

DEVELOPING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING IN THE FL CLASSROOM

KØGE, SEPTEMBER 18 - 21, 1986

REPORT

DANMARKS LÆRERHJSKOLE

1987

*Lilli Sam*

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In 1984, in the Copenhagen workshop held within the series of International Workshops on Communicative Curricula in Modern Languages first launched by Prof. Christopher Candlin, Prof. H-E Piepho and Christoph Edelhoff in 1979, one of the issues was ongoing work on changing traditional teacher-learner roles in the FL classroom.

In discussions with colleagues we realised that work in many contexts had progressed to a point where it might be worthwhile to organise a separate workshop focusing on the development of autonomous learning in a school context, and the first workshop was scheduled to take place in Denmark, at Køge, in the autumn of 1986.

Our intention for this first workshop was to bring together teachers, teacher trainers, and research workers to let them together review and discuss classroom experience, and on this basis to

- discuss the notion of learner autonomy in language learning, its theoretical, pedagogical and philosophical foundation
- discuss conditions for promoting learner autonomy and critical awareness
- suggest kinds of research needed to elucidate and concretise the various aspects of learner autonomy
- share experiences and concepts on an international basis and establish a network of inter-nordic cooperation for the dissemination of ideas and research-based innovation.

A second workshop has been agreed on in Finland in August 1987, which will continue the work begun in the Køge workshop, and which will further take up the question of ways to develop in-service teacher education.

We wish to thank the Greve Kommune Local Authorities for their support of the workshop, and Danmarks Lærerhøjskole for making it possible to send out this report.

Gerd Gabrielsen  
Danmarks Lærerhøjskole  
Copenhagen, July 1986

CONTENTS:

G Gabrielsen: Learner Autonomy in a School Setting - General Issues ... 3  
 PLENARY SESSION, Thursday September 18 ..... 7  
 C N Candlin: On Developing Critical Awareness ..... 8  
 J Lehtovaara: What Are the Crucial Conditions Fostering Autonomy? .... 12  
 P Alho, T Folland: Towards Learner Autonomy, Upper Comprehensive School 18  
 Th Ahlberg, E Hult: The Sverma Project ..... 18  
 H Thomsen: Developing Learner Autonomy - Thematic Organisation ..... 19  
 T Trebbi: Shared Management of the Learning Process in the Early Stages  
 of Learning French, Experienced With 14-16 Years Old Norwegian  
 Learners ..... 25  
 PLENARY SESSION, Friday September 19 ..... 32  
 V Kohonen: Towards Experiential Learning of Elementary English ..... 35  
 I Huttonen: Development and Evaluation of Learner Autonomy in  
 Senior Secondary School ..... 41  
 R Eriksson: Pupil Autonomy in Slow Language Learner Groups ..... 57  
 L Dam: Problems Encountered in Implementing Learner Autonomy ..... 63  
 U Rigbolt: Conditions for Promoting Learner Autonomy Among the  
 teachers in the Danish 'Folkeskole' ..... 66  
 G Gabrielsen: Six years' Experience in Workshops for Teachers ..... 70  
 PLENARY SESSION, Saturday September 20 ..... 81  
 Developing Autonomous Learning in the Foreign Language Classroom,  
 Final Evaluation Session ..... 90  
 Appendix: Workshop Programme ..... 93  
 -- : List of Participants ..... 95

Gerd Gabrielsen  
 Danmarks Lærerhøjskole  
 Denmark

LEARNER AUTONOMY IN SCHOOL SETTING - GENERAL ISSUES

What I would like us to look at here, at the beginning of this seminar, is a question of operational meaning - what do we actually refer to when using the term "autonomy" - how would we recognize such a thing in the classroom?

The term "autonomy" is used in many contexts. Politically, referring to self-government of states or groups within states, implying cultural unity or identity. It is used also as a term of industrial management, for a system of self-government introduced to further the efficiency of industrial units. It is used in general pedagogics as in the Council of Europe report of 1976, which pointed out that the formulations on overall aims of most European countries contained formulations on the development of autonomy, or independent work by students. Furthermore, it is used in psychology, referring to the development of independence as part of the development of a positive identity, and it is used in discussions of foreign language methodology to indicate specific organisations of teaching-learning in which learners are made individually responsible for their selection of aims/goals, the means of learning: procedures, steps and tools, and evaluation: criteria and procedures.

The term of "autonomy" as it is used in the context of foreign language learning is seen to relate both to the aspect of efficient application of available resources as for instance in adult education, and to general pedagogic aims, as an aspect of formal education or training, in preparation for a life-long independently managed career of language learning.

In the Danish context we take our point of departure in the following formulation:

"The planning and organisation of teaching, including the choice of instructional strategy, teaching materials, and content should as far as possible be decided on in collaboration between pupils and teacher."

General School Act. Min. of Education 1976.

This is clearly an ideological statement, and a general reaction has been that pupils cannot realistically take part in choosing teaching content as there is no way in which they can know the actual, systematic content-aims of school subjects.

We would argue, however, that in all small countries, as the Scandinavian countries undoubtedly are, and especially when as in Denmark, foreign languages are freely accessible in the media, the children's knowledge of the target language is far more extensive than supposed in conventional FL curricula. Furthermore, our experience shows that very important aspects of foreign language learning in schools may very well be seen as a further extension of acquired first language skills and knowledge.

What you do is functionally the same things that you would do in your first language, only you put different words and a different grammar to it. On this basis it is possible for teachers and learners to negotiate the specific aims of foreign language learning also in a school context.

The systematic aspects of what happens in the language classroom could be outlined as follows:

1. Learners and teacher discuss and decide time and scope of next teaching/learning sequence, from a few lessons to about a month.
2. Teachers decide which materials to use, freely or from a given selection, and organise their activities, including the agreement on a time plan.

3. Teacher observes the process of individual learners and the class as a whole:
  - manner of work
  - attention to aspects of language and communication
  - use of language, first language, foreign language
  - use of external sources of knowledge, works of reference, etc.
  - cooperation and other social aspects of classroom work
4. Teacher discusses the progress of work with learners and considers what changes/themes/challenges to suggest for next period of work.
5. Teacher and learners evaluate: learners and teachers state their separate observations, points of view, and suggestions for revision of further activity, focusing both on what was to be expected according to plans made and what unexpected outcomes that might have come up.
6. Learners (and teacher) discuss and plan next sequence.

In itself, however, the above represents only a managerial framework, and does not indicate in any way how much scope is actually given to learners' development in terms of their own individual conceptualisations of aims or means of learning. The extent to which this, or any real reflection on authentic experience of learning is taking place, can only indirectly be seen in the learners' evaluations or descriptions of the process.

Furthermore, the development in managing cognitive aspects of learning languages is only part of what we would aim at in a school context. Experience of languages and of language learning is closely bound up with social experience and with attitudes to others as manifested in classroom interaction. If we want our learners to develop a positive attitude towards learning and a confidence in themselves as language learners social and attitudinal factors are of basic importance.

In our discussions of what we would like learners to experience in school and what we think we sometimes see happening in our work, we have at times used the following list of "factors contributing to a development of positive identity", which we think is as important in language learning as in any other kind of school-experience:

- I am myself and the same also if I find myself in different situations.
- I am the same person today, yesterday, and tomorrow even though "I develop and change".
- My existence is of value to others.
- I know something and am able to do something which is of value to others.
- I recognise myself in what I am doing.
- I use my knowledge, my capacities, and beliefs.
- The outcome of what I do has value for others.
- I belong to a group, a community in which I am one with others without losing myself.
- I am confirmed in and recognised for what I know, can do, and believe in.
- I have an influence on my existence and am not a passive tool for forces outside myself.

Benedicte Madsen (1981).

What is important in the classroom is therefore a positive recognition of the learners' contributions, their ideas, their knowledge, skills and values. The extent to which this recognition is achieved would be a criterion for the educational value of autonomy in a school context.

Autonomous Work by Pupils, Council of Europe report, 1976.

Benedicte Madsen: *Menneskeverd og Merkeverd*. Gyldendal 1981.

PLENARY SESSION, Thursday, September 18

GROUP 1.

Lars, Ulla, Irma, Vilje, Turid

Discussed Gerd's 5 red circles. Tried to define autonomy. Exchanged ideas about autonomy as a goal. Autonomous learning as a tool to becoming an autonomous citizen.

Expectations:

- What is autonomy? Why do we want to work with it?
- What does it mean for various age groups?
- The danger of developing an autonomous individualist?
- Who is going to choose the content/defining the teacher/learner role?
- Teacher training/in-service training (how do we spread the ideas)?
- How do we make sure that the language is acquired/learned?

GROUP 2.

Karen, Hanne, Pekka, Hetty, Rigmor

Expectations:

- good ideas for the classroom
- the relationship between autonomy and planning processes (at different levels), for instance curriculum planning/autonomous learning
- brush-up on what autonomy really is
- how are concepts of autonomy and conditions for autonomous learning in different countries
- find out where we can find the "small steps" to take home to teachers who are scared of big words and new things

GROUP 3.

Johannes, Gerd, Jorma, Bror, Chris

Told each other what we were working on/interested in

Expectations:

- LOOK into wider implications of autonomy:
- autonomy not just in the classroom but as a personal aim for the learner in connection with/reflecting society
- definition of autonomy: when is it laissez-faire, when autonomy, when manipulation?
- look at contents of teaching (autonomy and the rest of the world)

GROUP 4.

Jytte, Leni, Raija, Per, Erik, Tarja

Reporting work in the various countries:

- Finland: - evaluation of pupils' social skills (in the classroom)
- Sweden: - limitations to autonomous learning
- problems when the pupils are reluctant (are we allowed to "do it the hard way"?)

The importance of the evaluating process, making the small steps of progress both socially and language-wise visible - to help the "scared teachers", Irma's small steps might be helpful here.

The use of diaries (pupils' diaries and workplans)

- CRIT: 1) You don't have to have autonomy at once - the necessity of small steps
- 2) The successful autonomist teacher, not only a question of classroom skills. The teacher has to know a lot of the subjects in order to help the groups, for instance

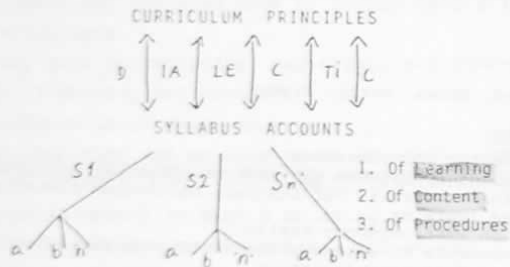
ON DEVELOPING CRITICAL AWARENESS

(from OH- transparencies)

CURRICULUM AND SYLLABUSES

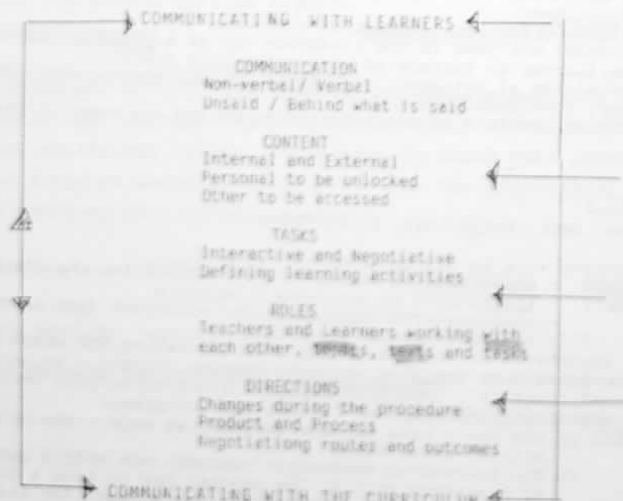
Prospective

STRATEGIC PLANNING



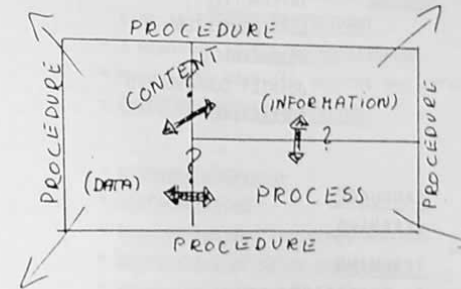
TACTICAL ACTION

Retrospective



OPERATIONALISATION

CONTENT PROCESS PROCEDURE



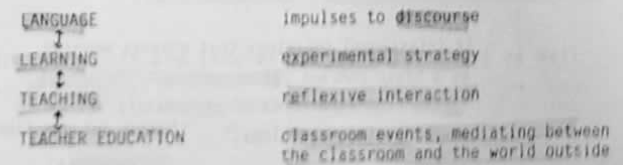
COMMUNICATIVE MATERIALS

- PROCEDURE
- (A) CONTENT MATERIALS
    - \* DATA
    - \* INFORMATION
  - (B) \*PROCESS MATERIALS

COMMUNICATIVE  
COGNITIVE } GOALS  
PROCEDURAL }

Accordingly:

A critical approach to:



LEARNERS CRITIQUE LANGUAGE (discourse)  
LEARNERS CRITIQUE LEARNING (Personal Negotiation)  
Always on two planes: LEARNER AS LEARNER (Metacognitively)  
LEARNER AS USER (Metacommunicatively)

They do so within the classroom as a critical world of discourse and learning

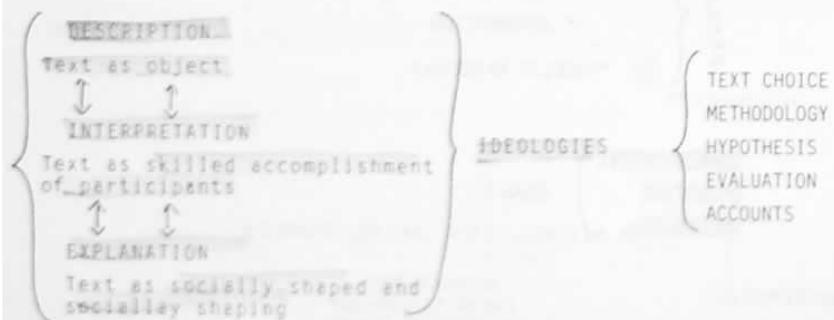
OBSERVATORY      LABORATORY      SOCIAL WORLD

INTERACTIVE  
DIFFERENTIATED  
ASYMMETRICAL  
JOINTLY CONSTRUCTED  
COLLECTIVE

NOTE:

FOR  
LANGUAGE  
LEARNING  
TEACHING  
T. EDUCATION

AND WITHIN THE PROCESS OF SYLLABUS DESIGN / CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT



"A (classroom) sociology that accepts meaning as a basic concept (not abstract the social system from structures of personality: it is always social psychology."

Habermas

LANGUAGE to be seen as

- \* Linked to underlying social structures in particular institutional settings
- \* Distinguishable between models which cast the learner in the role of ACTOR vs these s/he is ENGAGED PARTICIPANT
- \* A means of restoring equilibrium
- \* Needing to have its sources and effects explained
- \* Critical metacommunication

LEARNING is

- \* A shared endeavour
- \* Differentiated
- \* Problem-raising (solving)
- \* Negotiative of prior knowledge
- \* Requiring feedback

In sum it is EXPERIMENTAL + EXPLANATORY

TEACHING to be directed towards:

- \* Awareness of classroom processes
  - purposes
  - content
  - social-psychological processes
- \* Uncovering of interpretations : relativity
- \* Explanatory rather than descriptive base
- \* Thinking and learning as socially shaped
- \* Exploration of WHAT/HOW/WHY from all participants' perspectives
- \* Evaluation of individual and collective change/progress
- \* Teaching language = Learning how to learn language

CURRICULUM All curricula are inherently socio-political as well as educational

WHAT ARE THE AGENDA?

- 1. Functional : 'fitting in'
- or 2. Individual self-betterment : 'share of the cake'
- or 3. Social transformation : 'collective effort'

Jorma Lehtovaara  
University of Tampere  
Finland

#### MOTTO:

Man has a mind. Man has feeling. To separate the two is to deny all that man is. To integrate the two is to help man realize what he might be.

George Isaac Brown  
The Live Classroom

The following text is based on my notes for a lecture I gave in a workshop discussing "Developing autonomous learning in the foreign language classroom" (Copenhagen, September 18 - 21, 1986). The theme of my lecture was meant to be "On the role of objectives in autonomous learning" but the actual lecture turned out to deal mostly with the question "What are the crucial conditions fostering autonomy and why?" and only quite superficially with the role of objectives in this respect. I have made some minor changes on what I actually said in my presentation in Koge in order to improve the clarity of the point I wanted to make, which was to emphasize the importance of attitudinal conditions for the learner's growth towards autonomy. I tried to express my ideas through sharing with the other participants some of the problems I have encountered in trying to understand what autonomy and autonomous learning are all about. To use Gerd Gabrielsen's visualization, I just meant to pile up my meanings in the middle of the floor for the other participants to choose from.

Only later could I formulate in English or did it actually occur to me that I had forgotten to give any reasons for my focusing so much on the attitudinal qualities of the learning climate. I'll try to state some of them briefly now. One very important reason for my choice of this focus is that even we who are involved in educating human beings of the next generations very seldom discuss what man is and what he might become. On the basis of what has been found out on this issue I have come to consider man to be "built" to learn languages even in very severe conditions if only it is of importance to his survival. The same cannot be claimed of the process through which man becomes a human being. Much more care, attention and energy has to be spent on helping him grow to be a multidimensional, integrated human being. I have here in mind the following familiar statement: **Students learn languages best by doing something else.**

One more point I would like to discuss here is that I see fostering

autonomy as a process where the need to consciously dwell on emotional-attitudinal conditions decreases as the learner's autonomy increases. To help unautonomous learners to start growing towards autonomy is much more difficult than to keep at least slightly auto-nomous learners growing in this respect. On the basis of my personal experiences both as a "doer" and an observer of teaching for autonomy I have come to the conclusion that if the teacher does not pay enough attention to the emotional-attitudinal conditions of the learning situation at least in the beginning stages, she won't sensitively see her pupil's faltering and hesitant attempts to be curious, to use his imagination, to explore, to experiment, to have the courage to attack all kinds of problems, to react positively to all kinds of challenges, to be confident, to persevere, and to evaluate the quality and quantity of his work primarily according to his own criteria. If at this early stage the teacher focuses too much on the learner's linguistic products, she may not be sensitive enough to perceive what kind of encouragement, help and assistance each of her learners as a whole person needs in this specific learning task at this specific stage of his growth towards autonomy. Especially pupils who don't actively demand the attention of the teacher may run the risk of going unnoticed by her.

If we succeed as early as possible in building up the learner's courage and confidence to dare to be curious, explorative and self-reliant, we have helped him to see growth possibilities both in himself and elsewhere. The learner has then become emotionally autonomous to the extent that he does not any more have to depend so much on his teacher's attitudes and reactions. Later it may be possible for him to be able to live without the need of somebody always defining him, what he is or should be. I'll start with some very fundamental questions that have caused me trouble in getting to understand them. For example:

#### Why should we foster autonomy in our teaching?

It is not possible to answer this question on any empirical basis. We have to approach this question ontologically, trying to understand the phenomenon philosophically using critical thinking as our method. This is so because every empirical (in the natural scientific meaning of the word) approach has to presuppose something of the phenomenon, it has to make some hypotheses in advance. This means that you are going to find what you are looking for. By this I mean that by finding out what people are like or how they behave in their daily lives today out there in society, we cannot possibly find out what human autonomy is or what it could be. What we see out there is mostly dependence, not autonomy:

- dependence on various kinds of authorities,
- dependence on fashion,
- dependence on money or "the international laws of economy"
- dependence on teachers,
- dependence on school administration,
- dependence on learning materials publishers.

We could easily continue this list.



So we won't find the answer to our question "Why autonomy?" from the empirical data. We must try elsewhere.

We must start looking at man, the human being. We must try to answer the most fundamental question for all education: **What is man?** Only after answering this question can we say anything **significant** about education in general or autonomy in learning in particular. We must really dwell on this problem if we want to proceed in the direction of human autonomy in learning.

In order to deeply understand what man is, we need to understand paradoxical logic and reciprocal causality in addition to ordinary Aristotelian logic and linear causality. We also need a special kind of communication that could be called "rhapsodic communication" (I've borrowed this term from Maslow, perhaps?) With rhapsodic communication I refer to what we are thinking of when we say: **When you are listening to me listen for the music not the words.**

#### What is man?

Every man has intrinsic value, human dignity. No man has a right to take that value away from him.

#### Man is unique.

Man is unique mainly because he is conscious of the world and especially because he is conscious of himself in it. This means that he is **free to make choices**. So he makes himself what he is and what he becomes through his choices; every man is his own architect (Satre?). Because man is free he is always becoming something - so **man is a process**. Because man is free he is responsible. Nobody can make my choices for me. **Responsibility is always the child of freedom**. To be free to actualize all his capacities man has to be dependent, he needs the help of other people and has to live in dialogue with his environment. The same goes for autonomy too. The kind of dialogue I refer to here is almost the same at least to me as the kind of negotiation referred to in Chris's, Leni's and Gerd's writings. If man's freedom and autonomy are like this it is by definition impossible that we could produce an autonomous individualist (in the negative sense of the term).

#### Man is a multidimensional whole.

Man cannot be treated only as a cognitive being if we want to deal with him in any significant sense. Man is at the same time also in a very deep sense an affective being capable of having gut-level, visceral experiences. This sounds self-evident. But is it? We can easily find evidence suggesting to the contrary.

- cognitive psychology seems very often to treat the so called learning styles very much the same way as skills were treated before. Affective dimensions of these styles are only superficially dealt with.

- very many discussions we have take place only on a cognitive level,

or so we at least say. I think it is more probable that we just have feelings we don't want to admit or report!

- also focusing almost solely on rational, cognitive things at school can be considered evidence for underestimation of the importance of emotional aspects. A whole man is in contrast to the previous view a person who can make use of all his capacities (is a fully functioning person). He is congruent, has few defences, can listen to his "body" or his intrinsic capacity to judge what is good for him. He can trust his body because of its enormous physical and mental capacities. He is not a "yo-yo"!

**So:** a whole person appreciates, values, prizes himself, loves himself. His relation to the world and to people is **not interaction** because interaction usually presupposes two different entities, A and B. The relation man has to the world is basically **transaction**, which means that man and the world constitute each other. For example there is not in any deeper sense a buyer if there is no seller, or there is no self without community (= the people around me). According to this view there is not in any significant sense a world without us giving meaning to it.

If man's relation to the world is something like this, what is learning then?

#### Learning is a change in the meaning of an experience.

If learning is this kind of a qualitative process, what should then be considered good teaching, evaluation, objectives, curriculum etc.?

#### How does man become a human being?

The basis for this lies in the fact that in man as in all living organisms there seems to be present an actualizing tendency, a constructive tendency. This means that every living organism tends to grow to be as perfect as possible an organism it is meant to be. So to become fully human is for the child like becoming a perfect pear tree is for a pear seed. It is in the nature of the organism to actualize its potential.

But a newborn baby does not become a fully human being just by biological growth. He has to live in human contact, in a human community.

#### What guides education?

To me the most important single thing influencing education is what the educator thinks of the world and of the child, **how he perceives them**.

#### What is the most important single thing that governs the educator's perceptions?

It is how he sees man, and especially **how he sees himself as a human being**. This view a person has of himself I

would call his self concept or self image or identity. This image is a complex system of value-laden attitudes towards and beliefs of various aspects of oneself.

**How does a good teacher perceive herself?**

She sees herself as a unique, whole, able, valuable, possible, lovable and self-directed person.

**How do the teacher's perceptions and attitudes towards herself affect her teaching?**

These perceptions and attitudes provide as it were a good soil, a good place to grow in for the learner. It makes it possible for the learner to become what the teacher to a satisfactory degree already is. What the teacher does can be crystallized into two words - creates freedom. To me this means that when the teacher is an autonomous person, he has the courage and the necessary capacities to offer the learner opportunities to find out and encounter his own resources, his own depth and multidimensionality. This the teacher does primarily through her attitudes because attitudes lead her to select and implement the activities, learning tasks and materials. The teacher realizes that like herself the learner is also a process, all the time becoming something.

**How can the teacher encourage her pupil to fully understand and make good use of the freedom to learn offered to him by his teacher?**

She can do that by creating a rapport relationship with her pupils. The most important aspects of this kind of relationship are emotional-attitudinal in nature. These attitudes can be presented as three attitude complexes (according to Carl Rogers).

These attitudes are:

- ~~warmth~~, genuineness
- appreciation, prizing, trust
- empathic understanding

If the teacher cannot create a climate like this, there will be threat in the learning situation and it may hinder learning, e.g. make a good learner get fixed at a low level of aspiration.

Why are the most important conditions for learning and growth attitudinal in essence? How come they are not techniques or procedures? They must be attitudes if we think of man in the way presented in this paper so far, as living in his phenomenal field (everybody in his own world).

So, to put the answer to the long question presented above briefly, we can say that **all we need is love**, or unconditional positive regard.

This means love not only for our neighbours but love for ourselves too, self-love. There is not much sense in excluding oneself from all the rest of the humanity we are expected to love. (cf. Erich Fromm).

Love or unconditional positive regard is very important, since as even the Bible says: we cannot see clearly if we don't have love for ourselves, for the other people and the whole nature. I think a very good indicator of our present capacity for love is the answer we give to the following question: How often do I get hurt by what people say to me?

**What is the role of objectives if we see autonomous learning from this perspective?**

It is essential that every teacher, no matter what subject she teaches **deeply** understands that her goal and objective is first and foremost to foster or facilitate her every pupil's growth towards becoming a fully human person. If we could accomplish that, there would be **no subject teachers** in the traditional sense. There would only be **whole persons** with rich gut-level experiences of life, persons who are able to escort growing persons on their way towards autonomy as persons.

SO: the goal would be persons = processes = attitudes.

AND: the autonomous attitudes would be the goal and the conditions.

If the teacher perceives her goal in this way, her objectives are always her pupil's objectives too. **This cannot by definition be otherwise.**

If the teacher imposes, however gently, her objectives on the learner, the learner quite certainly, if he is still healthy enough, feels that somebody tries to change him. Consequently, he feels he is not good enough as he is.

**Education can change the learner only to the extent that it does not attempt to change him.**

**Only** when the teacher can be certain that the learner has understood that he is psychologically free to choose, is it wise for the teacher to offer his experiences, ideas and views to be explored by the pupil. Only in a climate like that can the pupil feel free to judge them and freely adopt those he considers relevant. This kind of activity is true negotiation to me.

Looking at language learning from this perspective how would we answer the question: What does a foreign language teacher teach?

She helps a foreign language learner to learn how to function as an intelligent human being who speaks the language in the role of a foreigner.

The approach to objectives presented above does not try to deny the meaning of objectives or the importance of clarifying them. This perspective only emphasizes the importance of attitudes over objectives and techniques. What this approach to objectives does is that it makes it impossible to apply in any strong sense the input-output model adopted from industry and the field of economy. That is a difficult tradition to break, because many ideas in today's education keep it up. But things are changing, as we saw from Chris Candlin's ideas on curriculum designing. I would like to end by using the words a famous psychiatrist is reported to have said to his clients.

**Loose your minds and come to your senses.**

Fritz Pearls

Towards Learner Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning in  
the Upper Comprehensive School in Finland

PEKKA AIHO    Tarja Folland

Our contribution was a video tape we had put together of several tapes made during spring 1986 and autumn 1986. Last year (85-86) the children were studying English for the 5th year, and had just started Swedish. Our tape presented the class in different kinds of activities, making posters, writing down lists of words and sentences, practising pronunciation and reading. We also discussed the background of our experiment and problems with individual students, and evaluated the achievements so far.

The Sverma Project

Thomas Ahlberg    Erik Bult

We showed a video, starring class 5 a at Rosengårdsskolan, Malmö. They started to work autonomously in August 1985 and are now studying English for the third year.

We have filmed them at various occasions and the video shows some of the activities that are always going on.

Reading, writing, acting and using the tape-recorder is always taking place somewhere in or outside the classroom.

The first part of the video was recorded in November 1985 and the final part, the songs, in September 1986.

Video, Grade 5

1. Pictures of the class.
2. Some boys playing a home-made game of dice. (These boys were not explicitly told to speak English during the play. But we happily discovered it, watching the video)
3. One boy is reading a book and discussing it with a friend.
4. One girl is reading a story that she has written herself.
5. Two boys are working with a stencil.
6. Two girls are making a play.
7. Two girls are listening to a tape and answering questions in a book
8. Two girls are rehearsing a play that they have written. And the performance.
9. A boy and a girl are reading.
10. The class is singing two English songs.

Hanne Thomsen

Denmark

Developing Learner Autonomy in a German Class: Thematic Organisation

I am going to talk on how I worked at developing learner autonomy in my class of 24 learners, starting in the 7th form, at the age of 13.

The first step was to discuss with the students how they could go about learning German. The drawing below was produced in class at the end of the second week:



In order to keep track of the work that had been done and what had been learned we used different worksheets which developed over time:

1

ARBEITSBLATT			
NAME: _____			
Zeitraum	Arbeit	Zeitraum	Arbeit

2

NAME: _____		
Zeitraum	Was habe ich gemacht?	Welche Probleme gab es?

3

KAPITEL :				
Lesetext	Arbeit	Was habe ich gelernt?	Probleme	Hausaufgaben

4

KAPITEL :					
Ziel	wie	mit wem	Verabredungen	Arbeit	Lesetext

We also used an exercise-typology for the learners to use for inspiration when choosing or devising their own tasks:

#### SUGGESTIONS FOR EXERCISE-TYPES

- cut up texts - put in order
- combine headlines - paragraphs
- combine texts - pictures
- write a script - what is a person doing when he says ...
- write instructions

.....

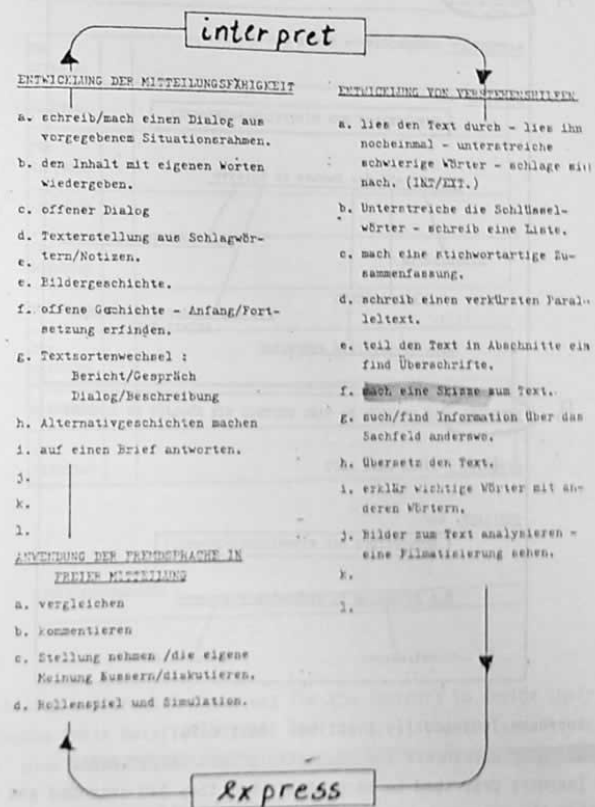
In the ninth form, after the learners had worked for two years choosing their own materials and tasks, I felt the need to work more systematically on content, and we therefore agreed on my suggestion to organise our work around selected themes, according to the following plan:

#### 9th FORM, GERMAN

- August : Landeskunde
- September : Kommissarfilme
- November : Deutschland im Krieg
- January : Veränderung einer Stadt
- March : Spionage
- April : Roman oder Kurzgeschichte

Aim: Students on their own plan their work within each of our six themes setting up aims, planning project work, evaluation, choosing from available materials, constructing their own tasks.

Again an exercise-typology was given out to help them planning their work. At this time I felt that it would be useful to focus on how to work from extended texts, and the typology below therefore deals with reading:



Another thing which characterised this period was that the students wanted to plan their work for longer periods of time, not just hour by hour, and we therefore used the planning sheet shown below:

For the theme 'Roman oder Kurtzgeschichte' the learners' aims were set up like this:

**A** ZIEL: IN GRUPPEN SO VIEL DEUTSCH WIE MÖGLICH ZU SPRECHEN

MATERIAL: VORDERSEITE + TITEL DES BUCHES.

AUFGABEN ZUR ENTWICKLUNG DER MITTEILUNGSFÄHIGKEIT

den Inhalt des Buches zu erraten

- beschreiben
- diskutieren
- eine Wörterliste schreiben
- eine Punkteendung machen
- den Mörder/den Kommissar zu identifizieren

**B** ZIEL: IN GRUPPEN SO VIEL DEUTSCH WIE MÖGLICH ZU SPRECHEN

MATERIAL: VIDEO OHNE LAUT

AUFGABEN ZUR ENTWICKLUNG DER MITTEILUNGSFÄHIGKEIT

die Situation zu verstehen / erraten

- diskutieren
- beschreiben

The learners individually described their aims.

read their worksheets and suggested groups or partners?

The learners described to each other what they had intended and found out whether they wanted to do the same thing or not.

The next thing was to decide how to work and with whom.

Evaluation with the whole class took place at the end of each period of work, and at the same time the planning of the next period was begun:

# ARBEITSPLAN

GRUPPE: \_\_\_\_\_ DATUM: \_\_\_\_\_

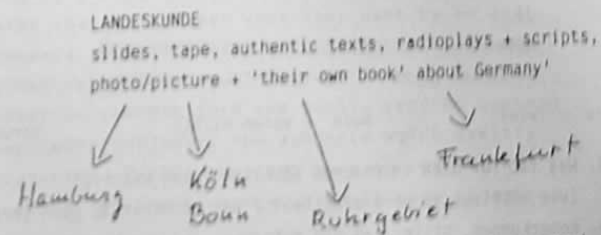
ANWESEND: \_\_\_\_\_

ABWESEND: \_\_\_\_\_

für	
DIENSTAG	
DIENSTAG	
für	
MITTWOCH	
MITTWOCH	
für	
DIENSTAG	
DIENSTAG	
für	
MITTWOCH	
MITTWOCH	
für	
DIENSTAG	

LEHRERBEMERKUNGEN: \_\_\_\_\_

The first step within each theme was for the learners to decide their aims and to choose their materials/tasks. For the first theme 'Landeskunde' the learners' plan looked like this:



The learners at this point chose what part of Germany they were interested in and were given a 'box of materials' to work from.

# EVALUIERUNG

14 Deutschstunden

Name \_\_\_\_\_

THEMA 2 : KOMISAR-FILME

Mit welchem Buch/Film hast du gearbeitet ?

\_\_\_\_\_

Mit wem hast du gearbeitet ?

\_\_\_\_\_

The questions put to the learners were:

- Beschreib die Gruppenerbeit, bitte:
  - Wie hast du selber gearbeitet:
  - Hast du deine Mitteilungsfähigkeit verbessert?
    - Ja
    - Nein
    - Weiss ich nicht
- Ja - wie?                      Nein - warum nicht?                      Warum nicht?
- Was ist für dich in unserem nächsten Thema wichtig?  
(Wie möchtest du gern arbeiten? / Was möchtest du gern lernen? / Was fehlt dir?)
  - Bemerkungen, bitte: (a) die Aufgaben, (b) das Buch/der Film, (c) die Lehrerin
  - Sonst noch etwas?

Turid Trebbi  
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Norway

## SHARED-MANAGEMENT OF THE LEARNING PROCESS IN THE EARLY STAGES OF LEARNING FRENCH, EXPERIENCED WITH 14-16 YEARS OLD NORWEGIAN LEARNERS.

The learning process in the classroom depends on decision making or management.

It is generally accepted that classroom management should be undertaken by the teacher alone.

Some claim however, that decision making may be shared by pupils and teacher. It is my experience that it should be, for two reasons - shared management promotes language learning and also the personal development of the pupils.

In Norway, French is an optional subject in the upper comprehensive school, 8th and 9th form, and there is no exam. Some pupils continue the study of French in secondary school, the so called B-language, which is conceived to be based on the knowledge acquired in comprehensive school. The choice of subject is generally not a real choice. Many pupils choose randomly, or they make a negative choice. Nevertheless, once they find themselves in the French group, most of the pupils feel curious about the new language and are eager to learn. Motivation at the starting point is favourable to learning. The pupils have an image of themselves as fluent French speakers, which they strongly want to become true. Only too soon they discover the gap between what they want to do and their own performance. What I notice is a great lack of understanding of the nature of language learning. Towards the second half of the 9th form the pupils tend to concentrate on the compulsory subjects, the subjects which qualify for secondary education. Pupils say they have to concentrate on English, Norwegian, mathematics etc., even if they enjoy learning French.

For some time I have pursued the ideas of autonomous learning. What led up to this was an increasing feeling that teachers prevent rather than stimulate learning by making all decisions, always telling the pupils what to do. I think of the learning situation which is defined and closed by the management of the teacher, where the unpredictable content has no place and is not allowed to interfere. The teacher undertakes the role of mediator between the pupils and the target language (see fig.A). and in this s/he focuses on the subject to be taught (the target language). This leads to some degree of personal learning, mainly in the field of knowledge about the language, but also to a considerably amount of learning illusion. The learner is told what to do, then s/he is controlled, and if the learner has done her/his duty, then s/he feels "due" to good marks. And as marks are thought to be evidence of achievement, both teacher and learner and parents are captivated by the illusion of learning, closing their eyes to the fact that independent language production is poor or none.

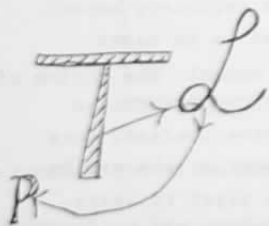


FIG. A.

- teacher mediated language contact
- illusion of learning
- some learning

When I realized this illusion, I started to think about <sup>what</sup> makes learning possible. I began to open up the learning situations by inviting the pupils to make decisions about content, material, activities and to take part in planning and evaluation. I withdrew from my position as a mediator so that the learners could get in immediate contact with the target language (see fig.B). The teacher shifted focus from the target language to the learner and the learning process. The learning situation was organized in such a way that both teacher and pupils had access to insight into the learning process. We started to talk about how to learn.

Thus, through metacommunication, the awareness of language learning was arosen. The pupils were stimulated by the possibility of decision making. They began to consider self-initiative, peer-tutoring and self-assessment as fundamental in the language learning process and changed from an illusory to a realistic conception of this process.

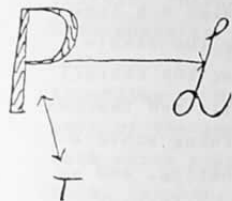


FIG.B.

- immediate language contact
- illusion of learning
- some learning
- metacommunication

But at the same time both pupils and teacher realized that this did not automatically lead to more language learning. During the second year of French the pupils started to complain that they did not learn much French. As a matter of fact this was understandable to us, as a considerable percentage of the teaching time had been spent on planning and discussing what we were doing, activities which were quite unfamiliar to them and in a sense contradictory to the school experience they had got already. Training in this had been necessary. Secondly, they felt easily lost without the guidance of the teacher and spent a considerably amount of time in searching randomly for language. What was gained in experimenting and hypothesis making and personal handling of the language, was lost in lack of achievement, presumably caused by insufficient systematic training of selected problems. In addition to this comes the fact that French is a rather distant language to Norwegian learners. The pupils are not exposed to French outside school as they are to English. French television films are exceptions, the number of transparent words are limited, and the structure of the language and the culture itself are remote to them. The pupils did not overcome their frustration of not being able to use the language, and they felt that the teacher did not help them to make an effort - it was too easy to skip the

French homework and concentrate on more "important" subjects. By withdrawing from my position as mediator, I deprived the pupils of the illusion of learning, but I did not cater for the amount of achievement which they felt necessary to enjoy learning. As learning progress in itself is of high motivating value, we lost a great part of the motivating effect.

The hypothesis that if pupils want to learn and also are free to do it their way, they will learn, proved to be too simple. Somehow the management of the learning process and the contact with the target language has to be shared by pupils and teacher (see fig. C) in order to improve and support learning achievement. We need some general principles for this sharing, and we need examples of application of such principles in different classroom realities.

As a teacher I know a great deal about language learning. To a certain extent I know how to enable pupils to learn language. I also know the French language and culture.

The pupils on their side know something about how I can become a good teacher to them, they know something about their needs and how they learn.

For both parts this is knowledge that we have to develop further, and to do so, we have to communicate our respective knowledge to each other and base our decisions on this. Put in other words, the learners have to enable me to enable them to reach the goal. My conception of shared management originates here.

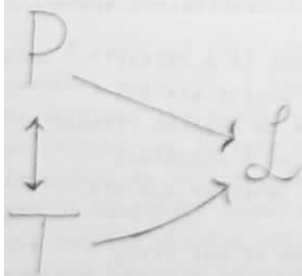


FIG. C.

- immediate language contact
- $\frac{1}{2}$  illusion of learning
- metacommunication
- shared management
- hopefully more learning

It is my experience that among the fields of knowledge to be taken into consideration both by teacher and pupils in the decision making, the value of learner production, the effects of exposure to language and the role of reinforcement activities are important. In our situation decisions are also affected by two motivating factors, namely short term achievement and documentation of progress. And then we have to count with the language learning potential of social interaction and interdependence. This converges into the pedagogical problem of task-setting and task-solving.

According to my conception of shared management tasksetting is part of the teacher role. The planning and effectuating of the work which makes task-solving possible, is part of the learner role. Further, the teacher's role is to provide relevant exposure and also to teach different methods and learning activities such as guessing strategies and hypothesis making, experimenting and language observation as well as reinforcement exercises, to enable the pupils to achieve independence in the task-solving process.

The task has to be set in such a way that the pupils get a clear idea of how to fulfill it. Tasks have to be open-ended so that the pupils can make different interpretations and come up with a variety of products.

The interrelationship between task and exposure is evident. An example of this interrelationship we find in the traditional classroom procedure of presentation (teacher mediated exposure) and reproduction (teacher directed task-solving). It is interesting to look at the interrelation between immediate language exposure and a production task within the frames of shared management.

The question is how to combine working with pupils' own material and develop awareness of different aspects of the target language. One way to go might be to combine exposure and feedback in one and the same "text". In the following I describe an example of activity where we tried to do that.

I asked my pupils to describe a humorous drawing made by one of my former pupils in the language lab within a time limit of 20 minutes. I had already asked a French girl at their age with no knowledge of Norwegian to make her description of the same drawing and taperecorded it. Then I listened to the tapes of my pupils and



made my version based on their language, only more elaborate. The pupils listened to this version and made their second description. Then we felt a need for discussion and exchange. Examples were drawn from the cassettes of different pupils who wanted to present their work. Language problems were discussed in small groups and then in plenary group. The pupils consulted the language sources available in the classroom.

After this the pupils went back to the language lab and listened to the French girl, and then they made their final version.

The pupils presented the products in groups of 4 or 5.

To summarize, the procedure went like this:

- a) Task decision
- b) First draft
- c) Input 1
- d) Second draft
- e) Discussion and exchange
- f) Input 2
- g) Task-solving
- h) Evaluation

The activity had some interesting features:

1. The quality and style of the drawing attracted the attention of the pupils and inspired them.
2. As a starting point the pupils had the possibility to experiment with their own language capacity. They did not delete their recordings so that language improvement from b) to g) was documented.
3. The pupils accepted my invitation to explore the language on their own and in a conscious way (c), perhaps because c) was close to b).
4. c) opened for problem raising and lead to peer-tutoring and reinforcement exercises.
5. It seems that f) stimulated the learners to improve their own product and increased language awareness. They were curious to hear how a native speaker at their own age solved the same task, and they took from her language what they found useful. Then they also noticed that she too had some problems in expressing herself, and this brought us into an interesting conversation about the very nature of language production - what is going on when we try to put our thoughts into words?
6. Through b), d) and g) I got insight in learner hypotheses, conceptions and attitudes which enabled me to make relevant plan-

ning both for c) and for further task-setting.

7. Further planning was directly based on the evaluation of g). Many pupils wanted to study grammatical items, some asked for drill exercises, others were unsatisfied with their pronunciation.

Of course, no clear conclusion can be drawn from this attempt. However, input 1 and 2 which were intended both as exposure and feedback, seemed to function that way. Further, I am more certain that I should be more selective when choosing tasks and content. There is a link between language exposure - culture - attitudes and feasibility for learning. Therefore learners need the guidance of the teacher or shared management.

But this is a field which needs investigation and research. I have only made my first draft.

- - -

SEMINARY SESSION, Friday, September 19

**Ger:** Hanne's project was a nice mixture of teacher's choices and students' choices.

The evaluation sheet was worth-while as a starting point. It was Hanne's choice to change it and later on the students' choice to arrange it into themes.

There is a need for the teacher to feel some sort of order also in autonomous learning, a need to know what is going on. Both learner and teacher should feel some sort of progress.

The teachers should discuss their choices with the pupils.

**Jorma:** Feels that teachers make problems for themselves in the classroom so that their job becomes too strenuous. They should have more trust in their ability to act intuitively. They should trust themselves as well as the pupils.

**Irma:** It is the teacher's need to keep up the illusion of learning. That is why the learner goes from one structure to another without looking at the whole; the learner's ability to communicate and to learn how to learn.

**Ger:** There is a line of division between laissez-faire and what we want to be autonomous learning. Teachers may feel insecure because they have no clear idea why they are there. They have to realise that the teacher is part of the classroom. The tricky thing is to be there and not impose.

**Jorma:** Teachers should focus more on the social aspect. Their main aim is to help pupils socially.

**Chris:** The world outside the classroom is competitive and nasty. Chris is

- unhappy about a too sheltered atmosphere in the classroom
- in the classroom one should demand language competence. Pupils should be trained to communicate in order to

make them competent outside the classroom.

**Jorma:** It is not either or. It is both and. A pleasant atmosphere in the classroom would not produce pupils without communicative competence. Teachers have to realise the difficulties of the young generation and emphasise harmony in the classroom.

**Chris:** Worried about over-emphasising harmony and co-operation in the classroom. For very many people communication is a conflict situation. Therefore teachers must create situations where communication is required. They must enable pupils to be tested out under pressure and help them to master their difficulties.

**Jorma:** "Is that possible in the classroom?"

**Chris:** Teachers should stop making pupils produce single sentences and instead train them in communication even if it takes time and the pupils need long periods of silence in order to get a message across. Would use authentic texts in context offering the pupils to make sense of the text, but

- no task without a purpose
- give them as many resources as possible to do the task.

**Leni:** Both teachers and learners need some sort of order. Teachers have to make decisions. The parents have to be informed about

- what the pupils are doing
- how they are doing it
- why they are doing it.

Leni referred to Hanne's approach as a good example of planning.

Gerd: A serious problem has arisen, which we have to work on. We are caught in linear exposition, which shows only one side of the problem. We need both order and freedom. Laissez-faire does not work, nor should teachers manipulate. The power - solidarity dimension is important. Purpose and initiative in communication are quite essential. Teachers have to create situations which can foster both freedom and purpose. There is a reciprocal causality which we should not be scared about.

(to  
Jorma) It is human not to be nice. Niceness can be suppressive you must show respect to the learner by being honest and teach pupils respect by showing them respect.

Jorma: There should be a proportion of niceness and control. We have to help the pupils, give them confidence, and the pupils will then ask for tasks that are demanding.

Irma: There is an example from Leni's class where a pupil responds quite differently now from what he did a year ago, now making decisions himself.

Betty: Autonomous methods of learning imply so many skills that they can seem very frightening to teachers.

Erro: What happens to children from less privileged backgrounds in autonomous learning? Turid's and Hanne's methods have things in them which might cater also for these groups.

Gerd: Autonomous methods are good for slow learners. Underprivileged children have never learned to make decisions. They can do it in the autonomous classroom. They can learn to structure a task.

Leni: In remedial teaching we ought to force pupils to make decisions and also make them carry them out.

(to  
Betty) When we have a problem, it is our duty to solve it.

Viljo Kohonen  
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### Towards Experiential Learning of Elementary English

The present paper discusses the theoretical backgrounds of a four-year teaching experiment being conducted at the Teacher Training Department of the University of Tampere, Finland, between 1984 and 1988. The experiment involves four primary schools in the City of Tampere, with eight experimenting teachers and 92 pupils. It is a longitudinal study attempting to elucidate the learning processes and personality growth of the same pupils from grade 3 (9 years of age) to grade 6 (12 years of age).

The main aims of the project are as follows:

- (1) Investigating the learning processes and outcomes in Finnish (mother tongue) and English (first foreign language), under ordinary (formal) school learning conditions,
- (2) Investigating the personality growth of the learners, in terms of measurements of self-concept and information processing capacity,
- (3) Investigating the effects of postponing the beginning age of English studies by one year (i.e., in grade 4 instead of the customary grade 3), whereby more instruction (two weekly hours) is given in global Finnish communication skills in grade 3,
- (4) Investigating the pedagogical possibilities of fostering "experiential" learning in elementary English instruction, with an emphasis on communicatively meaningful language use from the beginning (thereby introducing grammatically relatively heterogeneous materials), and
- (5) finding out and empirically testing ways of in-service teacher education in a learner-centered, communicative approach.

An attempt is made to examine and develop the variables of school learning in terms of a global, process-oriented approach including the following components (cf. Savignon, *Communicative Competence* 1983:57):

- (1) **WHAT IS LEARNED?** - goals of the Finnish educational system:
  - (a) educational goals: personality growth, learner autonomy, responsibility, well-balanced self-concept, creativity, ability for co-operation, international education;
  - (b) the notion of pragmatic competence: knowledge, skills, and COURAGE to use the target language as a personal tool of communication: risk-taking, "coping with the unknown"
- (2) **WHO LEARNS?** - learner variables: age, personality, needs, motivation
- (3) **WHERE LEARNS?** - meaningful learning in classroom contexts
- (4) **HOW LEARNS?** - fostering learning processes, personality growth, developing skills for continuous learning, and learner autonomy.

### On Experiential Learning of Elementary English

- "whole-person" approach to language learning, involving learners in learning process both cognitively and emotionally
- encouraging learners to rely on their own experiences
- quality of classroom atmosphere: fostering a learner-supportive environment and learner interaction
- attempts to provide communicatively meaningful opportunities of language use (cf. Blair (ed.), Innovative approaches to language teaching, Newbury House 1982):
  - (1) developing a personal awareness through the FL,
  - (2) utilizing comprehension-based approaches,
  - (3) placing a conscious emphasis on a rich input,
  - (4) meaningful learning of grammatical elements: games etc.

### Processes connected with school learning:

- (1) Individual growth of learner: realistic self-concept, self-esteem
- (2) Development of autonomy: responsibility, initiative, concentration
- (3) Development of emotional life: self-control, imagination, self-expression
- (4) Development of thinking: creative, intuitive thinking, inference-making
- (5) Social growth: perceiving and respecting others' feelings, co-operation, interaction: negotiation, self-expression in group
- (6) Development of learning skills: recognizing problems, planning of one's work, positive attitude to language learning, ability to utilize contextual information, skills to find necessary information, monitoring one's own learning, self-assessment

**THE BIG QUESTION:** how to build such process-oriented aims as part of the everyday classroom work --> teacher: guide, "facilitator" of learning, developing a "researcher's" attitude to one's work; courage to be a genuine person

### DIMENSIONS IN COMMUNICATIVE EVALUATION: WHERE ARE WE GOING?

- Evaluation integral part of learning process
  - (A) Internal: Process-oriented, increasing awareness --> 'soft' data collected by
    - teacher: Instructional evaluation
    - learner: Monitoring own learning
  - (B) External: Product-oriented - summative evaluation: 'efficient communicator' --> FL use
- Context essential: What kind of tasks?
  - without context there is no meaningful language use (cf Lado 1961: context 'gives away' discrete points contrasts to be tested)
  - specify: topic audience, setting, task: activate relevant pragmatic knowledge --> anticipations
  - desire, opportunity, pressure to use FL
  - direct testing: coping with 'real-life' after tests
  - goals <--> teaching <--> testing: credibility --> 'hidden curriculum' --> What is 'worth learning'?
- Discourse skills: Deriving/conveying meanings through interpretation, inferring, negotiation: sharing 'common ground' as interactive process
- Communication strategies: How to cope with limited processing capacity and deficient skills --> risk-taking essential --> 'demanding' tasks to demonstrate communicative efficiency
- Global use: 'Orchestration of task components'
- Criterion-referencing: 'Ability bands' --> basically accuracy-based marks at three levels: 1. Pass level --> 2. Functionally satisfactory --> 3. Autonomous level >>> 'Fine-tuning' / adjustments within these --> degree of internalization of FL system + courage to put that into communicative use
- Personality factors: Communicative willingness, cooperativeness, independence
  - by what criteria?
- To what extent can external evaluation be replaced by internal evaluation and self-assessment?

### TOWARDS INSTRUCTIONAL EVALUATION

1. Evaluation to support learner growth:
    - How to teach successfully at different levels of potential, talent and aspiration (mixed-ability)?
    - Evaluation: to yield information that can
      - guide instructional decisions
      - support development of learner competence
      - help learner optimize his learning potential
- > must be based on knowledge of learning, views of target competence and

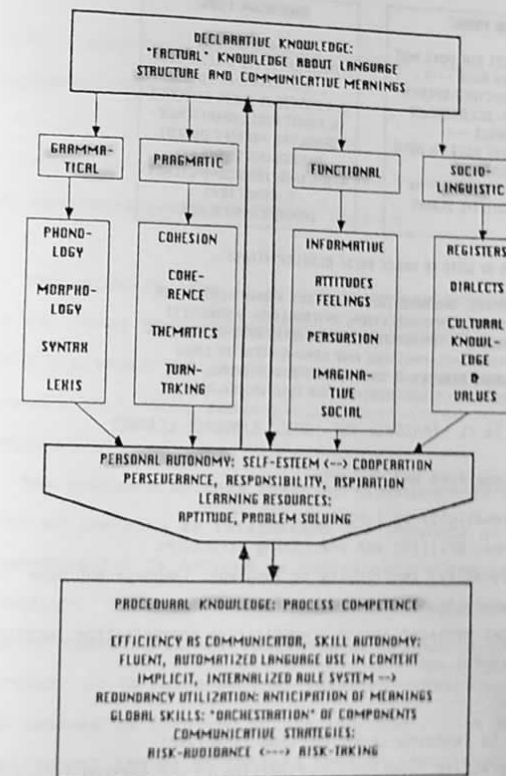
## 2. Developing learner competence

- Concept formation by learner: Identify beliefs, misconceptions and incomplete learning --> what systematic pattern of learner errors?
- Learner rules: Internalized grammar as a 'map' of language --> procedural knowledge --> ability to make context-based inferences, redundancy utilization --> theory restructuring: mental models of language to change during learning process --> what kind of learning tasks? --> feedback
- Automaticity to reduce attentional demands: automation of subtasks --> more processing capacity for message contents --> 'orchestration of task components': separate testing of skills not to give enough evidence of ability to handle complex communicative tasks --> demanding tasks for learners to 'outperform' and 'stretch' skills
- Self-assessment: Learner training to promote learning: Improved goal-orientation, internalizing criteria of performance, consciousness raising, sharing assessment burden --> life-long education
- Personality development: learner's own perception of himself, self-confidence and self-esteem, risk-taking: growth towards autonomy as a person

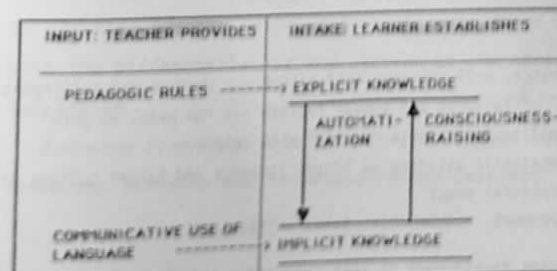
## SKILL LEARNING AS 'EXPERTISE' DEVELOPMENT

1. Cognitive stage: Declarative knowledge
  - Committing facts to memory, rehearsing, conscious monitoring of performance
2. Associative stage: Understanding the phenomenon
  - Establishing connections between various elements
  - Gradual elimination of errors in performance
3. Autonomous stage: 'Procedural' knowledge
  - Extension of the associative stage: --> 'expertise'
  - Rapid and automated performance: memory capacity relieved for processing of message contents
  - Losing verbal mediation in task performance: Unability to verbalize knowledge of skill, declarative representation no longer necessary
  - 'Pattern-matching' in a single step, 'top-down' processing of information developing organization of knowledge --> abstracting salient features of problem --> ability to quickly realize underlying principles and classify facts --> efficient handling of difficult situations: quick perception of solutions
  - Efficient communicator: Development of 'language intuition', redundancy utilization, anticipation, personal autonomy: self-esteem --> cooperation

## COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE



## AUTOMATIZATION AND CONSCIOUSNESS-RAISING



DEVELOPMENT OF CONSCIOUSNESS/ AUTOMATICITY:  
KNOWLEDGE OF RULES AS A "MAP" IN LANGUAGE USE

FERCH 1986:

1. LEARNER USES BUT DOES NOT REFLECT ON RULE -->
2. DECIDES WHETHER SPEECH IS/IS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH RULE -->
3. CAN DESCRIBE RULE IN OWN WORDS -->
4. CAN DESCRIBE RULE IN META-LINGUISTIC TERMS

ANDERSON 1986:

1. UNCONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE (MISTAKES NOT RECOGNIZED)
2. CONSCIOUS INCOMPETENCE
3. CONSCIOUS COMPETENCE (ANALYSE, MODIFY OUTPUT ACCORDING TO RULES)
4. UNCONSCIOUS COMPETENCE
5. CONSCIOUS SUPER-COMPETENCE

KINDS OF DATA TO TRACE THESE DEVELOPMENTS:

- DECLARATIVE, INSTRUCTED: CONSCIOUS MANIPULATION OF FL RULES, INTROSPECTION, INTERVIEWS: AWARENESS
- PROCEDURAL, NATURALISTIC: COPING WITH REAL-LIFE TASKS UNDER TIME-PRESSURE AND COMMUNICATIVE LOAD
- LEARNER DIARIES, RECORDINGS OF DISCUSSIONS, FREE PERFORMANCES, OBSERVATION AND ELICITATION DATA

TOWARDS EXPERTISE IN FL LEARNING: THE 'GOOD' LANGUAGE LEARNER

• Emphasis on message form and contents:

- looking for systematicity in linguistic structures
- attending to forms, drilling and practising structures
- feel for grammaticality, sensitivity to language: language aptitude
- willing and accurate 'guesser' - search for meanings
- willingness to get messages across - emphasis on communication, acquiring FL through meaningful use

• Learning skills:

- active approach to learning tasks, getting 'involved'
- willingness to practice, seeking opportunities to use foreign language and make 'own' exercises
- learning skills: monitoring own speech and others' speech, getting feedback on communicative abilities, 'know-how' about to tackle language learning
- self-monitoring: calculated risks, self-assessment

• Personality:

- ambiguity tolerance: self-concept, self-esteem --> courage and willingness to take 'risks' of failures and appear foolish --> 'no pain, no gain'
- outgoing personality, extrovert: 'mixing' with people
- tolerant and empathetic attitude to target language and target culture --> reduction of 'cultural shock'
- autonomy: independent, responsible, takes initiative

- How to encourage development of such properties in formal classroom instruction within available resources and materials?

Irma Huttonen  
University of Oulu  
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DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION OF LEARNER AUTONOMY IN SENIOR  
SECONDARY SCHOOL

A report of experimental activities taken in FL learning  
in Lassinkallion lukio, Oulu, Finland

The students come to senior secondary school at the age of 16. They have already studied English for seven years (2-3 h a week) and their experiences are usually based on teacher direction, audio-lingual activities and some translation.

The approach of this teaching experiment is based on a view of teaching as interaction and language as communication. Communication is defined as understanding and expressing meanings. Accordingly, in regard to subject matter, one aim of teaching is the fostering of pragmatic competence. Further, it is believed that learning takes place only if the learner is involved in the learning at hand. Such involvement can be encouraged through conscious building up of motivation from task to task and also, through conscious efforts to build learner orientation in the direction of task mastery orientation. This can take place by matching learner needs, interests, skills and abilities with the different levels and aspects of the official curriculum.

Starting from this point of view, an effort was made to teach the students how to become better learners. Two lines

something, it is my loss. Individualistic approach again holds the view that somebody else's achievements have nothing to do with my possible successes. Everybody's achievements are individualistic in this sense. Co-operational approach is, in a way, opposite to the competitive approach: somebody else's achievements are also my achievements in the sense that the building up of understanding and ability cannot take place in isolation.

The discussion of approaches and their implications, their connections with different kinds of activities and work in the classroom in general, was begun by asking each student to write answers to the following questions:

- What am I studying English for?
- Who am I studying for?
- Who am I competing with?

In the ensuing class discussion the teacher collected suitable answers on the board leading the discussion in the direction that the goal of FL learning is communication and that individualistic and co-operational approaches are favourable for the enhancement of the expected task mastery orientation (cf. e.g. Olkinuora 1984; Huttunen 1986).

To make the learners aware of the different aspects of language and some prominent components involved, the question, "How can you learn English?" was raised. In teacher-directed discussion the answers, "We learn English by listening, by speaking, by reading and by writing", were given. In the effort of making the learners understand

what areas they can concentrate on to improve their communication, the clear-cut and simple concepts familiar to them from different, more or less official tests and exercises in their textbooks, were used. So the teacher got the following claim on the board:

1. Listening implies understanding, which requires words & grammar.
2. Speaking implies being understood, which requires words & grammar.
3. Reading implies understanding, which requires words & grammar.
4. Writing implies being understood, which requires words & grammar.

To widen this rather restricted concentration on the grammatical aspect of declarative knowledge (cf. Kohonen 1986) and to make the aspect of the whole area of pragmatic competence clearer, the question of the use and function of language in different activities brought up alongside the question regarding how different activities give opportunities for the growth of autonomy.

I have felt this approach problematic but have not found a better way to analyse language and language usage simply and clearly enough with students. In the discussion after this presentation, Christopher Candlin took up this issue noting that it reflected an old-fashioned view of language though an effort was made to add the communicative element to it. He suggested an approach in which the students would be given examples of broken communication and made to analyse these examples to find out about implications and require-

ments. Search for such examples has already begun.

Classroom activities, with the communicative and attitudinal areas and the processes they encourage, were discussed in class and the following lists were given to the students to be used in planning:

Group I: The teacher is fully responsible for the activities:

- lectures, explanations, presentations of recordings, films, etc. by the teacher,
- questions asked by the teacher, tests,
- discussion in class guided by teacher,
- supervised exercises in class, in groups or by individual students.

Group II: Teacher and students are responsible for the activities (the teacher sets the task and the students are responsible for its management):

- discussion in class with students and teacher equal in the delimitation and treatment of the subject,
- pair and group activities,
- individual work at school or elsewhere,
- programmed learning,
- student guidance exhorted by the teacher.

Group III: The student is as responsible as possible within the framework of the curriculum (the student chooses or suggests the task, is responsible for monitoring and evaluation):

- autonomous work in groups and by individuals,
- spontaneous student guidance.

Different activities in the target language may encourage, at their best, many or most of the following aspects:

Group I:

Teacher presentations encourage:

- concentration on listening and making an effort to understand,
- reinforcement of the ability to collect information (from speech and from visual aids),
- reinforcement of the skill to make notes (if required),
- reinforcement of the skill to understand speech in different registers, accents and voices, and modes of presentation,
- retrieval of earlier learnt vocabulary and structures,
- understanding of new words and expressions in context.

The emphasis is on one-way communication.

Questions by the teacher encourage:

- concentration on listening and making an effort to understand,
- reinforcement of the ability to analyse and evaluate spoken language and messages (and messages by visual aids),
- composition and oral expression of the information required,
- retrieval of earlier learnt vocabulary and structures,
- comprehensible pronunciation, intonation and use of language.

Usually such questions only practise linguistic elements.

If there is communication, it is more often practice for communication than real communication.



Discussion in class guided by the teacher encourages:

- the same aspects as questions by the teacher,
- understanding of new words and expressions in a context,
- (- seldom: expression of new ideas and own meanings).

The activity is more often practice for communication than real communication.

Supervised exercises in class encourage:

- concentration on listening and/or reading and making an effort to understand,
- reinforcement of the ability to analyse and evaluate spoken and/or written language in exercise contexts,
- retrieval of earlier learnt vocabulary and structures,
- composition of oral and/or written structures and vocabulary required,
- comprehensible pronunciation and intonation,
- development of orthography,
- (- seldom: expression of new ideas and understanding of new words and expressions).

This activity is usually of the linguistic form for communication.

Group II:

Equal discussion in class encourages:

- concentration on listening and making an effort to understand,
- reinforcement of the ability to analyse and evaluate spoken language and messages,

- expression of own meanings and general discussion skills,
  - retrieval of learnt vocabulary and structures,
  - understanding of new words and expressions in context,
  - composition and expression of the information required,
  - comprehensible pronunciation, intonation and use of language,
  - own responsibility in the mutual effort.
- The emphasis is on two-way communication.
- Individual work and programmed learning encourage:
- concentration on listening, reading and/or viewing and making an effort to understand,
  - reinforcement of the ability to analyse and evaluate spoken and written language and messages in different contexts and messages by visual aids,
  - expression of own meanings and general discussion skills,
  - composition and expression of the information required,
  - retrieval of earlier learnt vocabulary and structures,
  - development of orthography,
  - composition of oral and written structures and vocabulary required,
  - comprehensible pronunciation, intonation and use of language,
  - search for new information, language, and new ways of thought and expression,
  - ability to present the results of one's work to others in oral and/or written form,
  - learning of technical aspects of procedures,
  - search for new ways of working,

- planning of work,
- active starting of work and active working,
- evaluation of one's own process and product,
- some responsibility of work and self,
- growth towards autonomy.

Pair and group activities and student guidance encourage:

- the same aspects as in individual and programmed learning,
- division of work,
- learning from peers,
- co-operation, empathy and flexibility,
- peer evaluation,
- some responsibility of others,
- growth towards autonomy.

The emphasis is on two-way communication, co-operation and growth of responsibility.

The emphasis is either on one-way communication where the learner receives messages from written, aural and/or visual sources performing more or less mechanical tasks for control, or two-way communication in the sense that the learner consults his sources, works on the information and ideas drawn from the sources and presents his own views and meanings either orally or in written form. Some emphasis is also placed on responsibility. Depending on the nature and realization of programmed learning, the range of aspects may be those enumerated or much more restricted.

Group III:

Autonomous work and student guidance encourage:

- the same aspects as in group II,
- as much responsibility as possible in school,
- growth of autonomy.

The emphasis is on two-way communication, co-operation and autonomy.

These two lists of classroom activities and of what different activities encourage, were used to make the learners aware of the different aspects of pragmatic competence. They were also used to guide the learners to plan their own learning procedures. It was expected that both their metacognition and metacommunication would be encouraged in this way. Another procedure expected to work to this effect, was the filling in of the following questionnaire, partly at the beginning of the course, partly at appropriate moments during the course:

	very good			very poor
1) My knowledge in English is				
in a) speaking				
b) pronunciation				
c) understanding of spoken language				
c) understanding of written language				
e) writing				
f) grammar				

2) What should you especially improve?

3) How could you do it? (What kind of exercise, instruction etc.)

4) a) Do you plan to study something extra?

b) Did you do it?

5) How much time did you use for your homework?

As the students in senior secondary school study an official, and in that way, a compulsory syllabus, the broad lines of the contents had to be the same for everybody, while there was plenty of opportunity for personal approach, scope and adaptation, and working procedures within this framework. The planning, realization and evaluation of these elements of the curriculum had the following rhythm:


Planning in class for the period of 6 weeks:  
Information on syllabus, agreement on common requirements, tests (number, form, data), level of acceptance (in tests, various performances), self-evaluation and/or peer evaluation (how, what, how often).



Planning in pairs/groups/individually for a short period (e.g. 1 week):  
Choice of themes or grammatical areas with special emphasis, choice of texts and exercises, planning of approach, scope and activities.



In pairs/groups/individually and in class (if planned):  
Realization with possible modifications to the original plan.



In class/individually/in groups:  
Evaluation of the period (what worked, what did not, why, how to improve).



In pairs/groups/individually for a short period (e.g. 1 week)  
Planning as earlier,



etc.



Individual evaluation of the period of 6 weeks:  
Evaluation of one's own product and giving oneself a grade and reasons for this grade.  
Evaluation of one's own procedures and processes.  
Suggestions for the following course.

In this way, evaluation was tied to planning, the aims being partly practical, i.e. giving information to teacher & students themselves, partly psychological, i.e. fostering the growth of autonomy through metacognition and meta-communication.

The following learner evaluation is an example of the practical usefulness of such evaluations for the teacher.

- During the first lesson of the course we chose themes for oral presentation. The teacher showed us a list of the theme, of which we had to choose one immediately. In my opinion there was too little time for choices.
- We received the material from the teacher. It was good and clear.
- I and my partner took the important things out of the material and shaped it into a presentable form.
- The work took about 2 h. There was sufficiently time for this work. The presentations took approx. 1,5 h.
- The teacher evaluated the presentations.
- I think that a small presentation like this is nice change.

Self-evaluations, like the following, serve to encourage individualistic approach and task-mastery orientation among the learners. Giving oneself a grade in connection to such evaluation, also helps the learners to internalize the standard of language and skill expected of them.

"Though the sum of my points (in different tests) was 243,

I think I have participated quite well in the lessons.

Also my poem and my first composition were graded as

"good". In addition, the other members of my group gave me good points when hearing my homework, 4/4 for both parts. Also the oral presentation went well, and I was given 4/4 points for it (the literary analysis also was "very good").

Also, other forms of self, peer and group evaluation have been experimented on by some teachers in the school. The targets of such evaluations have been homework, use of language, participation in group work. After the end of the activity the students assessed themselves, their peers or members of the group with the scale 0-4, 0 standing for failure and 4 for excellent performance. This was done by writing the grade on the student lists in the class, which the teacher circulated amongst the students.

Such assessment certainly gives the teacher and learners helpful information. On the other hand, it can be a tool of manipulation and accordingly a two-edged sword. It requires a skilful teacher, good teacher-student and student-student relationships, highly individualistic and co-operational approaches (cf. Ames & Ames 1984) and a trustful atmosphere. A more tactful alternative would be self-evaluation on personal evaluation sheets. Though they involve some practical problems they are worth experimenting on if numerical estimation of product and behaviour is considered important.

Both the teacher and the students should take part in planning and evaluation. Due to their age the students can be given quite sophisticated forms. Planning and evaluation serve as practical guidelines for work in the classroom.

At the same time they are tools which help the development and evaluation of learner autonomy when used in a right way.

literature:

Ames, C. & Ames, R. (1984) Systems of student and teacher motivation: towards a qualitative definition. *Journal of Educational Psychology* 76 (4):535-556.

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Most of the classroom developments are based on descriptions by Ms Sirkka Littow.

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PUPIL AUTONOMY IN SLOW LANGUAGE LEARNER GROUPS

Sweden and Denmark are now the only two Nordic countries where there is organized ability grouping (setting) in the comprehensive school. In Sweden pupils in grades 7-9 can choose each year between an easier and a more difficult course in English and Mathematics. This system of alternative courses has been criticized on several grounds - pedagogical as well as ideological, and there is evidence that the pupils who have spent all the three years in the easy English course learn very little. This is in short the background of the GEM project (Grouping of pupils in English and Mathematics), whose aim is to deliver a recommendation to the Swedish Board of Education about grouping models in grades 7-9 in the future. The recommendation is to be based on experiences from grouping experiments, which have been carried out over the last three years. The schools have been allowed to develop their own grouping models, as long as the models are not contradictory to the Swedish curriculum. Thus permanent ability grouping, i.e. when the pupils stay more than one term in the same ability groups, is not allowed (except in the traditional system mentioned above).

Only a couple of the original 27 schools taking part in the grouping experiments have chosen to work wholly in mixed ability groups all the three years. Others have tried but given up after a year. Teachers have claimed that individualization requires small groups and means a lot of extra work for the teachers, and that in fact they have no training in real differentiation within the classroom. Consequently they feel that they fail with both the slow and the fast learners. In my opinion this is largely due to the strong tradition of text- and teacher-centred language teaching, developed for fairly gifted pupils and maybe adequate for them. In heterogeneous groups, though, the uniform tasks of the teacher-centred methods frequently leave the slow learners at a loss and the more able ones without the slightest challenge.

Instead most of the experimental schools have chosen more or less flexible ability grouping, frequently on more than the ordinary two levels, but with varying degrees of flexibility between the groups. Usually there have also been periods of more autonomous work in mixed ability groups in between. These models have of course been much more complicated to administer than the permanent ability grouping, but according to many of the teachers they offer a way to get away from the negative and pessimistic mood frequently found in permanent slow learner groups. Anyway, the problems of finding methods that work in the slow learner groups are often pointed out, and so far teachers have been left on their own to experiment as best they can.

As no organization model solves the problem of teaching English to the slow learners, it seems logical to look upon the grouping issue from another perspective. Even the slow learners have managed to learn their native language. There is reason to suspect that they could acquire a communicative competence for certain purposes also in a foreign language, provided they got the right input and saw the point of learning a language, and provided they say what they could use it for, not some time in the future but here and now. Are there ways of teaching a foreign

language, where these conditions could be realized? If so, in what grouping models could these "methods" be developed? And how are the other pupils' needs provided for, i.e. the average and the gifted ones, in such grouping models?

The problem of the slow language learners is not only a Swedish concern. Increased international mobility and exchange on several levels have led to a recognition that practically all people need to understand and make themselves understood in at least one foreign language. In most European countries one foreign language (or more) is taught to all pupils, at least for a couple of years. The objectives have changed, from accuracy to fluency, from linguistic to communicative competence. Teachers who do not always accept the change of focus are given the task of teaching skills they are not really trained to teach, to pupils whose learning styles they do not understand. No wonder some German federal states have given the schools permission to "relieve" some pupils (and teachers) of the foreign language burden. Some states, however, have tried to find other solutions.

Englischunterricht für alle (ed. Hellwig/Sauer, Schöningh Paderborn 1984) is a collection of reports focusing not only on the problems but also on the possibilities among the slow language learners. Hellwig has a long and depressing list of shortcomings - or symptoms - frequently ascribed to slow language learners. Here is only an excerpt from it:

- dyslexia or other types of reading/writing problems in the native lang.
- low self confidence or unrealistic self-esteem
- difficulties in understanding abstract reasoning
- difficulties in concentrating
- little or no interest in long term objectives
- easily bored or fatigued by tasks
- low motivation for school because of earlier failures
- little or no support from home

There is, however, also a list of external reasons for the failures that many of the weak learners experience in the language classroom. The traditional methods are inadequate for them. These methods are too theoretical, give too little immediate feedback to the pupils, do not make them see what use they might have of learning the language etc. Neither in didactic research, nor in teacher training has the problem been recognized until recently. In this collection there are a large number of suggestions for other ways of working, many of them stressing the functions of language, i.e. an appeal for a communicative approach. There is no focus on learner autonomy, though, and from what I have seen the intention is not to give more responsibility or more choices to the pupils, but rather to adapt the content and the discourse to their everyday life and make the lessons less theoretical, more varying, more interesting. The authors seem convinced that also slow language learners can acquire a reasonable communicative competence in English, provided the language teaching methods are better adapted to their needs and possibilities. Most of the authors seem to take it for granted that the weak learners should be taught in special groups (C-kursus, i.e. the third level in the comprehensive schools). From their way of describing the pupils in these groups one does not get the impression that autonomy in language learning is the best way for these pupils, rather that they should be better taken care of.

Recently I had an opportunity to be informed about the Austrian project "English an Gesamtschule mit besonderer Berücksichtigung lernschwacher Schüler" ("English at Comprehensive schools with special reference to the slow learner"), which was concluded in 1985. The project was launched in connection with the Council of Europe Modern Languages project and aimed at a communicative approach in language teaching. Several schools were involved in producing and trying out materials as well as developing methods where the special problems of the weak learners were considered, but where also the the other pupils' needs had to be taken into account.

In Austria the syllabus as well as the objectives and the textbooks are decided upon for the whole country, and it is not possible for the pupils to make their own course programmes the way they can in Denmark. But the attitude of the steering group seemed in my opinion to encourage autonomy on a simple everyday level which is easy to carry out in the classroom, as the means for it to a certain extent are included in the course books. They have, for instance, a "Wiederholungsheft" with self assessments for each unit in the course books and with suggestions for "repair work", if needed. Thus pupils come to realize their own responsibility for their learning. The course books also help them with simple strategies for how to interact with each other and with the teacher in English. Lists of useful phrases to express one's needs and intentions, or at least how to start doing so, are given on the inside covers of the text books, where they are easy to find. According to the teachers I talked to all this has helped also the slow learners to some degree of autonomy.

Although the new approach has not solved all the learning problems for the slow ones, it certainly is much easier to motivate them now that they see how they can use the foreign language "here and now", for their own purposes in the classroom. Furthermore, the fast learners are not held back by the slow ones. In a communicative language teaching approach they have good chances to develop also in the mixed ability groups, as the tasks are less uniform and can be performed on different levels.

However, although the project group and many of the teachers in the project schools wanted to postpone and cut down on ability grouping, the authorities did not follow their advice but kept the three levels from the middle of the fifth form. In Vienna, though, where the schools have a higher degree of autonomy, the former project schools stick to the models with less ability grouping.

Back again to Sweden. In questionnaires and interviews I have asked the teachers in the project schools how the teaching differs between slow groups and the others. The answers point in different directions. Some teachers write that the difference is mainly quantitative, i.e. the slow learners get shorter texts, simpler grammar tasks, fewer words and less homework, whereas others say that they try to give the slow learners a much more concrete instruction. For instance they build the language around pictures, classroom situations and everyday life. Several teachers claim that slow learners must be more guided, have clear instructions and be told exactly what to do. On the few occasions where they can choose tasks and work more independently, they are usually in mixed ability groups together with more able pupils who can set the example.

When asked about the most important reasons why the slow learners often fail in English, the teachers usually point out some of the shortcomings

among the slow learners listed above. Only very few seem to consider the teacher's role in the learning process. There are a few, though, who mention that the text-centred teaching is too theoretical, too abstract. At the same time they admit that they do not really know what to do instead. Their teacher training did not provide them with models for the slow learners, and they themselves have tried on their own but not always succeeded in finding models that work in these groups.

I have attended a large number of language lessons in slow learner groups and videotaped some of them. In order to find out how videotaped lessons could be used in teacher training I invited 16 of the observed teachers - some of them experimenting in various ways to make the pupils more active in class - to a three-day seminar based on the videos. There were some theory lessons, but most of the time was spent on group work around the videos. A written analysis was available for each lesson, which the teachers studied sometimes before, sometimes after they saw the lesson. The categories in the analyses were chosen so as to point out clearly whether the activities were teacher-guided or pupil-centred. The teachers were urged to look for the positive things in the lessons, and no criticism was allowed except in the form of constructive suggestions for alternative ways. Some of the lessons had long passages of oral pair work around pictures or role cards, others were considerably more teacher guided.

It was a good experience to see how the pupils in some of these slow learner groups (aged 13) used English in pair work for quite long periods and even stood in front of the class, e.g. describing a person so that the others could guess who it was. There was indeed not much of pupil autonomy in these activities, but at least they willingly used the language they had, and for their own purposes, which is not too common in these groups. Their cheerful or concentrated faces showed that they really enjoyed what they were doing. In these tasks almost all the pupils could get the message through, and at least some of them had a chance to show both themselves and the others that they could talk fairly good English. To some of them this was a new experience. The year before, in the 6th form, they had all been in their ordinary class with their more able classmates also during the English lessons, and some had hardly ever dared to say anything in English in class.

On the last day of the seminar the teachers saw the video tape from Leni Dan's lesson. Although we did not understand everything that was going on, we were indeed impressed by the amount of pupil autonomy and by their natural use of English for all purposes in the classroom. In this mixed ability group the weak language learners evidently heard and used English on a much higher level than would ever be possible in a weak group - we all agreed on that. It was obvious that some of the teachers were astonished and would very much have liked to learn more about this Danish model, particularly how one can get pupils to use the target language also in group work.

It is my impression - supported by the teachers' evaluations - that the seminar was very useful for the teachers and helped them see themselves and reflect on their teaching behaviour in a way most of them had never done before. The most overwhelming reaction among them was: I had no idea I talked so much, guided so much, left no little initiative to the pupils. Some parts of their lessons, which they themselves had thought

were good, were seen from a pupil's perspective, i.e. they saw how the active teacher sometimes got rather passive pupils. In the written evaluations at the end of the course several of them wrote things like: "What I really take with me home is a conviction to hand over more responsibility, more initiative to the pupils. I see now that it works, that they can do much more on their own than I had expected."

Well, did they do so, did they hand over more responsibility to the pupils in their low ability groups? I do not really know - yet. I have talked to most of the teachers afterwards and videotaped a few more lessons. There is some evidence of quite radical changes, and some of them may be lasting. But it takes more than a three-day seminar to change one's teacher behaviour, rooted in one's own experience as a pupil and in a tradition which has grown over centuries. At least I felt this was a beginning for some, and for others a second or third step. I will show you a couple of minutes of a lesson which shows the change from frontal teaching to learner centred teaching at least in one class. All the pupils work with the same chapter in the book, but they do the tasks in groups and they can choose to skip some of it and do more of something they feel is more fun or more useful to themselves. Now and then they use English when talking to each other, but mostly they talk Swedish except to the teacher. Looking at a videotaped lesson "before", one realizes that the teacher's role in this classroom has indeed changed. It is a first step towards learner autonomy, although the step is very small compared with those taken in the autonomous classes I have seen in Denmark.

(Video)---

Now, what has all this got to do with the GEM project and our future recommendation on grouping? - Am I pleading for ability grouping on the condition that teachers can learn to let also the weak learners do more oral pair work, make them more active and give them more responsibility for their own learning, i.e. make them more autonomous? Honestly, I do not know. It is true that when I saw the good lessons in the low ability groups, I felt that it was very positive that almost all of them seemed to understand the teacher when she spoke English. They were able to do the tasks and dared to use the (little) English they had, and at least some of them had a chance to have little performances in a group where they felt they were good. I suppose experiences like these contribute to the convictions of all those teachers who claim that the weak learners are much better off in groups together with other low achievers. But from what I have seen and heard, very few teachers would believe in more than a very limited autonomy in such a group. Strictly guided oral pair work developing into somewhat less guided oral tasks may work, and maybe occasional role plays. More autonomous work in groups or pairs requires a number of pupils who can get the group started and take initiatives, and there are very few such pupils in these groups. "It would be so much easier if they had the other pupils there too, to set good examples and help the slow ones when the teacher is busy somewhere else", as one teacher said.

In a slow learner group there are often several pupils with problems of some kind, learning problems as well as social and psychological problems. There may be more disturbances than in an ordinary class to sort out during these lessons, and a lot of time must be spent on social talk (in Swedish). It takes time for the teacher to get the pupils into a functioning group, both in the beginning of the term and at the start of

each lesson. In the ordinary class or in a smaller mixed ability group these disturbances may be less frequent, as some of the other pupils may have a stabilizing effect. Also, the language input that the pupils get in these groups is considerably richer than in a weak group, at least for those who can follow.

Autonomous learning as I have seen it in Leni's and Hanne's classes seems to let all the pupils, also the weak ones develop on their own level. At the same time the weak pupils may get more support from their more able class-mates, both on a psychological and on a communicative/linguistic level. But they are in a group where they (as usual) feel that what they can do is very little compared to what some of the others do. They have perhaps no chances to be stars for a minute or more, standing in front of the class and performing in English. Or am I wrong, can they have such experiences also in a mixed ability group? And which is the most important, that the weak ones (or some of them) can get some more self confidence in their own groups, or that they (perhaps) can develop their English to a higher level in communication with their more able classmates in mixed ability groups?

It seems to me that learner autonomy in language learning could be one answer to the question of how to group the pupils in English in the future. Another answer could be flexible ability grouping + development of less theoretical, more pupil-centred ways of working in slow learner groups. The latter does not seem impossible to carry out and to spread in teacher training. But how does one transfer to Swedish language teachers the positive Danish attitude to learner autonomy? And language teachers who would like to try it, how can one help them to start?

There is a risk that what in the long run might be the best solution will not be chosen because it requires so much effort, and because nobody knows how to start. Maybe Denmark could help us a bit in the beginning, though?

Leni Dam:

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED IN IMPLEMENTING LEARNER AUTONOMY.

"Which <sup>you</sup> SUCCESSES have encountered in implementing learner autonomy?" is a question I find very easy to answer. I have at once a whole range of answers, situations, experiences to unfold. As opposed to that I have always found it extremely difficult to answer the question, "which problems have you encountered in implementing learner autonomy?" Or rather I have not got a ready answer. This was also the case when preparing this paper. In order to answer the question: Problems encountered in implementing learner autonomy I felt it first of all of importance to clarify to myself what my "old" problems had been. What kind of problems were encountered in my previous, traditional teaching situation? What struck me when thinking back was that I had NOT REALLY been worried about IF and HOW the pupils learned because I knew that I had TAUGHT them the best I had learned.

What had bothered me was:

Would the materials/activities I had chosen be of interest to the class?  
 Would the pupils work reasonably well?  
 Would I make a good performance?  
 Questions that I very seldom would get a straight answer to. I would have a feeling of what the answer might be, but FUNDAMENTALLY I felt I was alone with my problems. And that was probably the biggest problem. The only persons with whom I might solve that problem were the participants in the classroom.

Not an unimportant reason for LEARNER AUTONOMY.

In my search for "new" problems I went through a lot of pupils' questionnaires and diaries. I looked at my own notes, from classes and workshops, questions I had asked myself, the



pupils, other teachers - hoping to find not THE answer but some answer to the question.

From the data I could see that it could be a problem

- to make the pupils ask WHY
- to remember myself to ask "why"
- to make the pupils make decisions
- to make the pupils take over responsibility for their decisions
- to respect the pupils' right to make "wrong" decisions - and learn from that
- to find the best way to support the pupils in their choices
- to become better at listening to/hearing/understanding what the pupils were saying
- to build up respect for the participants (pupils and teacher) in the classroom
- to facilitate groupwork among students who have never worked in groups before
- to find "the best way" of supporting the need of the pupils to keep track of the work done and progress made
- to spent too much time on one "problem" at the cost of other "problems"

Going through the list I realized that "problems" in an autonomous language learning context are basically different to problems encountered in a traditional teaching context. The whole process

- to learn more about how to learn
  - to get to know more about the steps/decisions being made - what, how, why
- are easily identified problems. BUT why is it then so difficult to answer the question: What ARE the problems? Why is it so difficult to come up with a quick, straight answer to the question?

I think it is due to the ROLE of "problems" in an autonomous language learning context.

Fairly early in our work with autonomy we had problems placing "problems". One of our first evaluation sheets looked as follows:

Activity:	
Problems:	How did I solve them?:
Successes:	What did I learn?:

What we came to realize was that you learn from problems and that a problem can be part of a success. We realized that problems are part of everyday life in an autonomous learning context. They are things to be worked upon, things to be tackled as part of the process. Sometimes they might lead to new problems, sometimes they might be growthpoints. What is important is that they will always end by being steps forward, - you have learned something.

And that is why I would not label them problems but rather CHALLENGES, stressing that they are part of an on-going process including the following growthpoints:

- you get to know more about learning, more about the individual pupils - how they go about learning
- you get to know more about yourself
- you build up a positive, critical awareness

But perhaps most important of all: learning/teaching has become a SHARED experience - you are no longer ALONE with your problems.

I think that the "challenges" show in the following end of term evaluations, 10th form 1986:

I think that we have grown better at planning our own time. We know more about what we need to do and how to go about it. We try all the time to extend our vocabulary and to get an active language. Evaluation also helped us. It is like going

through things again.

I have learned English, planning my own work, cooperation. Know more about people in other parts of the world. I had my first penfriend via a visitor from Sri Lanka. Since then I've had thirty others. Have had and used an independent responsibility. Have taken part in the planning of learning (it makes one want to do, learn something for oneself.)

Ulla Rigbolt

CONDITIONS FOR PROMOTING LEARNER AUTONOMY AMONG THE  
TEACHERS IN THE DANISH 'POLKESKOLE'

When asked to contribute with a brief account of my experience in the field of learner autonomy, I decided to concentrate on my work in in-service teacher training courses. For the past five years I have participated in courses for Danish teachers of English in two rather different types of courses:

- a) "part-time courses", 1 day per week for 1 year, concerned with both the individual teacher's language ability and his teaching
- b) "full-time courses", 7 days altogether but divided into three periods in order that the teachers might try out teaching practices in their classrooms and later discuss them in the workshop.

These courses were only concerned with the teaching of English. When introducing the concept of learner autonomy to the teachers, their reactions would vary greatly from total rejection of the whole idea to a more or less half-hearted accept. The latter group would start out being seemingly positive but soon give up when problems arose. Finally, there was a group of teachers who were genuinely positive and experienced much success but who also had feelings of frustration and uncertainty regularly.

Returning to my "findings", two things come to my mind:

- 1) On the "part-time courses" the majority of the teachers were sceptical or only mildly interested. One implication of this could

be that this was the wrong way to present the concept of learner autonomy (see also my final remarks). On the "full-time courses" many more were positive, even to the point where on the latest course almost all the participants wanted to introduce learner autonomy to at least some of their classes. (On this course we asked the teachers to define learner autonomy. Their answers can be seen in Appendix A.)

- 2) There has been an increasing interest on the part of the teachers. Some have actually stated that they had wanted to work this way for some time but had not before been able to relate their ideas to a certain "school of thinking" or "method" or however we want to define the work with learner autonomy (this being the subject for further discussions?).

I have asked myself, naturally, why some of the teachers are interested while others definitely are not. And I cannot give all the reasons, of course, but it seems to me that at least the following "qualities" seem to be necessary:

- The teachers must have particular views on learners (and many other aspects of life). They must see it as a worthwhile objective to help "create" autonomous persons.
- The teachers must be able to accept criticism and to throw away old methods. In this connection it is worth remembering that it is still today possible to be a well-respected, successful teacher using traditional methods only - in fact, trying to change things will probably get you a good deal of criticism.
- Finally - and this is an open question - does this mean that the teacher who will try to introduce learner autonomy in his classroom must be an experienced and capable teacher with a lot of self-confidence?

Even if the teacher is positive and has all the qualities stated above, he will still from time to time be a "scared teacher", wondering if he is in fact doing the right thing. The following is an attempt to suggest things that might help in that situation:

- Participation in workshops and meetings with other teachers doing the same kind of work, to discuss problems and successes.
- Some kind of theoretical background, or simplified definitions - whatever - to use in discussions with colleagues, parents etc.etc.
- Something to put instead of the "course-book-security" (reports? statistics?)
- Discussion groups with colleagues - perhaps at the same school - practising learner autonomy in other subjects. It might be an idea to bring in people to talk about learner autonomy to the whole group of teachers.
- To make it "acceptable" to work with autonomy at various levels - and to describe these levels to the teachers.

Finally, and in relation to the levels of autonomy:

If we can talk about levels of autonomy or "small steps" in the foreign language classroom, does the same apply to in-service teacher training courses? Might it be that the teachers who at first hear about the concept of learner autonomy on a part-time course or in a speech given at their school and who at first are very sceptical, nevertheless become aware of certain things in their teaching that they might change and perhaps move slowly in the direction of "top-level autonomy" - just to call it something?

#### Appendix A

Answers to the question "What is learner autonomy? Why work with learner autonomy?" given by a group of teachers on a full-time course (1985/86) after a short presentation consisting of a brief speech and a video (Leni's from the 5th form):

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 The reason for working with learner autonomy is quite clearly to make the pupils independent and make them share in the management during the whole period of teaching, thereby training them to function in a genuine democracy so that they can become (be) independent and critical members of the society while they at the same time at their own speed acquire the necessary skills. "Selvvirksomhed" (self-activity!) comes closest to what I understand by autonomy. That the pupils can use themselves in many ways in their English lessons. Parts of themselves which in traditional teaching are limited to a few teacher- or textbook-initiated, for instance: creativity - drawing, drama, imagination. That the pupils can work according to their abilities... use the language for real communication ... choose, plan and carry out some projects themselves and work together in these ... take on responsibility and set their own learning objectives.

The starting point for the planning of the teaching must be the pupils - or rather the individual pupil. (It should in other words not be the parents' expectations to us which guide us.) It is the teacher's task to promote motivation. This is best done by giving the pupils joy in their work which is achieved partly by letting them decide as much as possible. From being the all-dominating teacher linked-up with an unyielding text-book, the teacher now has to play a sort of "service-role". To reach results which meet the expectations

from pupils, teachers, further education institutions etc. it is necessary to work much with responsibility.

- The pupils work according to their individual background, with texts/activities they have chosen themselves. They work in groups (not too much alone). The teacher's role is to guide, give advice and be a consultant. The members of the groups help each other - and the other groups.
- A way of teaching where the pupils themselves plan the teaching, the objectives and evaluation. For the pupil this means a larger degree of independence and the ability to view their learning as a whole; also more activity. For the teacher it means that he works more like a consultant (and not as the teacher)= give advice etc. For the class it means work at different levels with many groups and mutual influence. In everyday classroom work it means (compared to traditional teaching) that more English is spoken. A "Joy of work" hopefully should be developed ...
- We learn differently, we have different interests, we have different needs - we are different. Autonomy means shared management, responsibility, creativity, involvement and interest, motivation, pride in one's work, spontaneous activity and speech. To work with a subject where one is actively involved in the teaching process - and with the help of the other pupils and the teacher can decide on one's own needs, objectives and amount of work leads to responsibility
- What: to be conscious of one's own ability, to describe the types of activities which will cover the needs/expectations of the group, to cooperate, use each other's strong sides, work at one's own speed inside areas of interest, to have influence on the teaching situation, to be responsible to oneself and to others. Why: increased interest, eagerness to work, involvement. Everyone feels more secure when he can decide himself how and when he will try his strength on something new. Everybody has an inbuilt force to move ahead - it is unsatisfactory to remain in one place.
- Strengthens the pupils' shared management and shared responsibility. A more varied learning. The pupils get better at judging their own ability and possibilities.
- The pupils decide and plan the content of their teaching. The purpose is that the pupils become more aware of
  - 1) their own strong and weak sides
  - 2) feel more responsible for their own and other pupils learning
  - 3) get slower learners into a more meaningful work situation
  - 4) greater motivation, greater joy of work
- What: A way to work? differentiation, communication, motivation  
 Philosophy (menneskesyn)? education? responsibility, willingness to cooperate, initiative, self-esteem

Gerd Gabrielsen  
 Danmarks Lærerhøjskole  
 Denmark

#### SIX YEAR'S EXPERIENCE IN WORKSHOPS FOR TEACHERS

The Karlslunde project on autonomous learning began in 1980/81. We soon realised from the progress we saw the children make in organising their own work and in actual learning that we might be on to something which would prove to be of general interest, and accordingly began our first attempts to involve other teachers in developing the same mode of work in their own classroom.

Workshop  
 Organisation

The greater part of our teacher to teacher work has taken place within the framework of a series of workshops which was organised in collaboration with teachers from Lancaster University. (see Breen, Candlin, Dam and Gabrielsen forthcoming). The training focus of the workshops has changed, from transmission to problem-solving to the present focus of classroom decision-making and investigation. During the same period participants' active involvement in testing and working out common principles for classroom work has steadily increased. With time, therefore, the workshops have developed into a testing ground for us to see how far principles developed and outcomes observed in the first experimental classes are generally valid. One of the questions we had to face at the beginning of our project. It has further allowed us to gain some practical insight in the process of changing teacher and learner roles in the classroom. It is this latter aspect which is going to be my focus here.

At the present time we run two workshops each year of 42 hours each, one for teachers who are new to the approach suggested, and one continuing group. Work in the beginners' group focuses on basic classroom management while the continuing group focuses on principles and aspects involved in doing innovative work in ge-

neral. The overall aim of the two years as a whole is to support participants in managing continuous and systematic classroom development.

The pattern of workshop meetings which we have found useful is one in which we have two 2½ day meetings at the beginning of the school year, in August and October respectively, with two whole-day follow-up meetings in spring. The periods in between are used by participants for practical classroom work to be reported on in the next meeting.

Accordingly, for each meeting we have the following agenda:

- detailed discussion of observation and outcomes,
- fairly brief, focused input selected by organisers and participants according to the needs of that particular group,
- planning of work next to be undertaken in the classroom by participants.

In working out the practical issues of classroom work, participants follow the same procedure as that developed in the classroom with language learners, i.e. the teachers agree on "contracts":

- decide which aspects of classroom work to focus on in periods in between meetings,
- plan how to go about the work to be undertaken,
- decide on individual aims and on criteria of evaluation,
- try out plans in class and discuss in detail all aspects of the classroom process relevant to them,
- on this basis set up new or revised plans for further work.

To help analysis and discussion of classroom experience they bring back to their group of co-participants "classroom documentation, ranging from teacher's diaries over learner evaluation to learners' written or taped work.

To what extent, then, is actual classroom practice affected? During the one or two workshop years, all participants try out aspects of change in teaching-learning and evaluate these with their pupils. Our best estimate, based on personal contact after workshops, is that more than two thirds of the participants have furthermore made lasting and sometimes radical changes in the pattern of teacher-learner interaction in their classrooms.

support strategies  
The support strategies we have developed and use in order to make it feasible for participants to experiment systematically in their own classrooms may grossly be stated as follows:

- (i) The first and most important thing which we had to realise is that things take time. A radical change in teacher-learner roles as the one we are suggesting cannot take place overnight. It is a process of learning and mutual adjustment for teachers as well as learners, and moreover it is one which has to be worked out by each teacher for each group of learners. Change in teacher-learner roles must therefore not be seen as an all-or-nothing issue, but as something which can be introduced gradually, or even experimented with for a limited period of time, always with the possibility of changing strategies if outcomes are not as expected. "Failure" is not accepted, since any experience can be used as a basis for further planning. If necessary a change may consist in introducing very simple measures without changing the usual pattern of teaching-learning, such as asking the learners after an agreed period of time what they have learned, which type of activity they prefer, and why. It is up to each teacher to decide what he is going to do in class, the only condition being that the outcome of evaluation with learners is reported back to the group and if possible documented, i.e. written out or taped.

- (ii) For the last few years we have made sure that all participants know and accept that they are expected to try out certain aspects of change in their own classrooms. In advertising the workshops we state explicitly that we are aiming at a form of classroom organisation in which learners as far as possible set up their own aims and objectives for learning, choose their own materials and activities, and together with the teacher discuss and evaluate the outcome of learning. Participants therefore do not feel that this overall group aim is imposed from outside, and it is a help to them as well as to us as organisers that we may agree from the beginning that we are aiming at the same kind of change.

- (iii) In the workshops we make an effort to make it clear to participants how much support they can get from their learners in class and from their colleagues and co-participants. This should be experienced, not just talked about. Bringing classroom documentation to workshop meetings and analysing it there together with other participants is part of this. In this way participants together create a precise and concrete picture of the variability they may expect in class, and together they develop plans and strategies to deal with the problems which will necessarily arise. The long-time effect of this seems to be greater if done in groups than if done in discussions with us as workshop organisers. At the moment, therefore, we try only to join discussions at this stage when specifically invited.

- (iv) When evaluating input sessions and workshop discussions we try to look for what we have come to term "growthpoints", i.e. stages in the process of change at which certain statements of theory, suggestions, questions, or information proves to be particularly helpful, more so than at other times. We have had to learn to be selective in our input, sometimes to hold back information which may be more productive at a later stage, perhaps, and to carefully monitor the problems participants are

working at in the definition they give them. As with pupils in class it is a question of respecting the right of learners to define their own universe of inquiry and action even though we as organisers may work hard at changing it.

- (v) Plans for classroom action should be open and easy to revise if the need to do so should arise in the classroom. Recently we discovered that it is necessary to make it an explicit agreement that they should be individual plans, and that making plans in groups sometimes might counteract the actual trying out of plans in practice. Group dynamics, the convention of seeking inter-group agreement on what is to be done may get the upper hand so that less room is given to the individual teacher's consideration of what it will be appropriate and realistic to do in his particular group at that particular time. In our last workshop we asked participants to be aware of this problem, and with good results. Group work was as intense as before, while plans on the whole seemed to be more realistic, so that participants found it less difficult to put them into practice.

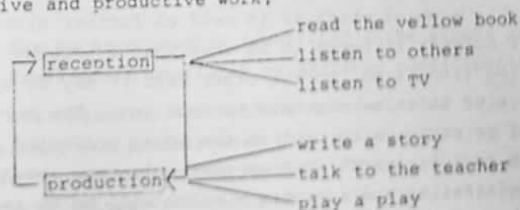
action input The change in teacher-learner roles which we ask people to undertake is a radical change. A first reaction of many teachers when they begin experimenting in class is that they feel a loss of control - they are uncertain how pupils, parents and colleagues will react, and how learners will learn in practice. Going through with the change therefore means re-thinking and re-making not only ideas of communication and language, but also experientially based concepts of language learning in schools and basic concepts of professionalism.

Workshop discussions reflect this process of re-thinking. As workshop organisers we try to make use of the insight

we get through these discussions in our selection of input, partly forced by the very short time we have at our disposal. We try to note if ideas or information introduced as part of the original workshop input is actually used in discussions. If it is, we will use it again, if it is not, we may decide after some time that it is not useful at this point and drop it temporarily or permanently.

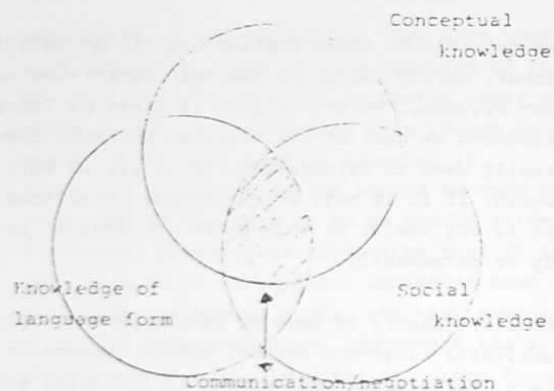
Explicit theory is used by participants in planning, in analysing classroom action, and in discussion with learners, parents and colleagues. In agreement with this the ideas most frequently referred to seem to be those which can be used in some basic form as criteria or "shorthand" reference points for classroom action or in discussions with learners and parents, and further those which make it possible to link up general pedagogic considerations with ideas of language and learning.

One example of this is "the good circle", a simplified illustration of the process of learning, involving receptive and productive work.



(Leni Dam, 1981)

Another would be the idea of communication (language and learning) as based on the negotiated interaction of three fields of knowledge, conceptual, social-interactional, and knowledge of language form. This is frequently used in discussions on classroom events, to integrate thinking about cognitive development, social experience in and outside the classroom, and the learning of language, and thus to explain the role of classroom organisation and social issues in learning and communication.

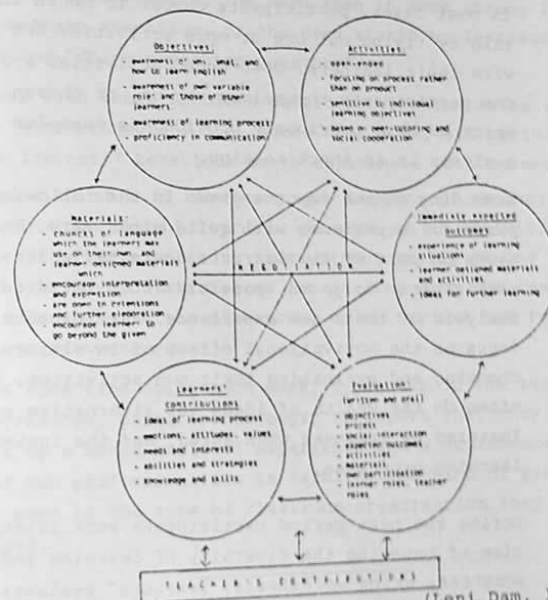


(Simplified after  
C N Candlin, Lancaster Univ.)

It seems to me, that the function which these conceptualisations or simplified illustrations have is that of "organisers" of theory or ideas which has already, in other contexts, been referred to and judged relevant, e.g. in discussions of general pedagogic issues or in public debate on the role of language in society.

This is a point which is in need of further discussion. In dark moments it seems to me that what I present of theory is too simplified, on the other hand it may be a division of roles which we may have to look into. The more important point seems to be that the ideas presented are valid both in relation to what we currently know about language, communication, and learning - which will be my responsibility, and in relation to the chosen stand in the pedagogic and human process which teaching-learning is, which is the responsibility of the teacher.

A final point to be made is that whereas in linguistics or in learning theory we often look for the general or typical, the teachers' concern is for the idea or concept which will show the variability to be expected or which will bring order to the complexity of real-life decisions. An example in point is "The Flower",



(Leni Dam, 1981)

Classroom  
change

So far we have roughly identified three stages in the process of development undertaken by workshop participants.

At the beginning, discussions are dominated by a concern with personal and professional interaction: "How am I going to put this?", "How will they react?", "What are they going to say?", a first tentative trying out of new role relationships, whether applied to parents or pupils.

The type of classroom information we find helpful at this point is videotaped examples of learners working together, examples of learners' evaluations, or examples of how the experiment may be explained to parents. A focus on learners rather than on teacher-learner interaction per se follows from an agreement that our common topic is learners and what learners can do, rather than examples of what teachers can do, which are often read as normative.

In most cases, participants choose to begin their experimenting by trying out one or more activities and evaluating them with their learners. Open-ended activities are suggested by the participants themselves, by us, or chosen from activities which we have previously provided as examples for independent analysis in an input session.

According to the reports given in the following workshop meeting, practical experience will quite often vary, but positive reactions on part of the learners dominate, which encourages all participants to go on, possibly after revision and renewed analysis of their own experience. Participants' comments often focus on the motivational effect of involving learners in choosing and evaluating their own activities, but equally often on the wealth of ideas for alternative activities fostered by learners when asked, and the insight they have in learning processes.

During the next period participants work intensely at the problem of managing the diversity of learning and of documenting progress, using worksheets, learners' evaluations, diaries. Problems of monitoring linguistic progress are discussed, what to do about correctness, how do learners see progression, what is the "normal" process of learners? A general knowledge and acceptance of the concept of interlanguage, and the varied experience of participants is of help here, as is the fact that we as organisers are able to demonstrate how different learners have developed over long periods of time.

After some time a third stage is reached in which both more general and more specific problems of classroom interaction are taken up. There is a growing awareness of all aspects of the teacher and learner roles, and often discussions on this develop into discussions of operational criteria for evaluating the pedagogic process, or of the relation of what is observed to pedagogic or social issues in general.

At the specific level, the problems may be what to do about particularly strong or weak learners, what to do about learners

who work superficially, the need seen in some strong learners for constant attention, or the need stated by learners or teachers for "doing something together".

To deal with these problems participants often agree to undertake "mini-projects", i.e. agree over a certain period to observe learners' behaviour or to experiment with agreed issues. Examples of this is observing what happens if teachers do not interfere and "push" learners who pick up an activity only to leave it after some short time without really having worked at it, to develop strategies for dealing with the teachers' multiple tasks in the classroom, or to try out and report on whole-class ventures.

After some time doing such work, typically in the second year of workshops, participants begin to report that they have built up a broad basis of experience and a confidence in their own professionalism in tackling the kind of problems they meet in the type of classroom organisation they have developed.

#### Conclusion

This is where we are at at the moment. That and then perhaps at the point of realising that the content and focus of in-service courses just as classroom teaching cannot be permanent. It has taken us six years to get this far, and what we are doing needs as much revision and re-thinking as it has ever done. Maybe we, in organising courses, will have to live with the fact that the changing world affects us as much as it affects what is going on in school.

No matter what changes are made, however, we believe that if we wish to organise workshops which support real and continuous change in classrooms, we shall still need to

- present relevant theory in a format which allows for use in evaluating and planning classroom practice, if possible do it in a form which is simple



enough for it to be used in planning and evaluation with the pupils, and to be used in explaining practice to parents and colleagues,

- support teachers in trying out small steps in the intended direction, being prepared to supply information about what generally happens and what has been done previously, and being genuinely interested in the outcome of each experiment,
- give teachers time to become familiar with a different monitoring function in the classroom, and to work out the principles and issues involved in working with strategies of change, both in a short-term and in a long-term perspective.
- encourage teachers to form their own support groups and to develop their own strategies for continuing change, using the information they get from their learners and the support they may get from their colleagues.

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G Gabrielsen: Pupil Initiative and Teacher Accountability. In: Teaching the Language of the Host Country to Migrants. Report. Informasjonssentret for Språkundervisning. Oslo, 1986.

M P Breen, C N Candlin, L Dam and G Gabrielsen: The Evolution of a Teacher Training Programme. In: R F Johnson (ed.): Program Design and Evaluation in Language Teaching. Applied Linguistics Series. Cambridge University Press (forthcoming).

PLENARY SESSION, Saturday September 20.

GROUP I: WHAT IS AUTONOMY

The group presented a slightly personal view of what autonomy is. The presentation took its point of departure in Holec's definition of autonomy in learning:

- to be willing to and capable of taking charge of one's own learning
- choosing aims and purposes
- choosing method and material
- choosing time and timing
- choosing criteria for evaluation

Being technical, this definition is useful in describing a manner of organising language learning. It does, however, not in itself indicate content of learning.

We have discussed two of the three possible orientations in learner autonomy identified by Chris Candlin: self-betterment (individualistic, status- and product-oriented) and interactional. We would accept only the latter in an educational context. This, because it seems to us to be the only one agreeing with the current educational debate in which we see a movement towards a process concept, not only of society and education, but also of personality, deriving from an acceptance of the idea of permanent education. In this view, concepts like identity and self-reliance become crucial, also because material conditions in society are isolationist, non-social, and do not generally favour the development of self-reliance and positive identification, which we do not find independent of other-reliance, social/emotional recognition by others.

The interactional view of autonomy is congruent with a pro-

cess-oriented view of communication and learning. Emphasis will be shifted from the traditional model of communication:



which shows communication as unidirectional, implying a power relationship from sender to receiver (the right to define how the message should be heard) to a slightly revised version with greater potential for solidarity, in which the process of negotiation is basic:



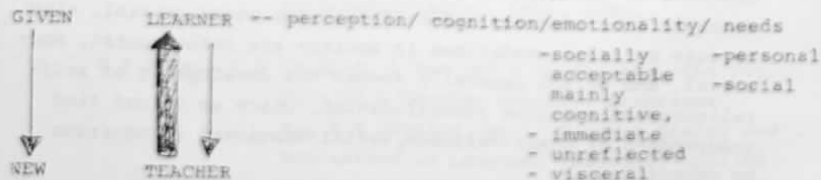
I, as sender, throw my words in a heap on the floor, and you, being active, pick out from my heap of words those that you want to use for the use you want to make of them. I as a sender am dependent on you as a receiver, and on your wish to show and establish solidarity.

As communication, personal development has to do with reciprocal causality. Below is one possible model of how autonomy in our sense of the word may come about:

#### SELF-RELIANCE

Freedom is one dimension in this - the ability to see existing possibilities

- to respect yourself as a unique human being



- to respect others as unique human beings - respecting the freedom of others

The aim and its conditions is self-reliance in our learners and in ourselves as teachers. This is closely related to freedom, the ability to see actual possibilities. To understand the development of self-reliance we have to think in reciprocal causality. The one presupposes the other. Self-reliance presupposes self-respect, and builds on respect for others. The process may begin as a dialogue between the child and its parents, but it may also begin at school. With the arrows we indicate how we see a possible process in school. The teacher will have to show respect to and require respect from the learners who are not used to requiring respect for themselves, thereby showing the learners that "respect for me" and other-reliance are possible categories in their world.

Trusting learners in allowing them to make their own decisions and choices, and as part of this allowing them to make mistakes and learn by analysing these, is a concrete manifestation of this principle in language learning.

The process takes time, but is necessary if we wish our pupils to interact positively with the world. Also the process is sensitive to situation, and will have to be fought for over and over again. As teachers, however, we should be willing to do this work.

#### GROUP II: LEVELS OF AUTONOMY, CONDITIONS FOR PROMOTING AUTONOMY and TEACHER QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED FOR AUTONOMY

Three teacher groups were identified on the basis of the experience of group members. (1) The experienced, competent teacher, who seems to have the ability to constantly reflect on her own teaching, approaching the subject either from the methodological or the linguistic point of

view. (2) Remedial teachers who are used from their work situation to observing the children individually, and who realise that differences are normal. (3) Young teachers without extensive work experience who approach the subject ideologically, regarding school as a possible instrument for change. In all three cases a common qualification is the ability to establish confidence in the chosen manner of teaching-learning. The students appreciate teachers who are confident in their own use of language and who have a firmly established idea of what they want to achieve.

The group further discussed teacher training in the different countries represented and the possibility of introducing autonomy of learning in this context.

At the moment, Sweden is in a favourable position in this respect because of the ongoing process of reshaping basic teacher training. As to the general climate in schools today the group saw no obvious opening for learner autonomy. The Swedish move toward stressing basic knowledge was seen as a case in point. Teachers in Finland, on the other hand seem to welcome a loosening up in the centrally issued goals for language teaching.

A possibility in all contexts is approaching learner autonomy in small steps, showing teachers that small changes may have far-ranging effects. It would be possible to begin by evaluating materials in current use e.g. "What did you like in this unit, what didn't you like and why?", and to go on to more individualised planning from these. It would have to be kept in mind that there is also a need for whole-group activities and that teaching should be based on the teachers' constant interest in the work the learners were engaged in.

### GROUP III: WHAT KINDS OF RESEARCH ARE NEEDED

#### 1. Existing research on autonomy:

Research in the actual area of autonomy is not very extensive. Work at CRAPEL at Nancy with H. Holec. We have P. Riley's reports in the journal *Mélanges Pédagogiques*, the book *Discourse and Learning* by P. Riley (ed.) Longman 1985, the Council of Europe publications on autonomy of H. Holec (ed.). Also G. Bridley and D. Nunan have done work in this area in Australia. We need to write a short list of available <sup>work</sup> on autonomy.

#### 2. Modes of research:

Typical and available modes of research, e.g. action research were discussed. That could be done by teachers in classroom and would be essentially ethnographic and ethnomethodological, i.e. observing what went on in the classroom and investigating this by appeals to the participants. Such research might include diaries, accounts and various forms of triangulation, introspection by participants, observation by outsiders.

Such research would have at least 3 objectives. (1) We would describe the thing as closely and as narrowly as we could, using the best available resources and techniques. The way to handle this material would be discourse analysis. (2) It would be interpretive, i.e. it would draw on the experience of the participants by various forms of introspective device. (3) It ought to be explanatory, i.e. we should say something about what are the root causes of the activity, why is it as it is, what are the things to be made within the classroom activity and the social formations that surround the classroom in the experience of the learners. We could ask questions like what actually happened, what did it mean that it hap-

pened, what did it mean that it happened like that, what kinds of feelings and reactions did the participants have and what are the underlying causes of the activity.

### 3. Foci for research:

We might want to focus upon tasks, in which case we might ask about the criteria for task selection by teacher and students. What could the learner contribution be, what might the effect of different tasks be on the quality of discourse produced, on cooperation among the learners, degree of risk taking by the learners, on learner metacognition and metacommunication? Then we might want to focus upon contents and ask what input do different learners attend to or engage in, what are the viable contents for the learner, for the teacher? Or we could focus upon the act of planning, the process of planning and its relationship to sequency. Here we could ask what the possible criteria for sequencing activities are. Another area would be that of evaluation where the problem area is the capacity of teacher and pupils to evaluate different aspects. Then there are the kinds of resources and information; here we might ask what resources do pupils feel they need as help, which do they then prefer, for what data and which tasks? In the area of explanation we could investigate the quality of explanation by learners of what was going on. And finally curricular autonomy: what is the effect of autonomy on a school curriculum as a whole?

Finally we could note that there is lots of teacher information of what is happening in the classroom. The problem is, how to convert that implicit theory into explicit theory, which is backed up with systematic observation and systematic research.

## IV AUTONOMOUS LEARNING OF THE STRUCTURE OF LANGUAGE

### General discussion:

Very little is known about how learners come to terms with the grammar of the target language. The traditional classroom does not seem to be the best source of data for throwing light on this issue since the preselection of the structural items imposed upon the learners presumably will obscure the picture.

Data from learning in an autonomous setting on the other hand might provide us with clues as to how we deal with the problem and ultimately become better at preparing the ground for learners who want to improve the formal aspect of their competence.

### Question:

Is it possible and desirable at the present time to gather such evidence from ongoing projects in autonomous language learning through the current modes of data collecting, i.e. evaluation, interviews with teachers and students, and possibly observation?

### Answer:

Provided that it does not interfere too much with classroom procedures and documentation of more important issues, it would be useful if teachers would include in their reports information about the handling of grammar in the autonomous classroom.

### Some extra notes from the research group:

The item-and-unit approach only gives an "illusion" of learning. We should rather concentrate on consciousness raising,

working from "use" to "usage". Grammar should be seen as a kind of map of language which facilitates message processing; this would give purpose to grammar in communicatively meaningful work. Part of the learner's communicative efficiency is seen in the fact that learner grammar changes constantly. A typical feature is redundancy utilization, which reduces processing load, and is an interesting field to work upon.

#### GROUP V: AUTONOMOUS LEARNING AND THE CURRICULUM

The group spent much time in defining concepts and discussing the essence of learner autonomy. As many of the issues brought up in the group have been dealt with in the previous reports they are not repeated here.

It would seem that the teaching of autonomy looks different within the frameworks of different curricula. It is affected by such facts as whether the syllabus is strictly or loosely defined; whether teaching is mainly based on approved textbooks and what those textbooks are like; what the examinations are like, by whom they are administered, how they are assessed and what weight they are given; and whether teaching focuses on separate subjects or groups of subjects.

Under conditions where the teachers are given only broad guide-lines, the contents of learning in autonomous work are fairly freely eligible by the learners. This means that the contents may be very different from the contents in a situation where there is a clearly stated syllabus concerning both vocabulary and grammar, in which case the teacher and the learners must operate within a given content area. Within this area, however, there are still plenty of opportunity for choice in approach, objectives, procedures and in material within the given area. In theory, both loose guidelines and clearly stated syllabuses can be realised by the conventional model:

### DEVELOPING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM Copenhagen, September 18 - 21, 1986

#### PROGRAMME

##### Thursday, September 18:

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 15.30 - 17.00 | Arrival of participants.   |
| 17.00 - 17.30 | Opening of workshop. General information.  |
| 19.00 - 21.30 | Gerd Gabrielsen: Learner autonomy in a school setting: general issues.<br>Group discussions: Learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom: issues and implications.<br>Plenary |
| 21.30 -       | Soft socializing   |

##### Friday, September 19:

- |               |  |
|---------------|--|
| 9.00 - 10.30  | Chris Candlin: On developing critical awareness.<br>Jorma Lehtovaara: The role of objectives in autonomous learning.   |
| 11.00 - 12.00 | Thomas Ahlberg, Erik Hult: Classroom experience. First year experiment, grade 5 (video).<br>Pekka Alho, Tarja Folland: First year's experience and comments on experiment in autonomous learning in English and Swedish at comprehensive school level (video). |
| 14.00 - 16.00 | Hanne Thomsen: Thematic organisation, 9th form, third year of German.<br><br>Turid Trebbi: Shared management of the learning process in the early stages of learning French, experienced with 14-16 year-old learners.   |
| 16.30 - 17.30 | Plenary  |
| 20.00 - 21.30 | Viljo Kohonen: Some thoughts on testing in a communicative/autonomous framework.<br>Irma Huttonen: Development and assessment of learner autonomy in senior secondary school.  |
| 21.30 -       | Participants' projects   |

Saturday, September 20:

- 9.00 - 10.00 Rigmor Eriksson: Is learner autonomy possible in 'slow language learner' groups? (video).  
 Leni Dam: Problems encountered in implementing learner autonomy.
- Ulla Rigbolt: Conditions for promoting learner autonomy among the teachers in the Danish 'folkeskole'.
- Gerd Gabrielsen: Six years' experience in workshops for teachers.
- 14.00 - 16.30 Group discussions: - conditions for promoting learner autonomy and critical awareness  
 - research needed to elucidate and concretize the various aspects of learner autonomy.
- 16.30 - 18.00 Plenary
- 19.30 - Dinner and dancing. We meet at 19.00 in the hall.

Sunday, September 21:

- 9.00 - 10.00 Evaluation session. Discussion.
- 10.30 - 12.00 What next: Planning session

Departure of participants after lunch.

DEVELOPING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING IN THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM  
 Copenhagen, September 18-21 1986

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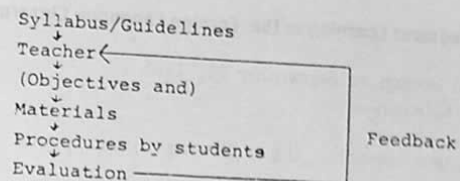
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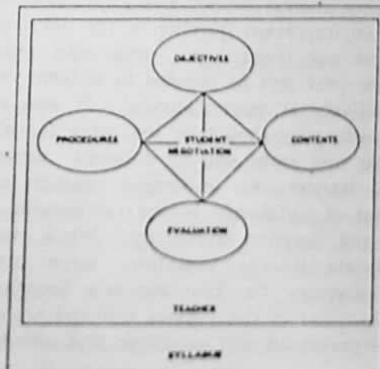
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With an official curriculum, i.e. syllabus and other official objectives, it acts as a framework for the whole learning process. It guides the pre-interactive planning of the teacher, who controls situation as a whole. The students negotiate objectives, contents, procedures and evaluation, but prior to this process learners must be made aware of the general guidelines. Here we meet the delicate lines between laissez-faire, autonomy and manipulation for the first time:



An interesting question is how much learning procedures actually differ within these different kinds of curricula. We can also ask what kinds of learning different curricula encourage and whether autonomy and authority can live in the same classroom.

## Developing Autonomous Learning in the Foreign Language Classroom

Final Evaluation Session on September 21, 1986

Reporter: Viljo Kohonen

In the evaluation session, the following main points were discussed:

- (1) Notion of "autonomy"
- (2) Teacher education for autonomous learning
- (3) Autonomous learning in the classroom
- (4) Continuation of the international project work

### (1) Notion of "autonomy"

It was felt that the notion of "autonomy" is in need of continuous defining and redefining; we need to be explicit about what we mean by this key concept. It was pointed out that autonomy is essentially a philosophical phenomenon that needs to be reflected upon. It is not extractable from classroom videos. The stages in the development of autonomy will be useful for pedagogical purposes, but the phenomenon is not easily divisible into any discrete categories. An important question is the development of autonomy at different age levels, i.e., what can autonomous work mean e.g. to ten-year olds as opposed to sixteen-year olds? Is it different qualitatively or quantitatively? It was suggested that the essence of autonomy should be the same for all, while learning arrangements and tasks will be different, depending on the maturity of the learner. An important question connected with the development of autonomy is the relationship between teacher authority and learner autonomy. While too much authority will suffocate learner initiative, some amount of authority will be necessary for the learner's security. These questions must be discussed in the various national projects, and the insights and interpretations will be shared and refined further together.

### (2) Teacher education for autonomous learning

It was felt that we must be concrete about the notion of autonomy and practical classroom arrangements fostering it, if we are to increase the acceptance of autonomous work among language teachers. Teachers need to be shown clear examples and guidelines to get started. The start should be unoffensive and start from the teacher's own realities in his/her current

situation. An example of such a "gentle start" might be small-group discussions about current work: what teachers feel happy about, and what problems or difficulties they might face. Such concrete examples could lead to generalizations of current thinking in foreign language pedagogy. The Danish "flower" would seem to give ideas for such discussions. Teachers should be provided evidence of the possible benefits of autonomous work, as well as what pitfalls to avoid. There should be proof positive that autonomous work is an efficient way of learning languages, not just "fun". We must be critical about our own work as developers of learner autonomy. If we fail to make clear what autonomy is about, it may be "marginalized" by teachers.

It is important that teachers should have opportunities to share and talk through their feelings of both satisfaction and dissatisfaction, even fears. This is where the safe environment of small groups gives important advantages over lectures, which can, indeed, be frightening for the "uninitiated". The security of the teacher as a learner is essential for the inservice-education to be successful. More work needs to be done on the methods of inservice teacher education, and how to implement innovations.

### (3) Autonomous learning in the classroom

Learner training for autonomy was also felt to be important, otherwise there is a danger that classroom work will be nothing more but a "mess". Learners should be guided towards "workshop-oriented" classrooms. We need to develop ways of learner training as well. Also, we need information about learner attitudes to autonomous work. To focus on learner growth, we need systematically collected data about the development of learner language, and the learners' learning skills and personality in autonomous work. The following are some important questions for research: how do learners structure their work? how does such structuring develop over years?, and what is the teacher's role in this development? Various kinds of empirical data (i.e., audio and video recordings, learner interviews and case studies, evaluation data) are needed for the clarification of these questions. Reflection is useful and necessary, but it must also be coupled with concrete classroom experience serving as a basis for joint discussions.



(4) Continuation of the international project work

It was decided that the next international workshop needs to be prepared carefully during the academic year of 1986-87 within the different national projects groups. Concrete work will be done on the following growth points:

- (i) Questions of authority and autonomy: theory
- (ii) Pedagogical arrangements of classroom work: videos
- (iii) Evaluation and accounts of learner development:  
process assessment, tests of communicative skills

(i) The contact person for the theoretical contributions is Gerd Gabrielsen, who will introduce the issue of authority vs. autonomy at the next workshop.

(ii) The contact person for the video presentations of pedagogical arrangements in the classroom is Leni Dam. It was felt that the video presentations need not be "professional" in technical quality, more important is their pedagogical and subject matter design. Still, the recordings should meet some reasonable requirements:

- audible sound, by using a separate microphone (or several)
- signal of the elapsed time on the screen
- show the pedagogical design of the work done in the classroom: indicate a total view of the pedagogical situation and task, show its coherence and continuity (how it started, how it was planned and carried out, how it was evaluated). To make the recording reasonably short (1-2 hours), the tapes must be edited, showing the transitions between connected events.

The purpose of the editing is to give other participants sufficient evidence for analysing and interpreting the video presentations in their proper local contexts.

Those wishing to bring up video presentations should contact Leni Dam. The following persons undertook to work on a video project: Leni Dam, Tarja Folland and Pekka Alho, Turid Trebbi and Per Orten, Hetty Mulder (provided the permission is granted by Dutch authorities), Irma Huttunen, and Ulla Rigbolt.

(iii) The contact person for evaluation and accounts of learner development is Gerd Gabrielsen. The following participants offered contributions: Leni Dam and Hanne Thomsen, Viljo Kohonen.

It was decided that the above contributions must be confirmed with the contact persons by October 10th. The next meeting will be arranged in Finland during the last week of August, 1987. Viljo Kohonen will be in charge of the arrangements.