While all three of the books reviewed here will be essential additions to the bookshelves of those already involved with autonomous learning, each reaches out to a broader audience. Leni Dam’s should be given to anyone who doubts the practicality of autonomy in the classroom, while Dee McGarry’s should be given to anyone who still insists on building their courses around textbooks. Anyone who fails to be convinced is probably incorrigible. Ema Ushioda’s book will repay more than one reading and deserves a wide readership as an important contribution not only to the literature on autonomy, but to the literature on second language acquisition in general.

REFERENCES


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Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning consists of eighteen papers that were presented at the international conference “Autonomy in Language Learning” held in Hong Kong (23–25 June 1994). Organized into five sections that respectively deal with foundational concepts, the learner and the learning process, materials, technology, and evaluation, the collection makes a contribution to the literature in the field by providing readers with (1) a discussion of key educational issues as they apply to autonomy in language learning, (2) frameworks for curriculum design, and (3) procedures for promoting autonomy in classroom settings and outside the classroom through independent learning.

Issues—What are some issues that theoreticians, researchers, and curriculum designers in the area of learner autonomy must take into account? Nunan’s paper reports on research which addresses the relationship between learner-centred and learning-centred classroom practices and learner autonomy. Do the former lead to and enhance the latter? Benson
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raises concerns about trends that point to the depoliticization of learner autonomy, thus pointing to the broader question of the aim of promoting autonomy in language learning. Of particular interest to practitioners in Asian contexts is the role of the culture into which one has been socialized. Is it a situational variable that can impede the promotion of autonomy? Pierson addresses this question, as does Esch. Little considers the apparent contradiction between learner autonomy, “the freedom to learn”, and the social dimension of learning, “the compulsion to interact”. Regarding materials, how does a designer of text-based and computer-assisted materials deal with the restraints imposed by publishing houses (Sinclair), learners’ preferences and proficiency levels (Sinclair and Lee), and approach (Stevens)? Should learner training be made explicit in the design of materials? and if so, how explicit? Finally, Riley discusses issues relating to research methodology that should guide the study and evaluation of educational projects that promote learner autonomy either in classrooms or in self-access centres.

Frameworks—The collection also includes papers which provide useful guidelines for the design of learning plans to promote learner autonomy. Esch describes five criteria which should characterize self-access centres if they are to support and facilitate the emergence of a learner’s capacity for autonomy, while Sinclair outlines guidelines for designing materials for learner training. Little’s paper presents three task types that utilize technology for independent learning, while at the same time respecting the learner’s need for both collaboration and autonomy—tasks that require learners to interact with, around, and via information systems.

On the other hand, Kelly considers the need to prepare professionals who would facilitate the development of autonomy, outlining macro and micro skills needed by learning counsellors in self-access centres, and Riley lists approaches for evaluating projects in self-access and self-directed learning which use a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

Settings for promoting autonomy—How does a teacher go about promoting autonomy in a classroom setting? What kind of projects can be offered through a self-access centre? Dam/Legenhausen and Nunan describe procedures for self-directed learning in a classroom environment. Other papers report on independent learning projects that promote self-assessment (Thomson) and peer assessment (Miller and Ng) as a separate component of a traditional language course; strategy development (Simmons); self-direction in learning, e.g. a conversation exchange (Voller and Pickard), film-based discussions (Christopher and Ho), tasks using interactive video (Gardner and Garcia), and a text-processing computer program (Milton, et al.)—these last five being instances of projects set up as part of self-access or independent language learning centres.

Conclusion—In sum, for the greater part, the papers reflect a view of autonomy that suggests that autonomous learners are capable of self-directing their learning, i.e. planning, monitoring and evaluating; that a key characteristic for settings that promote autonomy is the absence of a teacher; and that the best method for promoting autonomy is experiential learning, i.e. “learning by doing”, with varying views on the role of feedback—whether or not the experience is to be followed by some form of reflection.
At the same time, while in the minority, other papers point to an alternative though complementary view: that autonomy can be promoted within and as an integral part of a learner-centred classroom; that learner training activities directed to that end can (and should) be explicit or informed rather than blind—often the case when learners are asked to learn by doing; and that beliefs and task knowledge are also key to autonomy in learning.

*Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning* takes on the view that learner autonomy has grown in importance over the last two decades (Benson and Voller) and that, in fact, it has become mainstreamed as a key concept in educational planning (Pennycook). Thus, the book brings together in a timely fashion a collection of papers that provide a critique of trends in its implementation in language learning.

**Aims**—Two of the chapters (Benson and Pennycook) address the overall educational aim of promoting autonomy in language learning. For Pennycook, an autonomous learner, capable of authoring her own world, does not so much need to learn how to learn but how to struggle for cultural alternatives (p. 45), while Benson lists activities through which this political version of autonomy can be promoted.

**Autonomy in self-access**—However, most of the chapters focus on independent learning through self-access centres. One of the recurring themes is that there may be a conflict between the stated aims of self-access and its implementation. In other words, self-access does not automatically guarantee that learners will take charge of their learning and learn, and several of the papers discuss what needs to be done to ensure that they do so. For Littlewood, it is essential that self-access should complement other elements in a language learning plan. To that end, he proposes a general theoretical framework for language teaching and more specific models of learning which, together, suggest that the following questions should be taken into account in determining the role self-access will play within the language learning curriculum: Will self-access contribute to the development of communicative autonomy and/or pedagogic autonomy? Will it contribute to the development of personal autonomy? Will it provide learners with opportunities/tasks which allow them to learn analytically and/or experientially? Will it allow them to focus on form or meaning?

Other chapters focus exclusively on how self-access as a setting for learning separate from the classroom can ensure that learners take charge and learn independently. One way is to provide learner development and support (Sheerin, Sturtridge, Little). Another is to design materials that foster independence (Sheerin); require creativity, initiative and evaluation on the part of the learner (Littlejohn); provide linguistic and pedagogical development and take into account the learners' cultural strengths (Sturtridge). Little presents a rationale for the use of authentic materials, even for language learners with a low level of proficiency, emphasizing their function both for language learning and language use, while Aston and Ryan describe procedures for helping learners learn to utilize such (authentic) materials—theme-based corpora in a self-access centre (Aston) and foreign language resources found in the native speaker's social environment (Ryan). Milton describes how computer technologies can be utilized to provide the linguistic, discourse, and procedural knowledge necessary for the autonomous development of writing skills,
and Nunan illustrates how the ability to select, revise and/or create learning objectives and tasks makes it possible to adapt commercial and teacher-made materials to develop autonomy, namely.

**Teacher roles and autonomous learning**—A second theme points to the role change that is essential for teachers in learning programmes that aim to nurture learner autonomy. Voller discusses the rationale for and the implications of basing teaching practices on negotiation with learners, while Esch's description of a workshop run by learners is an illustration of how teachers can function as facilitators of learning. Riley provides a discussion of the role of the learning counsellor, contrasting it to that of a teacher and outlining the kinds of expertise that it requires. Breen and Mann describe attributes which should characterize the teacher of autonomous learners and instructional practices which will allow learners the "space" to exercise autonomy within classroom settings. O'Dell reports on a case study which showed how attitudinal changes and the acquisition of skills that are foundational to teachers' participation in autonomous learning programs can be developed.

**Conclusion**—Retrospecting about and building on two decades of experience with self-access centres, this volume will lead readers to reconsider (1) the broader educational aims implicit in the promoting of learner autonomy, (2) the assumption that once learners are placed in a setting that is instructor-free, such as a self-access centre, they will necessarily take charge of their learning and learn, and (3) the role of teachers in these centres and in autonomy-centred classrooms. These are all relevant questions that merit our attention as we further develop principles, approaches and related practices to foster autonomy in language learning.

*Autonomy in Language Learning* aims to promote one of the goals of communicative language learning—autonomy. Except for David Little's article, each chapter provides an account of how the foreign language classroom can be re-organized to change the roles of teachers and students so as to promote communicative language learning, i.e. linguistic autonomy, as well as to allow students to take more initiatives in their language learning and, in that sense, to promote pedagogic autonomy.

Little's article, on the other hand, reviews the main curricular questions that need to be addressed in promoting learner autonomy. Thus, it provides the theoretical basis for these accounts, which describe and illustrate how different teachers have chosen to address several of these questions, e.g. what the content of lessons should be; how to design lessons; what tasks to set and what kinds of materials to use to implement these tasks; what roles to assign to teachers and students; how to deal with attitudes—teachers' and students'; how to rearrange the classroom; and so on. Some of the accounts also move beyond classroom concerns to broader organizational issues that need to be addressed, e.g. dealing with parents, or preferred models of school management.

Taken as a whole, including the conclusions of the conference discussion groups, the book will be useful to classroom teachers who are looking for practical suggestions as well as advice about how to create environments that will promote learner autonomy. The book
is also useful as a case study of how several schools within a broader school district can initiate and implement instructional innovation.

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This book is intended primarily for teachers of beginner learners of German at third-level institutions, though (as the editors suggest) it is also relevant to teachers of other languages. The book evolved as a response to a perceived need among participants at a conference held at the University of York in 1992, for teachers and educators to focus specifically on *ab initio* learners. That first conference was held in conjunction with the Goethe-Institut, York, and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD), and these two bodies, together with the Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT), are acknowledged by the editors for their ongoing support.

There are 16 contributors, academics and practitioners in the field of German as a foreign language with experience in Britain, Ireland and Germany. The diversity of input is one of the principal strengths of the book; it is ambitious in its brief, and wide-ranging in its scope. One of its aims is to "bridge the gap between theory and practice" (p. 2), and in this respect it is innovative, since it includes sample lessons, including suggested handouts. With regard to the theoretical side, an assumption appears to be that the readership will have little background knowledge of many of the theoretical frameworks on which applied linguistics is based, and the whole thrust of the book takes that into account.

There are two sections. Part 1, entitled "Towards a pedagogy of *ab initio* language teaching", comprises seven contributions which discuss the following: language teaching methodologies and textbooks; German for specific purposes; cultural awareness among learners who spend study/placement time abroad; learner autonomy; computer-assisted language learning; factors influencing the development of *ab initio* courses; content and subject in *ab initio* learning. Each contribution in Part 1 has a practical as well as a theoretical component. Each is very user-friendly: the appended references include a brief, evaluative comment for readers who might like to pursue them further (the article by Mathias Schulze on computer-assisted language learning goes so far as to list, with addresses of suppliers, the software he mentions). Such attention to detail might mean that some readers will gloss over some of the topics covered. The first contribution, by