

Language learner autonomy basics

- In formal contexts autonomous language learners
 - are able to take charge of their own learning (Holec 1981)
 - develop a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action (Little 1991)
 - can manage the affective dimension of their learning experience to motivational advantage (Ushioda 1996)
 - become more autonomous in language learning as they become more autonomous in language use, and vice versa (Little 1991)
- The freedom that learner autonomy implies is always conditional and constrained:
 - because we are social beings, our independence is always balanced by dependence
 - our essential condition is one of interdependence (Little 1991)
- Like the acquisition of language, the development of learner autonomy depends on social interaction (cf. Vygotsky 1978, 1986)
- Autonomous learners do things for themselves; they may or may not do things on their own
- The teacher's indispensable role in the development of language learner autonomy is governed by three general pedagogical principles (Little 2001, 2007):
 - Learner involvement – we must involve learners fully in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning
 - Learner reflection – we must help learners to reflect continuously on the process and content of their learning and to engage in regular self-assessment
 - Target language use – we must ensure that the target language is the medium as well as the goal of all learning, including the reflective component

References

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