, language diaries and interviews to identify relationships between vocabulary and oral proficiency in English. During one academic year, participants aged 15-16 from four different schools took several proficiency and vocabulary tests. Unsurprisingly, the researcher found that certain cultural and socioeconomic circumstances contributed towards motivation and proficiency, but did not seem to influence the amount of extramural English students had undertaken. Boys, who generally spent more time engaging in more active extramural English tasks, such as video games, produced significantly better test results than girls. More passive tasks, such as listening to

music, despite their popularity, did not appear to have an important role in improving abilities.

In **Chapter 9**, **Sophie Bailly** describes a French school's attempt to assist students in independently learning a foreign language of their choice. Bailly used an ethnographic approach to identify which languages were chosen and why, the methods used and difficulties faced. The languages chosen fell into three main categories: languages to be used for further advancement, those related to family or social identity and languages for socialization or personal interest. Methods were divided into the more formal, reflecting activities previously used in school, or 'lighter', more passive and entertaining activities. The choices related to the seriousness of students' motivation. Difficulties fell into two main groups: personal and material difficulties or using inefficient learning strategies. As she points out, the most successful learners were those with more ideas about how to learn.

Garold Murray's contribution, in **Chapter 10**, shows how older learners made use of a university's Self Access Centre to improve their own English. He shows how these learners valued the ability to identify their own needs and experiment with the methodologies available, but also the importance they placed on the social aspect of being part of a community. Community learning also featured in **Ursula Stickler** and **Martina Emke's** research, described in **Chapter 11**, which involved a tandem learning programme by multiple participants across Europe, studying a selection of languages. It was supported by institutions in Germany, Italy, Poland and the U.K. As the project was run through an online learning environment, it allowed the researchers to be participating observers. They looked at the participants' use of formal, non-formal and informal language and how this influenced both their learning and the ways in which they changed the direction of the project.

In **Chapter 12**, **Gary Barkhuizen's** research looks at a language-based programme focussing on the individual needs of immigrants to New Zealand. In these one-to-one sessions, the tutor usually caters to far more than simple language and cultural needs, by also helping the learners overcome the difficulties of adapting to a new environment.

Consequently, the tutor must assume multiple roles and learn from the participant in order to develop the materials necessary to assist in acculturation. This often resulted in far closer relationships than those in formal classroom situations.

Hayo Reinders' Chapter 13 considers the need to develop materials for use outside the classroom, providing information on the different stages required for successful self-directed learning as well as a framework for evaluating materials' effectiveness. He emphasises the importance of preparing students to become autonomous during classroom activities and the need for support in choosing and using the materials.

This volume contains a wealth of useful material for both prospective researchers and classroom teachers hoping to encourage greater autonomy among their learners. For the former, chapters by **Palfreyman, Kuure and Menezes** provide examples of research methodologies they can adapt to their settings, while their findings will help reinforce the message teachers wish to convey, as expressed by Nunan & Lamb, (1996: 156) "if learners are seriously interested in becoming proficient in the language, then they are going to have to do most of the learning on their own". For me, the studies by **Sundqvist and Kalaja, Alanen, Palviainen and Dufva** were most interesting as they point out how cultural, social and gender differences affect out-of-class activities with a consequent impact on proficiency and the importance of teachers' support. Sundqvist's identification of the types of activity which are most beneficial can help teachers point students towards activities they could then use themselves. However, such findings would need to be backed up by larger scale, multi-cultural longitudinal studies before jumping to any conclusions. In general, this volume provides varied and interesting reading and is a valuable reference work for newcomers as well as experienced learner autonomy practitioners.

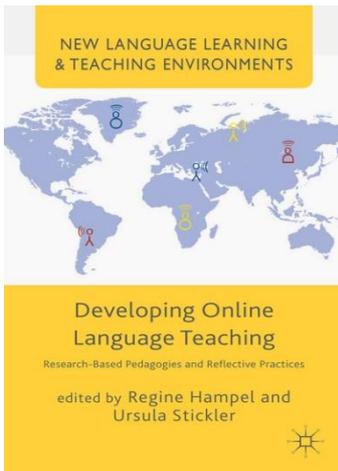
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Notes on the editors

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HAYO REINDERS is Professor of Education at UNITEC, Auckland, New Zealand. He is editor of the Journal *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*. His interests are in educational technology, autonomy and out-of-class learning. His most recent books are on teacher autonomy, digital games and computer-assisted learning.



Developing Online Language Teaching: Research-based Pedagogies and Reflective Practices

ISBN: 978-1-137-41225-6

Edited by Regine Hampel and Ursula Stickler
Basingstoke, UK & New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015

Reviewed by Raymond Sheehan,
Assistant Professor, Zayed University, Abu Dhabi, UAE

Developing Online Language Teaching does far more for the cause of learner autonomy than its title might initially suggest. This book is certainly rich in detail that will facilitate self-training in technical skills sets for self-directed language teachers keen to effect a transition from face-to-face teaching to teaching online. The most powerful boundary-pushing aspect of the book, however, is its sociocultural and constructivist ethos. This book is about teachers and learners building new worlds, new learning environments, to be co-constructed at several levels. What is most exciting, from a 'learner autonomy' point of view is that it provides us with innovative theoretical and pedagogical frameworks to help us theorize and exemplify the changing nature of learner autonomy as learners gain access to learning opportunities within ever-increasing social online contexts which were not available to learners a generation before.

Of the book's eleven chapters, **Chapters 1** (the **Introduction**), **4** and **9** most clearly articulate the principles or ethos of this collection. After the introduction in **Chapter 1**, **Regine Hampel** in **Theoretical Approaches and Research-based Pedagogies for Online Teaching (Chapter 9)** provides a powerful starting point. Hampel sees second language learning as "learning a social practice by using the language in communication with other speakers" (p. 135). The researcher into learner autonomy will now have to develop a theory and methods to understand how the learner is constructing, and interacting in, new contexts, learning new rules of engagement and manipulating

new tools and media for communication. A sound point of departure for autonomy research is the statement that: "Sociocultural theory links individual mental processes with the cultural, institutional and historical context and emphasizes the role of cultural mediation in the development of higher psychological functions (for example, thinking, reasoning, self-awareness, or the use of signs such as language)" (p. 135). Hampel refers to Lantolf (2006) to single out three cultural factors that play a role in such mediation between individual learner and context: activities, artifacts and concepts. The exploratory potential for tracking the progress of the autonomous learner in a new learning environment is enormous here. For example, it may focus on how self-awareness and the development of an online identity, facilitated by specific activities and the artifacts of technology, might also facilitate autonomous language learning. The learner ceases to be mainly a learner and becomes an online user with authentic individualized purposes in purposeful online communities. In such communities, teachers have a mediating role in enabling learners to engage more competently and autonomously with their enlarged learning contexts, making their own learning decisions about what, how and when.

Linda Murphy's Chapter 4, Online Language Teaching: The Learner's Perspective is a research-based study of how learners view the transition from face-to-face to online learning. Her investigation leads her to conclude that "learners have a clear view of the need to adapt practices and

transform existing skills to create effective relationships in online teaching” (p. 61). The practices and skills she refers to are teaching skills. While learners clearly value a teacher who has the technical know-how to support their learning and solve problems, what learners may value most (as in a language classroom) is teaching involvement “in creating and sustaining social and cognitive presence, encouraging an open and constructive learner-teacher relationship and helping to boost learner satisfaction” (pp. 60-61). Learners value teachers who are present within a structured online learning space, where learners can operate with confidence not just technically but cognitively, socially and linguistically. In such a structured learning space, learners can feel free to explore with judicious support, in order to make their own social connections and cognitive syntheses while mapping out their own language-learning highways and byways. This chapter, like **Chapter 9**, has the potential to generate much further research into the social, cognitive and affective roles of teachers, learners and members of online communities in fostering learner autonomy in a context where the role of the teacher has changed.

Chapter 5 provides a principled starting-point in enabling teachers to reflect upon and identify their own training needs. **Stickler and Hampel**, in **Transforming Teaching: New Skills for Online Language Learning Spaces** identify three key skills areas for teacher development. First, there needs to be an ongoing “awareness of the affordances of different media and the intercultural dimensions of online materials in order to transform online spaces into online learning spaces” (p. 64). Secondly, teachers need to be able to identify, exploit and adapt the most appropriate online learning tools and materials. Thirdly, and most importantly, from the point of view of learner autonomy, teachers with an online presence need “skill in encouraging their learners to take responsibility for their selection of learning spaces and activities and engage in the negotiation of suitable spaces and their appropriate use for online language learning” (p. 64). The chapter also has a very welcome section (pp. 72-74) on the under-researched area of enhancing creativity online and mentions seven skills, hierarchically arranged, that will enable the teacher to transform learners’ experience. There are

authentic opportunities for learners to become authors (e.g. of fanfiction), translators, editors etc.

This book makes it clear that the language teacher in these new contexts needs to learn at least as vigorously as the language learner. Seven of the book’s authors have been involved in the DOTS project: **Developing Online Teaching Skills**. Developed by the European Centre for Modern Languages, the DOTS project stresses the supportive collaborative nature of professional development and also accepts that the modules must provide maximum returns for a teacher’s investment in professional-development time. “The main characteristics of the activities are that they are modular and designed for immediate implementation in the language classroom, they foster teacher reflection and sharing with others and they are open” (p. 161). **Chapters 2, 10 and 11** in this book give detailed accounts of the DOTS project and researched reports of teachers’ experiences with the project.

Realistically, the time, and financial means, to construct new learning worlds online, may seem a luxury only to be dreamed of. In **Chapter 3, Part-time and Freelance Language Teachers and Their ICT Training Needs** **Stickler and Emke** point out the challenges in a world where teaching as a profession is becoming increasingly undervalued, while institutional and governmental demands on teachers to keep up-to-date with professional development increase in inverse proportion. For example, the *Volkshochschule* in Germany “employs 187,000 part-time teachers and only 3,247 full-time teaching staff” (p. 29). Part-time teachers are “almost invisible: marginalized in the profession, under-researched in studies, and under-represented in the literature” (p. 36). The issue of their teacher-identity is a rich area for investigation, suggested in this chapter. This book can certainly help them make “a shift from a fractured or shifted identity towards a fully developed professional identity” (p. 42) by pointing towards free, open, flexible and easily accessible sources of development online. It cannot, however, hope to solve the injustices perpetrated upon that body of professionals with the greatest transformative power to shape future global citizens for the better.

In addition to those chapters outlining the DOTS project, **Chapters 6, 7 and 8** will guide readers, whatever their entry point, towards collaborative web-based sources for professional development. **Joseph Hopkins** in **Chapter 6, Free Online Training Spaces for Language Teachers** constructs a useful typology of sources which will suit a large range of users at different entry levels: self-training modules; MOOCs (Massive Online Open Courses); directories of online tools; tools training by language teacher trainers and online communities of practice. **Anna Comas-Quinn and Kate Borthwick** in **Chapter 7, Sharing: Open Educational Resources for Language Teachers**, state that “research has shown that awareness and use of OER are still low among language professionals” (p. 99) and their chapter makes a detailed awareness-raising contribution to the volume. **Aline Germain-Rutherford** in **Chapter 8, Online Communities of Practice: A Professional Development Tool for Language Educators** explores both the advantages and challenges of belonging in such communities. This chapter will in fact be very useful not only for those seeking membership, but also for those seeking to construct online communities of practice for purposeful self-directed collaborative professional development.

This book comes highly recommended. For those of us who wish to research learner autonomy in new sociocultural and constructivist contexts, it suggests ways to conceptualize and exemplify learner and teacher experience in relatively unexplored social contexts. Additionally, given the modular nature of the book, teacher trainers can choose a chapter or sequence of chapters which will encourage discussion, individual or collaborative exploration, pedagogical innovation and action research.

In fact, each chapter provides exemplars of and encourages action research and each concludes with a valuable reflective task of benefit to all users of this book. The emphasis on action research is salutary in an area which is still being co-constructed, reformulated and extended. The book, overall, rightly claims to serve the needs of users in both formal and informal settings: whether trainees on a course or self-directed teachers with all combinations of pedagogical experience and technical competence interested in laying out their own pathways for professional development.

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Notes on the editors

REGINA HEMPEL is Professor of Open and Distance Language Learning at the Open University, UK. Her research interests include the impact of new technologies on learning and teaching and their implications for teacher training.

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Don't forget to join our Facebook group !

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The Learner Autonomy SIG

The IATEFL Learner Autonomy SIG was for many years called the Learner Independence SIG. The Learner Independence SIG was formed in 1986 by a small group of devotees, with Vic Richardson as its coordinator. The Learner Autonomy SIG is one of 15 IATEFL Special Interest Groups. It is for teachers and teacher educators who are interested in autonomy in language learning and all that it implies. The Learner Autonomy SIG aims to:

- raise awareness among language teachers and researchers of issues related to autonomy in language learning
- explore and investigate practices and strategies for the implementation and development of autonomy
- provide a forum for discussion of these ideas through publications and events
- offer opportunities to network globally and cross-culturally
- organise study tours, courses, seminars, events and exhibitions world-wide.

Contributing to *Independence*

The newsletter comes out three times a year and includes practical and theoretical articles, materials reviews, net updates, details of events and self-access advice. Its defining style is one of exploratory talk.

We are looking for contributions, in a variety of formats and genres, long and short articles, interviews, readers' letters, learner (autonomy) stories, teacher-learner narratives, reflections, in short anything helping the readers of *Independence* to better understand developing autonomy in second language education.

Contributions in the form of learner/teacher (autonomy) stories, articles, interviews, reports, letters, poems, book reviews, conference reports and reflections, or short notices on forthcoming events are always welcome, as are responses to articles appearing in the newsletter. Learners' voices and reflections are also very much welcome.

Deadlines for the next two issues

30th April 2016

(for the **July – August** issue)

15th August 2016

(for the **October – November** issue)

Submitting contributions

Send all texts other than book reviews or reflections in Word by e-mail attachment to one of the editors:

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Practice and research in learner autonomy – learners' and teachers' voices

Opening of the day	
10:00	Plenary talk
	<p>David Little (Ireland)/Déirdre Kirwan (Ireland)</p> <p><i>Language learner autonomy, documentation and action research</i></p> <p>In an autonomous learning environment, learners' voices are the medium of individual and collective learning and the starting point for action research. We shall elaborate on this proposition by showing how immigrant pupils at an Irish primary school develop autonomous learning skills as they acquire proficiency in English as an additional lan-</p>
	
10:45-11:00 Introduction to poster presentations (for details see inside cover)	
11:00-11:30 Coffee break (looking at posters)	
Reflection/awareness raising	
11:30-11:50	<p>Turid Trebbi (Norway)</p> <p><i>Teachers' reflections on classroom discourse in diverse cultural contexts – data from a research project</i></p> <p>The impact of verbal interaction on the accessibility of language learning, and teachers' reflections on classroom discourse will be discussed from the perspective of learner autonomy.</p>
	
11:50-12:10	<p>Leena Karlsson/Sandro Amendolara (Finland)</p> <p><i>Autonomy in the realm of meta-cognitive/meta-emotional dialogues</i></p> <p>In our talk, we will introduce a project on students' and counsellors' meta-cognitive/meta-emotional processes in the context of Autonomous Learning Modules (ALMS) and discuss related pedagogical tenets.</p>
	
12:10-12:30	<p>Ilse Born-Lechleitner (Austria)</p> <p><i>Learners' voices from reflective writing</i></p> <p>This talk demonstrates how students on a university Business English course shift their attention from writing about difficulties to writing about learning processes and achievements as they practise reflective writing.</p>
	
12:30 -13:30 Lunch break	
Practice	
13:30-14:15	<p>Frank Lacey (Denmark)</p> <p><i>Logbooks – insights into pupils' learning and teacher's practice</i></p> <p>Logbooks give teachers an insight into pupils' learning and teachers' practice. In this workshop we shall analyse 13-14 year olds' logbooks and discuss their use in the autonomous classroom (workshop).</p>
	
14:15-14:35	<p>Daniela Busciglio (USA)</p> <p><i>Not covering, but discovering: Fostering learner autonomy in project-based language learning</i></p> <p>This talk focuses on a practical approach to fostering and enhancing agency and learner autonomy through student-driven project-based learning in language courses.</p>
	
14:35-14:55	<p>Kassim Koruyan (Saudi Arabia)</p> <p><i>The importance of listening to learners' and teachers' voices.</i></p> <p>This presentation is based partly on 11 years of experience in the field in different contexts, and partly on two experimental research studies designed to promote language learning autonomy in different contexts: together these provide insights into practice and research in learner autonomy regarding learners' and teachers' voices.</p>
	

Practice and research in learner autonomy – learners’ and teachers’ voices

15:00-15:30		Meeting the poster presenters	
	Anja Burkert (Austria) Learners’ voices on collaborative learning and joint meaning-making in the language classroom	The poster will show data providing insights into learners’ perceptions of work undertaken collaboratively. The data have been collected in the form of questionnaires, short interviews and learner diary entries.	
	Dorte Asmussen (Denmark)/Christian Ludwig (Germany) Developing learner autonomy through young and adult learners’ voices		The aim is to give voice to learners who have had experiences of autonomous language-learning to show that learner autonomy provides a successful framework for encouraging learners to have an ‘individual relationship’ with their learning.
	Stephan Gabel (Germany) Student teachers’ attitudes towards portfolios	Students often have negative attitudes towards portfolios, which jeopardizes their pedagogical objectives. This contribution investigates the reasons for this and presents the results of enquiries into student opinions about portfolios.	
	Susanne Quandt (Germany) From teaching to learning: School curricula in transition	This poster presentation presents teachers’ voices on how their teaching of English changes when learner autonomy becomes a priority. Using logbooks and creative modules are ways of enabling such change.	
15:30-16:00		Coffee break	
Motivation & Where does this take us?			
16:00-16:20		Jo Mynard (Japan) Self-access learners’ voices	In this presentation, I will draw on research conducted in a self-access context in Japan to explore why some learners continue to engage in self-sustaining learning under their own volition.
16:20-17:10	Where does this take us? Discussion in smaller groups around the topics of the day – results in plenary. Introduction and follow-up by David Little.		
17:10	Evaluation / Next year’s PCE?		
17:30	End of Day		

**Practice and research in
 LEARNER AUTONOMY
 LEARNERS’ AND TEACHERS’ VOICES**

