

Teaching for Autonomy: What do the Students Think?

Ruth Wilkinson
University of Castilla La Mancha
Ruth.Wilkinson@uclm.es

ABSTRACT

The following paper describes an action research project which was carried out with a class of second-year students following the Degree of English Philology at the University of Castilla la Mancha. The aim of the project was to raise students' awareness of the need to be less dependent on their teachers and to provide the reflective and interactive scaffolding necessary to enable them to take greater responsibility for their own learning. The current paper describes the measures taken, and how students reacted to this process. It concludes by examining the lessons learned and by proposing a number of guidelines to be taken into account when attempting to promote autonomy in a similar context.

I'm always doing things I can't do -
that's how I get to do them
Pablo Picasso

1. Introduction and theoretical framework

Frequently, when talking with practising teachers whether at secondary or university level, I hear comments such as “the students may not be ready for it, but perhaps it is really us (the teachers) who aren't prepared for autonomy”. Certainly, “teaching for autonomy” implies a change in attitude and focus for both teachers and learners alike, and any such change can be threatening and fraught with difficulties. For this reason, the aim of the project described here was to find out if students could be helped towards a position of greater responsibility for their learning without abandoning the fixed syllabus or jettisoning the text book. In order to avoid

the disorientation which comes from implementing half-digested, innovative theory in a very traditional teaching context, it seemed only commonsense to proceed with caution and not to disregard the lessons of hard-won experience and the benefits of tried and tested methods. If our work to promote students' growth as learners is to prosper, it is essential that both students and teachers feel secure and are able to come to terms gradually with the changes required of them.

The impetus for the study arose from my observations of the problems experienced by many university students as they attempt to negotiate a passage through the degree of English Philology (replaced in September 2010 by the degree of English Studies). An alarming proportion stumble along, entering a vicious circle of repeating and failing exams, memorising the text book, but apparently having no clear idea of where they are going wrong or how to improve their chances of success. The practice of rote-learning of what Freire (1994) refers to as the "sacred" information imparted by the teacher may have served them well in the past, or for other more 'content-based' subjects, but proves to be totally inadequate for a subject like English language, based as it is on the development of skills and the ability to apply knowledge in practice.

An additional, urgent incentive for increasing the effectiveness of students' learning arose from the fact that the University was on the brink of changing from a five-year to a four year degree course and adapting teaching programmes in line with the requirements of the Bologna Process. As this involves an increased emphasis on the competences of learner autonomy and learning to learn, we need to seek realistic and effective ways of promoting these skills in our particular context, calling on the students, the real experts in their own learning processes, to help us evaluate new measures.

Parting from Holec's (1981) definition of learner autonomy as "the ability to take control of one's own learning", this study focuses (predominantly though not exclusively) on those tasks he considered were carried out by the fully autonomous learner:

- Determining objectives
- Defining contents and progressions
- Selecting methods and techniques for achieving learning goals
- Monitoring the procedure of acquisition (pace, time, location etc.)
- Evaluating what has been learnt.

Given that a majority of our Spanish university students are initially unaccustomed to taking charge of these areas of their learning, the process of 'autonomisation' is conceived, to use Leni Dam's image, as one of letting go and taking hold (Dam:2008), that is to say there is a gradual and fluid handing over of responsibility from the teacher to the pupil. As Little (1991) notes, the capacity for autonomy, even within one learner, is not constant, and will fluctuate as new tasks are introduced. Moreover, as he continues, "the fact is that autonomy is likely to be hard-won and its permanence cannot be guaranteed; and the learner who displays a high degree of autonomy in one area may be non-autonomous in another" (Little 1991:4). Nonetheless, and within these obvious constraints, if the programme adopted to promote learner autonomy is successful, we should expect to see net gains over the course of

one academic year. These gains, it should be noted, concern changes in attitudes and behaviour, not necessarily, in the short-term, in acquisition. It is widely accepted that a truly autonomous learner will ultimately be a more effective learner (if an autonomous learner is one who exploits all resources available to him, including the teacher), but the changes required may in a first instance cause some disorientation in certain learners, and it is essential to remember that the aim of the process is not simply to get the students through their end-of-year exams with better marks, but to prepare them to be successful life-long learners.

The actions undertaken in the course of this study are based on three key notions which are explained in the following paragraphs. These are: (a) changing constructs; (b) constructing knowledge through social interaction and (c) the fundamental importance of self-esteem.

According to the literature, the first step in developing learner autonomy is what is referred to, in the title, as “raising awareness” (Benson 1995; Scharle and Szabó2000, Van Lier 1996, Wenden 1987) - since any attempt to require learners to become more autonomous is liable to be ineffective unless the learner is pre-disposed to be so. For this reason the most important yet at the same time most difficult preliminary step is to *create* this willingness: “A learner has to learn to believe in his capacity to take control” (Wenden 1987:12). In psychological terms, this means there must be a change in the student’s learning *constructs* - his¹ attitudes or beliefs about himself as a learner, about the learning-process and his role within it. We can expect some resistance from those averse to changing their roles, and for this reason the voices of the students are key to interpreting the success of the project.

Secondly, and following Vygotskian principles, the activities used are based on the hypothesis that knowledge about learning is constructed in the same way as knowledge about language, that is via social interaction. It is assumed that this interaction should allow students to integrate new concepts into previously acquired knowledge. In practice that means we can carry out activities related to learning awareness in the same way as any other communicative language activities. The communicative objective in this case is one that is necessarily relevant to students: sharing your thoughts about your learning with your friends and teacher with the aim of improving how you learn. According to Krashen’s input hypothesis (1985), we can only assimilate input which is one step above what we already know, and for this reason too we can expect students to learn better from their peers in many instances than from their teachers. Social interaction and teacher support can provide the *scaffolding* (Wood, Bruner et al. 1976) necessary to allow students to move into their Zone of Proximal Development² (Vygotsky 1978) in this as in any other area.

Thirdly, it is understood that self-esteem is both a pre-requisite *for* and consequence *of* work for autonomy (Legenhausen 2008). It is therefore fundamentally important that work undertaken takes place in a safe learning environment, and that there is a strong sense of trust within the group. All activities must foster this positive group dynamic and reinforce students’ belief in their capacity to take control of their own learning. If the intervention “works” we should expect to see an increase in student confidence and perhaps intrinsic motivation, both factors closely linked to self-esteem.

This brings us to the hypothesis on which this study is based. If we assume, as Piaget (1950;1972) and Montessori (1967;1971) affirm, that children are born with the innate capacity to learn autonomously, but that this skill has somehow been dulled through their

educational experience or upbringing, it is quite conceivable that the attitude of teacher-dependence can be unlearned, under the right conditions. It was the aim of the current study to embark on an attempt to carry out this process of awareness-raising by employing a double-barrage of 'autonomising' language learning tasks and structured reflective tasks. The aim is, perhaps paradoxically, to help learners towards independence via the interdependence of the students.

In this paper I describe my own attempts to design a programme of activities which would help promote learner autonomy, and focus specifically on the following questions:

- I How do these particular students react to different activities designed to promote their autonomy?
- II. What lessons can we learn from their responses to help make learner training programmes more effective (and enjoyable) for our students?

These questions are considered key, because if our attempts to promote autonomy are to be successful, we need to count on the learners as active participants in informing all our efforts. 'Affect' has been widely recognised (Arnold 1999) as a key factor in determining the success of language learning, and, as discussed above, moves to promote autonomy can be perceived as threatening by students and teachers alike. For this reason the present study pays close attention to the voices of the learners, and gives considerable weight to their words in the evaluation of activities undertaken. It is assumed that an activity will not be effective if it does not have the students' support, or if it takes them too far outside their comfort zone.

Furthermore, through learners' explanations of what works or doesn't work, and why, we can better adapt our teaching practice to the target group. The learners are after all in the best position to teach us to 'do' autonomy in a way which is relevant and appropriate for them. In this case, the target group is composed of Spanish university students. However, these learners are simply a product of the social and educational system at work in Spain, and more particularly in Castilla La Mancha, so it is reasonable to suppose that dominant characteristics of the group will be shared with both teenage and adult learners from the same background.

2. Methods and Procedures

The present study follows the methodology of Action Research, being based on: a) the identification of a problem (excessive teacher-dependence on the part of students, combined with the need to adapt teaching-styles to the requirements of current legislation); b) a hypothesis (it is possible, under the right conditions, to enable our students to take greater control over their own learning), c) direct intervention to try to resolve the problem and d) analysis and interpretation of data (cf. Nunan 1992). The research takes the form of a Case Study of a specific class, and whilst the results cannot be generalised beyond that context, they may give valuable insights which can be relevant to other teachers struggling to 'teach for autonomy' from within a fairly traditional educational system.

The study is not a formal experiment, as the number of variables in an 'ordinary' class

situation is too great to effectively control. Irregularity of attendance is not the least of these impediments. Nonetheless, the different research tools used generate both quantitative and qualitative data which provide a considerable body of richly descriptive information for interpretation. To assure the maximum internal validity of the study, the data was obtained from a variety of sources, including questionnaires and written reflections, teacher's observations and personal interviews.

The Group Under Study

The research was carried out by the class-teacher (myself) of a group of some 20 students in their second year of the degree of English Philology, at the University of Castilla la Mancha, and in the context of their regular English language classes. However, for various reasons beyond the teacher's control, some of the students did not participate in all the activities. Consequently the analysis of data is limited to those 14 students who completed all the relevant questionnaires and attended more than 60% of classes. It was felt that students whose attendance was very irregular had insufficient information to evaluate the process and, moreover, that any change in their beliefs concerning their learning-process could not be attributed to the present study.

Activities Carried Out

Throughout the academic year, activities were carried out within the context of the normal, programmed class- and homework time, designed to further the linguistic aims of the established teaching plan whilst at the same time obliging students to take on more responsibility and/or to reflect on their learning process. All activities were carried out entirely in English, with the exception of contact with Spanish speakers in bookshops, family members and friends consulted for research purposes etc. (see the 'set-book' tasks below). Each activity was designed to impact on one of the areas considered essential for the autonomous learner and outlined in Holec's definition above. The only area of Holec's definition which was not directly addressed through the activities was the issue of control over the timing of learning activities and processes.

Many of the ideas used are inspired by the work of Leni Dam (1995; 2008), David Little and Radka Perclová (Little and Perclová 2003) and some of the activities are derived from related activities found in the European Languages Portfolio (Ministerio de Educación 2004). Given that learning to learn and the development of learner autonomy are key goals of the European Languages Portfolio (PEL) and that the relevant components in the PEL have a strong theoretical basis, the PEL provides a good starting point for developing work on autonomy appropriate to the particular context and needs of our own learners. In all cases the activities used here were adapted to the target group according to the key notions established in the introduction to this article. Activities taking place later in the cycle develop out of the feedback received in the early stages of the research, according to the cyclical nature typical of Action Research (Nunan 1992).

Table 1 shows a sample of the type of 'autonomising' language learning activities used, together with the *learning to learn* objective of each activity, while Table 2 lists the reflective activities undertaken throughout the course. The third column in Table 2 indicates the

contribution of the activity to the research aims. (There is, inevitably, an overlap between the two types of activities, because students are improving their English even as they struggle to express their ideas about how they learn, and who is to say that they do not reflect as they perform more practical tasks? However, for the sake of clarity the distinction will be maintained). I will proceed to explain the most salient aspects of certain key activities, although due to constraints of space, it is impossible to describe all the activities in detail.

Activity	“Hidden” learning to learn objective
The ‘set-book’	Introducing choice: learning to select appropriate learning materials
Internet research	Selecting learning materials critically, Integrating new learning
Peer reviewing of written work	Evaluating own and other’s work; Celebrating success, giving positive feedback; Developing critical language awareness; recognising errors
Portfolio of written work	Improving organisation; celebrating progress
Reviewing each other’s portfolios	As in (3) and (4)
Other: e.g. homework sharing, 2-minute talks (Dam 1995) setting up debates, peer evaluation of oral work etc.	Peer instruction, taking responsibility for own learning

Table 1. ‘Autonomising’ language learning activities.

Task/name of questionnaire	Explicit learning to learn objective	Contribution to the research aims
“Orientation session”	a) Self-assessment, setting goals, choosing and sharing methods for achieving them b) Feedback/reflection	a) Observation of how well students can perform these tasks b) Informs next stage
Goal review	Reviewing goals, recognising progress, revising and setting new goals	Observation of progress in goal-setting skills (arises from previous stage)
“Taking Control of your own learning”	Reflect on which activities help you learn best	Answer Research Questions
Final interviews	Reflect on what have learnt, try to integrate it	Confirm, inform and explain results of previous stages

Table 2. Reflective tasks.

Autonomising language learning activities

The ‘set’-book

Even when using a course-book for regular class-work and homework, there is always room for introducing additional, authentic materials which the learners choose themselves according to their own interests. In this case, learners were traditionally obliged to study a set modern novel throughout the year. In the interests of fostering students’ ability to select their own learning materials it seemed logical to delegate the choice of this book to the students. They were encouraged to choose different books according to their individual tastes, so that there would be a greater communicative objective in the language tasks arising, and to ensure everyone was really motivated to read.

In the preparatory phase, all students were required to find out about books they would like to read themselves in English, by visiting bookshops, consulting libraries, the Internet, friends etc. Basing their writing on the information found on back-covers of books or in book reviews, they were to write recommendations which were then put together to form a class ‘catalogue’. (In October 2009 the same activity was performed with a new class, but students uploaded their recommendations to the class blog. This had the additional advantage of saving on photocopying and ensuring students received a regular barrage of recommendations in their email accounts, increasing the “snowball” effect of enthusiasm – or peer pressure? – generated).

Guided by (but not limited to) these recommendations, students then decided on and started to read the novel of their choice. The book had to meet the following criteria:

- It must be written in contemporary English so that the student would pick up natural, up-to-date expressions appropriate for his own use in speech or writing;
- Students must find it sufficiently easy to read fluently;
- It should be ‘unputdownable’ i.e. a book they were really interested in and could read in bed or in the bath;
- Adapted texts were not acceptable.

During the year, various tasks were set with regard to the book, including oral presentations, a book review, a character study and various activities in which students were encouraged to focus on narrative and descriptive techniques, vocabulary and collocations, word order etc.

As mentioned above, all the tasks had a genuine communicative purpose since the students were describing books they had enjoyed which neither their class-mates nor the teacher had read.

Internet research

The linguistic aim of this activity was to improve students’ writing skills, specifically relating to three text types or styles: descriptions of people and places; book reviews and character studies.

The decision to work with the Internet was based on the fact that it offers a wide range of

authentic materials in English, including specifically designed “teaching” materials. While these materials are easy for students to access, they may have difficulty choosing from the wide range of resources available, and ascertaining which are reliable or relevant to their needs. Given that the Internet is increasingly the first point of reference for young people, it was considered essential to support students in making appropriate use of the materials they found, in the belief that this would afford them greater independence in organising their studies, and eventually, in the case of many graduates from this course, in organising the learning of their future students.

In this cycle of activities the students carried out a range of tasks designed to help them: (a) choose critically by applying their previous knowledge and with the help of their peers; (b) process and apply the information they discovered, and (c) integrate it within their existing skills and knowledge base.

Students performed an Internet search in Google or similar to find useful language and advice on how to write a description of a person or place in English. They made notes of the information they considered most relevant, and printed out key documents. In the next class the students presented their findings in groups and together evaluated their usefulness. The best recommendations were shared with the whole class in order to establish a set of guidelines for this type of writing.

Students then wrote a composition following the guidelines established in the previous class. In the next class students swapped essays with their partners and evaluated them against the same set of ‘learner-produced’ guidelines. Finally students reviewed and edited their compositions in the light of their friends’ comments and presented the final draft to the teacher for assessment.

Given the quality of useful and appropriate information which the students derived from this process, and the positive impact on the quality of students’ written work (especially on the variety and appropriateness of vocabulary used, the structural improvement and the interest of the content) the same method was applied later in the course for writing book reviews and character studies based on the “set” book.

Peer evaluation of written work

Whenever students wrote a composition, the first drafts were evaluated in pairs. In the case described above, arising from research on the Internet, the guidelines were established through negotiation between the students and with the teacher, thus increasing the students’ internalisation of the criteria to be applied. Of course, this procedure is time-consuming, and more frequently students were therefore asked to evaluate according to criteria provided by the teacher, as in Table 3, or simply to answer the questions:

(a) What did you like best about this essay? and (b) How could it be improved?

When reviewing your friends' compositions, check whether they have fulfilled the following requirements:

Answering the question

- Have they answered all parts of the question?
- Is everything relevant?
- Have they written the correct number of words?
- Have they organised their ideas appropriately, using one paragraph for each idea?
- Have they expressed their ideas clearly?

Accuracy

- Can you find any grammatical, spelling, vocabulary or punctuation errors?

Variety

- Have they used:
 - o A variety of grammatical structures (e.g. subordinate clauses, range of tenses)?
 - o Interesting vocabulary?
 - o Appropriate linking words?

Style

- Is the language/register used appropriate for this style of essay?

Does it read well? Is it natural? Does it flow?

(Criteria adapted from the students' book of "First Certificate Gold" (Newbrook et al. 2004))

Table 3. Example of criteria for peer-evaluation of written work.

Students were asked to correct or high-light any perceived grammatical, orthographic or lexical errors in pencil, leaving it to the 'author' of the original text to accept or reject the changes when editing the final draft.

Students were not expected to give a grade to the work, as previous experience with peer evaluation had shown students are often deeply uncomfortable with the idea of judging each other's work. For this reason they were strongly encouraged to point out positive aspects of each other's work and to help their partner improve it by making constructive suggestions. The aims of peer evaluation were clearly explained, stressing the value of increasing their awareness of error, and helping each other produce better quality work, with the consequent impact on their marks. Students were encouraged to say what they thought honestly but kindly, always with the intention of helping their partner.

Portfolio of written work

Since writing is the Achilles' heel of many of our students, I decided to adapt the idea of the portfolio as conceived by the European Languages Portfolio according to the immediate needs of the learners in question. Students were therefore instructed to dedicate a folder to the subject and organise it in the following sections:

- Learning to learn: containing all the written reflections and questionnaires, including

- self-assessment and learning objectives;
- Reference: for organising grammar and vocabulary notes; recommendations on how to improve different genres of written text; examples of different text types;
- Error check-list: derived from their corrected compositions, a personalised list composed by the students of their own typical errors;
- Compositions: Including all essays, both the original, with the partner's annotations, and intermediate and final drafts with their mark and teacher's observations.
- Tests and exam compositions
- Others (optional)

A formative mark was given on the contents of the Portfolio mid-term, and the final mark represented the global evaluation for the end-of-year written course-work component.

Reviewing each other's portfolios

After the formative evaluation students were asked, in groups, to review each other's portfolios and answer questions similar to those used for the peer-evaluation of written work (see Table 4). The idea for the activity arises from Little and Perclová's (2003) teacher's guide to the European Languages Portfolio (ELP), where students are encouraged to 'show and tell' what they have in their Portfolios on a regular basis, as a way to celebrate the work done, recognise progress and think about points for improvement.

Instructions: Form groups of four. Pass round your portfolios, have a good look at each one, and then fill in your comments in the table below:

The best thing about this Portfolio is:	You could improve this Portfolio by:

Table 4. Form used for the group evaluation of Portfolios.

The table shown above was then returned, with the Portfolio, to its owner, and students were encouraged to discuss the comments made. As homework they were then asked to revise their Portfolio and try to improve it, if appropriate, in line with the comments made by the other students.

Homework-sharing and other day-to-day activities

The above are the activities explicitly evaluated in the questionnaires. Other activities took place throughout the year, including peer assessment of oral work, "homework" sharing etc. (Dam 1995) all of which aimed to give students more responsibility and allow them to participate more actively in their learning.

Following Dam's advice, homework-sharing was introduced from the beginning as a way of encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning, and become more

actively involved with tasks from the book. For grammar exercises, students had to compare their answers in pairs and, in the case of any disagreement, justify their discrepancies by referring to the grammar reference section at the back of the book, or their own beliefs about the language. Students were required to reach an agreement. This allowed the teacher time to respond to individual queries whilst other students were busily engaged in defending their answers. Finally the exercises were corrected quickly together, to double-check students' conclusions, but generally there were very few questions to be resolved at this stage, and students were quickly able to offer a clear justification for their answers.

Similarly, for reading comprehension exercises, students had to provide the evidence from the text which supported their answer. For every answer, whether in a reading comprehension or a grammar exercise, students were required to be 100% sure they were right, and be able to prove it. It was hoped in this way to counteract a very prevalent attitude of students whereby they plump for the answer that feels good rather quickly and hope for the best, relying on the fact that it is the teacher's job to "give" them the right answer.

Where students had completed a reading comprehension, they were required to summarise it to their partner and give their opinion of the issues discussed in the text, or to prepare questions for discussion in groups arising from the theme of the text.

These activities were not explicitly evaluated in the questionnaires, as they were a prevalent aspect of the focus adopted rather than clearly identifiable, discreet activities, but comments made in the final interviews appear to refer to the more active role required of the students and the benefits of this approach.

Reflective activities

In the following sections I describe the reflective activities outlined in Table 2 which are specifically evaluated in the analysis of results which follows.

Orientation Session (Mid-October)

This session was designed to help students analyse their strengths and weaknesses, identify priority areas for improvement and find methods for achieving these new goals. A similar activity entitled "Planes de Futuro" is put forward in the language biography of the Spanish version of the ELP (MEC 2004), but the activities used here aim to achieve the same goals of reflection and orientation via a more interactive and communicative process, where the methods, goals etc. are put forward by the students themselves.

Students were required to: i) assess their own language skills against the Self-assessment table from the ELP Language Passport (based on the Common European Reference Framework), in order to identify their strengths and weaknesses; ii) use this information to identify their personal learning goals; iii) think about what tasks they could carry out and what resources they could use to achieve these goals; iv) survey other class-members to share ideas and finally v) evaluate the process by answering the questions:

- a) Did you like these activities? Why/why not?
- b) Were they useful? Why/why not?
- c) How could we make these activities more useful?

In their answers to question (c) above, two students expressed the need for more guidance, and two others expressed the desire to know all the other students' ideas. As the activity had generated many good suggestions, it was decided to pool these in writing and ask students at a later date to discuss them and identify which they personally would find most helpful. It was hoped that this would respond to both needs identified above, whilst reinforcing the message that students could find solutions to their own problems if they worked together, and need not always rely entirely on the teacher.

Goal review (February 2009, i.e. start of the second semester)

In the above activity most students had no problem self-assessing and thinking of autonomous activities to improve their skills and share with other students, such as watching films in English, using specific web-sites they had found to improve grammar, etc. On the other hand, observation of the process of goal-setting showed that students' goals were often very vague or over-ambitious, so the following activity was planned to help refine their ability to set and achieve appropriate and realistic learning objectives.

Students were asked to review the goals they had set in October in order to recognise progress made towards these and identify new goals for the end of the year. It was felt that goals should be reviewed periodically in order to increase students' sense of being in control of their own learning. Students answered the questions shown in Table 5.

1. Look at the goals you set yourself in October. What did you decide to do before Christmas?
2. Did you do it? Why? Why not?
3. What are your goals from now until June? (What do you need to improve)?
4. Do you need to revise your goals on the basis of your experience so far?
5. How will you record your progress towards your goals?

Table 5. "Goal Review".

These questions aimed to establish whether any possible failure to fulfil goals was due to having set inappropriate objectives, and if this was the case, to help the student refine this skill.

"Taking Control of your own learning"

In this questionnaire students compare their feelings towards different 'autonomising' tasks. A list of key activities is given and students are asked to rate each one according to: (a) "How I feel about this activity" and (b) "How useful is it?" They evaluated each on a four-point scale from 1 = very positive to 4 = very negative for each category (feelings, and usefulness). Students were also asked to answer two open questions designed to help them reflect on the relevance of these tasks and think about their long-term learning: (c) "What have I learned from this activity?" and (d) How will it help me in the future?

The answers to these questions also helped to clarify the reasons for responding as they did to questions (a) and (b).

Final interviews

After analysing the questionnaires described above, a sub-group of ten students was selected

for personal interviews in order to confirm and contrast information received through surveys and observation, and to acquire a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the answers given on paper.

It was considered more important to choose a representative sample of the diverse opinions held by the group than to interview all the members of the class, so that more time could be dedicated to each member of the group and a fairly thorough picture obtained of the attitudes and behaviours of each one. For this reason the sub-group included those students who had expressed both the most negative as well as the most positive views about the learning activities undertaken. Given that exam-success is a key factor affecting students' motivation, self-esteem and beliefs about their own learning, the group also included four students who had passed the previous academic year, (English Language 1), four who had not, and two students who were repeating the course of English Language 2.

The interviews were based on a series of key questions relating to the activities undertaken, but were conducted as semi-open interviews, and were adapted in each case to respond to the opinions voiced in the questionnaires. The interviews were recorded with a small digital voice recorder and were later transcribed in full.

Whilst the initial motivation for conducting the interviews was to compare information with that received in previous phases, they also had an important pedagogic function, given that they served as a further reflective mechanism to help students question their attitudes (constructs) with relation to their learning.

Thus a series of reflective tasks was used with the aim of helping students become more aware of their responsibility for their own learning. These awareness-raising activities were accompanied by day-to-day teaching/learning activities designed to help learners become more independent. Scaffolding was provided in the form of structured reflection and interactive activities with the aim that they should feel secure and capable of carrying out their new role. The teacher was available at all times as a point of reference and support, but the aim was predominantly to allow the students to find solutions through helping one another, in order to reinforce the message that they could operate independently of the teacher.

3. Results, Discussion and Conclusions

In this section I endeavour to answer the research questions cited above by analysing students' responses to the questionnaire "Taking Control of your own learning", contrasting this information where appropriate with impressions gained from observation and quotations from the final interviews. All quotations are in the students' original words.

Figure 1 shows the feelings expressed by the students with respect to the different activities described above, while Figure 2 represents their perception of the usefulness of these tasks. In each case, strong positive answers are to the left of the graph, followed by positive answers, with negative and finally very negative answers to the right of the graph, and in lighter shading.

In fact it can be seen at a glance that there is little difference between the opinions expressed in the two graphs, suggesting that in this case at least students' enjoyment of a task

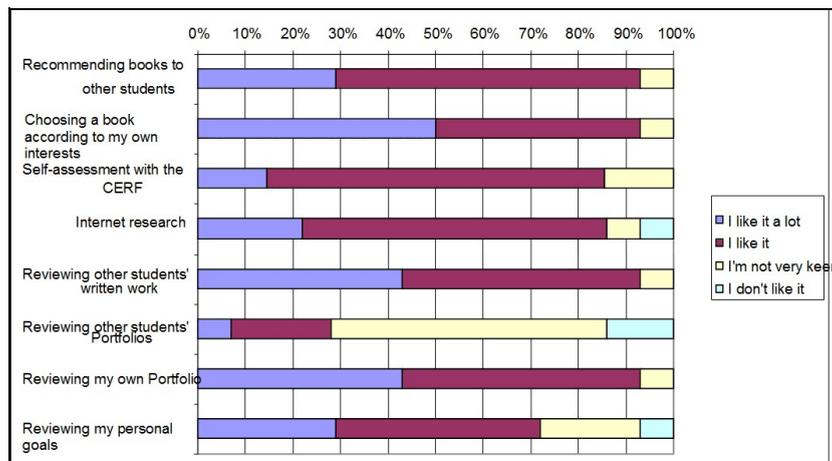


Figure 1. Students' feelings about the activities

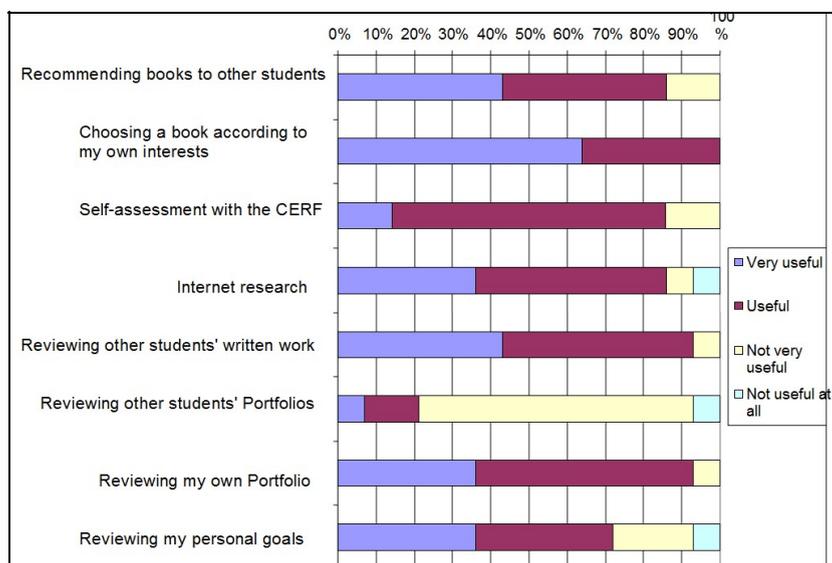


Figure 2. Students' perception of the usefulness of the activities.

was closely related to their perception of its usefulness.

Generally the response to all but one of the activities is very positive and whilst this is encouraging, it is assumed that students may well have endeavoured to please their teacher by giving the 'right' or expected answer. For this reason the value of this analysis rests above all on the comparison between students' opinions of the different tasks. The explanations offered by students to justify their preferences help to confirm and clarify the answers given, so a representative sample of these is provided in the analysis of each activity.

The activities relating to the personal choice of a set book were clearly the most popular tasks, whilst all the other activities were positively evaluated with the notable exception of the activity "Reviewing other students' Portfolios", which received a strong negative reaction. Surprisingly perhaps, the next highest-rating activities after those connected with the "set"

book were “reviewing other students’ written work” and “reviewing my own Portfolio”, both of which would appear to be similar to reviewing other students’ Portfolios. Possible reasons for this apparent anomaly will be discussed below.

The next most popular activities were searching for learning materials on the Internet and self-assessment, although the work with the Internet had the most very positive responses (“I like it a lot”/“Very useful”).

I will proceed to comment in more detail on these different reactions following the order established in this brief summary, that is to say, starting from the two extremes of most and least popular activities and then analysing the rest of the activities in descending order of popularity, with the aim of establishing the reasons which could lead to a more or less positive reaction.

Recommending, choosing and reading a contemporary novel

As mentioned above, the activities relating to the choice of a book stood out for the positive reaction from students, being the most popular and above all the most useful in the opinion of the students. The comments in Table 6 indicate the degree of enthusiasm generated by this simple change to traditional practice, and how novel it was in their experience to have any control over the contents of what they were studying. As we see, expressions such as “a special interest/amazed/delighted/enjoy” predominate. This enthusiasm was contagious, and increased through the group presentation activities, creating a snowball effect of enthusiasm for reading new books and sharing recommendations. This fact is all the more remarkable given that the *majority* of the students admitted that they had never read a book in English on their own initiative, despite the fact that they were in the second year of a degree course in English Philology.

This is the first time I have chosen a book to read, because the teacher always told me the book that I had to read

It seems to me more productive than reading a book chosen by others – if you have a special interest by a book or film, you learn faster.(i) It encourages you to read more in the future.

Sometimes the teacher’s taste is not the students’ taste.

Choosing a book freely amazed me since I had always read a book out of a sense of duty without the chance of choosing the title of it. So I am delighted with this kind of job.

This activity is useful to learn more vocabulary and moreover to enjoy reading with a book which you have chosen. I’ve learned to think about which book is the best to choose.(ii)

In the future I’ll be able to choose a book, teachers won’t have to tell me it.(ii)

Table 6. Comments about the ‘set’ book.

This reaction confirms the affirmations of proponents of autonomy (Dam 1995; Dickinson 1996), that choice over learning content and materials is a key motivating factor. Moreover,

the comments underlined in the table seem to provide initial evidence of progression in students' attitudes concerning key objectives of learner autonomy, such as: (i) reflecting about how to learn better and (ii) developing the ability to choose learning materials.

From my own point of view as their teacher, the written work based on the book (a book review and a character study) stood out in comparison to the typical essays produced during the rest of the course for the increase in maturity, improved expression, organisation and "flow". This may be the result of various factors: students received copious comprehensible input (Krashen 1985); they received it with motivation and interest; they studied it in a focussed way, by observing the narrative and descriptive techniques employed by the author, and they integrated the new language in their compositions to produce a high quality final product which was nonetheless distinctively personal.

Reviewing other students' Portfolios

Given that we often learn more from our mistakes, however painful, than our successes, it is worth examining the reasons given by the students for their strong negative reaction to this activity. Two main points appear from such an examination: (a) the activity was rather boring or didn't teach them anything new, and (b) students felt uncomfortable evaluating other students' work, considering it "a bit personal".

One explanation given for the first point was that "you have said to us the sections, which are the same for everybody" - indeed the organisation followed by the students conformed mostly to the structure recommended by the teacher, and relatively few students had supplemented the basic obligatory materials. The idea of working with, and being evaluated on the basis of, a Portfolio was entirely new to the students and it had taken a considerable time simply to establish the basic discipline of storing work in a relevant order, arranging reference materials appropriately etc. Consequently little emphasis was laid on the value of personalising the content. If the idea of the Portfolio were carried through over a longer term, it would no doubt be easier to gradually build up the quantity of personalised learning materials and products contained in the folder, adding relevance and value to the activity of showing and sharing the Portfolio.

There were, nonetheless, a few positive comments, including those seen in Table 7, which seem to imply: (i) reflection about the process of learning, development of organisational strategies and hence management of learning; (ii) recognition of specific language learning strategies and (iii) a recognition of the value of the activity for future professional practice. These reactions suggest that the activity could be worthwhile if it were carried out in a different way, or if, as mentioned above, the personal element of the portfolio had been further developed in all cases.

<p><u>It's an excellent way to try to compare different ways to classify your contents to make easier your learning (i). For example people classify the new vocabulary making long lists of synonymous words, other people organise it by semantic fields... you can decide if you should make like them or not (ii)</u></p> <p><u>I gain experience to be critical with my future pupils' work (iii)</u></p>

Table 7. Positive comments about reviewing other students' portfolios.

The most common response, however, concerned feelings of discomfort about judging other students' work. In order to appreciate the significance of these comments, it is necessary to examine reactions to the next most popular activity after the "set" book:

Reviewing other students' written work

The vast majority of the class reacted positively to this activity, with almost half the class considering it very useful. Only one student reacted in any way negatively, justifying her view with the opinion "I don't think everybody likes that the rest of the class analyse their work". Judging from the positive comments of the rest of the class, this student was speaking more on her own behalf than for her class-mates, but her point is clear - she doesn't like criticising her companions. From a purely subjective standpoint, as a British teacher with many years of teaching experience in Spain, I consider this dislike of criticising each other's work particularly strong amongst Spanish young people, who do not usually endeavour to stand out from the crowd. This common attitude makes it rather more difficult to initiate them in the work of peer evaluation, as they are slow to make suggestions for improvement. On the other hand, they tend to be very supportive of one another, and like to give positive evaluations of each other's work, which helps them gain in confidence. It is, however, necessary to refine this capacity so that they are able to identify precisely the positive aspects of the work they are evaluating.

In this case, students practised peer evaluation regularly throughout the year, which seemed to help them understand its purpose and improve their ability to criticise others' work constructively. The importance of training students in this skill is reflected in the first comment in Table 8 (i). The most common remark was that this had helped learners recognise their own errors and improve their writing, whilst many students considered it was important to develop this skill in preparation for their future work as teachers.

At first I think it was very boring but it is very useful know how other people write and how they express their ideas. It helps me to catch some ideas of my class-mates in order to improve my writing. (i)

I liked this experience because we could observe the most frequent errors [...] and we learned how to improve our narratives with the suggestions of the class

This will help me:

- Be a good English teacher
- Be critical with myself
- Accept my own mistakes

Table 8. Comments in favour of reviewing other students' written work.

This leaves us with the question, what was the difference between reviewing portfolios and reviewing other students' work, in this case, and why did one prove so popular and the other so unpopular?

The first point is that reviewing essays was perceived as very useful, and this fact

presumably helped override any initial discomfort. Yet there were also key differences in the way the activities were carried out which may help explain the different reactions. These differences are set out in Table 9.

Reviewing written work	Reviewing Portfolios
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried out in pairs • Took place before evaluation by the teacher • The students had to review each other's work according to clear, fixed criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carried out in small groups • Took place after the teacher's initial evaluation • Students had to respond to open questions (What do you like most about this Portfolio? How could it be improved?)

Table 9. Differences in presentation of the two activities.

Clearly, the differences shown in the table could help account for both the feeling of discomfort of students and their perception that the activity was not very useful. Working one-to-one is always "safer" emotionally than working in groups, and given that students are very sensitive to peer evaluation, it is worth bearing this in mind. As the peer evaluation of written work took place before the teacher's assessment, and students had opportunity to improve their work, and thus their mark, by adopting some of the suggestions received, it may have been perceived as having a more obvious purpose than the Portfolio activity, which took place after the initial, formative assessment. Students in the latter case were already conscious of what they needed to improve and therefore probably more prone to feel embarrassed by what they saw as the shortcomings of their work. Finally, in order for the activity to be effective, students seem to need very clear criteria for evaluation, as they are clearly not yet confident of their own criteria for ascertaining what is and is not 'good' work. This is therefore a skill which needs to be developed over a longer period.

For all the above reasons it was felt that any work of this kind should initially comply with the characteristics set out in the left-hand side of table 9 with the aim of lowering the affective barrier (Krashen 1983) and keeping students sufficiently within their comfort zone so that the activity could achieve its purpose. As students become more confident with this style of working, it may be that such tasks can be successfully carried out in larger groups and in a more open way.

Reviewing my own Portfolio

This activity was almost as popular as the peer-evaluation of written work: again, all but one reacted positively, with almost half of these students saying they liked the activity very much. The activity was considered only slightly less useful than peer-reviewing of written work, with one less student claiming to find it very useful. In the final interviews the portfolio stood out as the single element which had most helped students to organize their learning, to learn from their mistakes and to recognise their progress. Table 10 shows the most frequently repeated comments.

- i) I've learned from my errors (>two-thirds of respondents)
- ii) I liked it because it helped me improve my organisation. It's a good idea which I can now use in other subjects.
- iii) The Portfolio is great because here is all the information of the course.
- iii) It will be very useful when I come to prepare my exams.

Table 10. Comments about "Reviewing my own Portfolio".

It should be stressed that in this as in all cases, the comments are free answers to open questions, no suggestions were offered to guide students, and that the high incidence of comments such as (i) therefore seem to suggest a common recognition arising directly from the students' experience.

It was felt that comment (ii) suggests the possibility of future transfer of skills to other areas of learning, one of the basic objectives of autonomy. The remaining comments (i, iii and iv) give the impression that the Portfolio had contributed towards the students sense of control over their own learning.

The only slightly negative reaction was from a highly autonomous student who acknowledged that she hadn't liked the activity (although she did consider it useful) because it obliged her to confront her own lack of organisation.

Internet research

This activity had a positive reaction from all but two of the respondents, although a third student who claimed to have enjoyed the activity also made a very relevant comment which is included in Table 11 (i).

- I think that if you get any excellent information about it, it's the best way to do it, but most of the time you can find wrong information and it can be confusing and unsuitable. (i)
- This is the least useful activity, because we can look on the Internet when we want. (ii)
- I think that the Internet isn't the best source. (iii)

Table 11. Negative comments about Internet research.

The first comment demonstrates why it is necessary to offer scaffolding to students who are just starting to perform Internet research in the foreign language. Although students are accustomed to using email, google, wikipedia and Facebook etc., the majority had not previously had experience in sifting the enormous and very variable store of materials available on the Internet in English. For the first time searcher, the Internet can certainly be confusing, and this comment suggests that it would be worth carrying out the first search together, in the computer room, so that students had the support of each other and the teacher whenever necessary. However, the student who considered this activity "the least useful" was already accustomed to searching for information on the Internet in English, and therefore considered that the activity offered her nothing new.

The third student, who considered that the Internet was not “the best source”, explained that her scepticism was due to concerns about the reliability of information available. However, in the extract from her final interview (see Table 12) it is apparent that her opinion has changed slightly as a result of the work carried out. She sees the value of the Internet but considers that the teacher’s criteria is still essential in guiding the choice of materials: whilst the students’ are best placed to determine relevance and appropriateness for their level and interests, the teacher is still needed to help identify which pages are more accurate.

Interviewer: At the beginning of the year you mentioned that you didn’t much like the Internet as a source of material, you didn’t think it was very trustworthy...

Student: Mm, yes but now, we have worked a lot with the Internet[...]and I’ve learned that it can be useful sometimes.

I: Obviously you have to choose very carefully...

S: Yes, because some web-pages aren’t very good made, well made.

I: Do you think it is possible for you as a student to select which ones are good, which ones are better. Can you recognise better materials?

S: Mmm.. yes, sometimes, but not always, because you can recognise if some pages have very big grammatical mistakes but other times you don’t know.

I: Yes, but here for example you say, “We know ourselves better than the teacher and we have to know which materials are better for us”, and I think that’s very true, that you recognise, oh that’s what I need...

S: That that’s what I need, yes, but not what is better, for example you know which you are going to understand better than others, but not if it is the most accurate.

I: So it needs to be a combination of you finding and the teacher helping you to choose. I mean, on the Internet anyone can write anything, and sometimes it is completely wrong, you know, you are right to be cautious, it’s very important, and to be critical.

Table 12. Extract from Interview with S1 about the Internet.

The remaining comments were all positive and emphasised the importance of having gained confidence to carry out future searches in the target language. The activity was considered worth-while in having encouraged students to access the wealth of authentic materials available and to help them start to develop a critical awareness in their choice. The fact that some students still expressed difficulties in selecting appropriate or reliable information points to the need for follow-up work to help establish criteria for the selection of appropriate web-sites and to improve their ability to define relevant search mechanisms.

Self-assessment

Like the previous activity with the Internet, self-assessment was rated positively by all but two of the participants in both graphs, although there were slightly less very positive reactions. The most repeated reason for finding the activity useful was because it helped them to identify what they needed to improve, whilst only two students explicitly commented on recognising what they already knew. Further comments are given in Table 13.

<p>This task has been one of the most useful I have done. I've realised what I know and what I must improve</p> <p>I've learned what I can do to get a higher level</p> <p>This will help me know what my level is in each moment during my English degree</p> <p>Now I'm able to analyse my own learning and I can improve it.</p> <p>I learn to be critical with myself</p> <p>Helps us to think about our purposes in this course and the methods of study that we can use to learn more and better English.</p>

Table 13. Positive comments about self-assessment.

These reactions confirm that self-assessment is a key tool in increasing students' awareness of what is required in learning a language, and hence giving them a stronger sense of control over their own learning process.

On the other hand, two students didn't like the activity, and one didn't find it useful, expressing her frustration thus: "I know that I must improve a lot of things but I don't know how to do! [...] This activity only shows our deficiency in some points of English that we have to improve". In response to the question, what have you learnt from this activity, she answered "Nothing, I sometimes think that I am a bit foolish and I could make a big effort". Although these are the only negative comments, they are very significant, as they represent the views of a conscientious and hard-working student who has previously religiously followed the practice of memorising the text book, with very disappointing results, but who does not feel ready or prepared for autonomous learning. The comments warn us about the possible negative impact on students' self-esteem of the act of self-assessment.

Reviewing my personal goals

Towards the end of the academic year, and after much work focussed on the language learning process, this was the last task performed before completing this comparative evaluation of activities. This fact may help to explain the perception of a certain sense of weariness on the part of the students when asked to review the learning goals set in October. This impression is backed up by consulting the graphs: only ten out of fourteen rate the activity positively, and less than four of them liked it a lot, making it the least popular activity after "reviewing each other's portfolios". Although the evaluation is still positive, (unlike the latter activity), these

factors warn us of the dangers of boredom associated with an excessive focus on the process of learning, even when the activities are fully integrated in the teaching plan and used as a further means for developing the target language, as in this case.

Clearly, the act of reviewing objectives may seem repetitive, but it is so novel for students that we cannot expect them to learn to set and attain appropriate learning goals without practice.

It also appears that, as with self-assessment, reviewing goals can be discouraging or have negative effects on students' self-esteem, not just in the case of weaker students, as seen in the previous activity, but also for students with high self-expectations, as illustrated by the following comment from one of the most able students in the group: "In general I don't like thinking about goals because if you don't achieve them you feel frustrated. From my point of view it's better to work bit by bit, without persecuting big and sometimes impossible aims". In fact, this comment shows a misunderstanding of the concept of learning objectives: as commented earlier, many of the students tended to focus on distant end-goals rather than on small steps to be taken immediately. Working learning objectives are just such "bit by bit" plans which should help students feel a sense of progress and pride in their achievements. Reactions like those of these two students emphasise the need for great sensitivity in dealing with self-assessment and learning goals, pointing up the importance of the "counselling" side of the teacher's role when working for learner autonomy.

On the other hand, a number of positive comments (see Table 14) suggest that some students *had* understood the purpose of the activity and found it useful.

I've learned the ability to better myself. It will help me to set new goals in my life.

In my opinion it is very interesting for us to put our best and our worst skills and trying to improve the second ones in the future with a limit of time.

I have realised that I can do much more of what I actually do

It's helpful to be constant in our studies trying to get all our goals. This will really be useful in our future

Table 14. Positive comments about reviewing goals

This impression was reinforced by comments from the interviews which revealed that certain students had voluntarily and without my knowledge, carried on the practice of setting and reviewing their goals on a regular basis throughout the year. Table 15 shows an example of how one of the weaker students (linguistically) had quite independently adopted this new way of working.

<p>Interviewer: Do you feel now you have a better idea how to achieve your goals?</p> <p>Student: Yes (emphatically). Because in my opinion the year before I didn't have any goal, only study, study, study, and that's all. But this year, I try to every month I had a goal and I think I achieve it.</p> <p>I: Right, so on your own you've chosen to set yourself goals...??!</p> <p>S: Yes, yes.</p> <p>I: Good for you. You feel you know where you're going? You have a sense of direction?</p> <p>S: Yes, yes, now, yes.</p>

Table 15. Extract from interview with S2.

Finally, activities such as homework sharing were not explicitly evaluated, but general comments about the approach adopted include frequent references to the fact that students had been more active, and that this had in turn helped to create a stronger relationship of trust between students

4. Concluding Remarks

In summary, students reacted positively to most of the activities and their comments show a growing appreciation of the purpose behind them. The most popular activities were those which allowed them to achieve specific objectives of the teaching programme using innovative methods, especially the activities relating to the personal choice of a set-book, the Internet and reviewing their class-mates' compositions. In other words, students preferred tasks which they perceived to be completely integrated in the "normal" work of the class. In particular, the opportunity to choose the learning materials on which class-work was based was seen to be very motivating and productive. As one student said in her interview, you can't change the grammar, but there is no reason why students should not participate, together with the teacher, in choosing the materials and topics used to study the language.

From the perspective of the teacher, counting on the help of the students in the choice of learning materials can save on preparation time, and ensure that materials are constantly updated. The interest invested by students in the materials they choose ensures that they enjoy working with them, and releases the teacher from what Illich (1971) describes as bribing or compelling the student to find the time and the will to learn.

The reflective activities were also well-received, and considered reasonably useful in general, but they did not arouse the same degree of interest as those activities perceived as more "active". This may be due in part to the perception that they didn't help students directly to learn the course "contents" or prepare them explicitly for the final exams, which always tend to be foremost in our students' minds. (This last fact, of course, has implications concerning the need to emphasise formative assessment and evaluate life-skills such as

'learning to learn' as well as traditional language skills).

In addition, reflection necessarily implies an interruption in the *activity* of learning to allow the analysis of the *process* of learning. As students are subject to a frenetic rhythm of classes, compulsory assignments and assessments, it is natural that the very act of stopping to think can itself generate stress and appear to be a waste of time (a comment made by one student). However, if students discover that reflection helps them to improve their learning, this attitude may change. Whilst there are, inevitably, some students who do not feel comfortable with reflective work, probably as a result of their particular learning styles, comments generally revealed that reflection had played an important part in students' learning during the year. Even the student who considered reflection a waste of time wrote that "this last (reflection) was better, because it was when I realised how much we have learned, with your help".

As a general observation, all the students cooperated in a very positive manner with the teacher's attempts to foster their autonomy, despite displaying certain consternation when new activities were introduced. They reacted with humour and displayed a growing willingness to offer their ideas, perform their own research and share their findings with the rest of the class. It was particularly encouraging to see the increase in self-confidence of some of the shyer class-members.

Nonetheless, some students' discomfort with self-assessment and monitoring learning objectives serves as a warning that this type of activity can have a negative impact on students' self-confidence, that pre-requisite for developing learner autonomy (Dam 1995, Legenhausen 2008). This particular type of reflection can be a powerful ally in the awareness-raising process, but it is a double-edged sword, which must be used with great care. It is therefore imperative to get feedback from students when undertaking these tasks, and to follow up negative reactions with individual students. This can happen on an *ad hoc* basis (as happened in these cases), by simply taking students aside to discuss their concerns, or through scheduled learning-to-learn tutorials (currently being trialled with a new group), which may turn out to be more effective in offering the necessary encouragement and helping students develop their own personalised learning plans.

The use of a portfolio was universally applauded, whilst the benefits of peer-reviewing of compositions were widely recognised. On the other hand, the negative reception of peer-reviewing of portfolios underscores the fine line we tread with this sort of activity, which can easily push students outside their comfort zone if handled incorrectly or in the absence of the essential atmosphere of mutual trust. We mustn't forget that the key to success in autonomy is relationship and negotiation, as Elspeth Broady reminds us: "a deficit model of autonomy - our learners don't have it, we need to develop it - can undermine our ability as teachers to build effective learning environments and relationships with our students" (Broady 2009).

Fortunately students can seemingly forgive a few mistakes when they are convinced that the teacher is genuinely concerned for their learning, and from my own point of view the experience convinced me of the beneficial effects of adopting an 'autonomising focus' with an increase in activities which explicitly target language learning awareness and a gradual delegation of responsibilities to the students. A definite positive spin-off of the whole process is the improved relationship with the class and the sense of working together as a team on a

common project: their language learning. As one student put it, “I think it’s better, it’s useful think that you can be important for the teacher or for other students, and I think it’s better have responsibility about your study and sometimes with other students. And it’s more interesting to you, because you see what your progress are, and it’s good.”

To conclude, Picasso’s words as translated at the start of this article appear to be the key, as Leslie Dickinson would no doubt agree (ref. Dickinson 1996): reflection is valuable to help students realise what they have achieved and give focus to their actions, but it is doing what they can’t do – successfully – which builds self-esteem, initiative and motivation, and may even help to reverse the vicious circle of teacher-dependency discussed in the opening paragraphs.

Notes

1. For the sake of brevity, when referring to a hypothetical student in a general sense, I have used the masculine form.

2. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) refers to the knowledge and functions which have not yet matured but which are in the process of maturing. What a learner can do with help today (that is his ZPD) he will be able to do alone in the future.

References

- Arnold, Jane (1999): *Affect in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Benson, Philip (1995): “A Critical View of Learner Training” *originally published in Learning Learning* 2/2 (July 1995)
[<http://penta.ufrgs.br/edu/telelab/7/phil22e.htm>].
- Broady, Elspeth (2009): “Autonomy and identity, seeing and moving comfort zones”. At SWON Autonomy in a Connected World Conference. Milton Keynes Open University.
- Dam, Leni (1995): *Learner Autonomy 3: From Theory to Classroom Practice*. Dublin: Authentik.
- _____. (2008): “How do we recognise an Autonomous Classroom? – Revisited”. In TESOL Symposium on Learner Autonomy: Sevilla.
- Dickinson, Leslie (1996): *Learner autonomy 2: Learner training for language learning*. Dublin: Authentik.
- Freire, Paulo (1994): “Educación y participación comunitaria”. In *Nuevas Perspectivas Críticas en Educación*. Barcelona: Paidós Educador.
- Holec, Henri (1981): *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning*. Oxford: Pergamon. (first pub. 1979, Strasbourg: Council of Europe).
- Illich, Ivan (1971): *Deschooling Society* (originally published in New York: Harper & Row).
[http://www.davidtinapple.com/illich/1970_deschooling.html].
- Krashen, Stephen (1983): *The Natural Approach*. Oxford: Pergamon.
- _____. (1985): *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. Longman.
- Legenhausen, Lienhard (2008): “Arguments for Learner Autonomy”. In TESOL Symposium on Learner Autonomy: Sevilla.
- Little, David (1991): *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin: Authentik.
- Little, David & Perclová, Radka., (2003): *European Language Portfolio: Guide for Teachers and*

- Teacher trainers*. Council of Europe.
- Ministerio de Educación y Ciencia/Consejo de Europa (2004): "Portfolio Europeo de las Lenguas, Modelo acreditado nº 59". n.p.
- Montessori, Maria (1967): *To Educate the Human Potential*. Madras, India: Kalakshetra Publications, 1948.
- _____. (1971): *The Absorbent Mind*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston. In Jacky Newbrook, Judith Wilson & Richard Acklam (2004): *First Certificate Gold*. London: Longman.
- Nunan, David (1992): *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Piaget, Jean (1950): *The Psychology of Intelligence*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- _____. (1972): *Science of Education and the Psychology of the Child* (rev. ed.) New York: Viking, 1965.
- Scharle, Agota & Szabó Anita (2000): *Learner Autonomy: A guide to developing learner responsibility*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Van Lier, Leo (1996): *Interaction in the Language Curriculum: Awareness, Autonomy and Authenticity*. London: Longman.
- Vygotsky, Lev (1978): *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Wenden, Anita. (1987): "Incorporating Learner Training in the Classroom". In Wenden, Rubin, Joan. (eds.) *Learner Strategies in Language Learning*. London: Prentice Hall.
- Wood, David, Bruner, Jerome & Ross, Gail (1976): "The role of tutoring in problem solving". In *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry* N° 17.