

MUYSKENS, J.A. (ed.). (1997). *New ways of learning and teaching: focus on technology and foreign language education*. Boston, MA: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

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Leni DAM. *Learner autonomy 3: from theory to classroom practice*. Dublin: Authentik, 1995, ii + 84 pages.

Learner autonomy 3: from theory to classroom practice, as the name suggests, is the third in a series of books about learner autonomy published by Authentik, a campus company of Trinity College, Dublin. The book is intended to be a practical guide for teachers. It is easily accessible and clear in terms of its practicality based on real teaching situations, with ideas directly transferable for teachers at all levels interested in developing learner autonomy in their classrooms.

The book is the result of 15 years teaching experience of putting learner autonomy ideas into practice, with a particular emphasis on working on the learners' involvement in their own learning process. The author, Leni Dam, is a pedagogical adviser and teacher in Copenhagen, who teaches English at a comprehensive school, and has given lectures and seminars on learner autonomy. The ideas were practised with literally hundreds of pupils over this period, not only in Denmark, but also in Norway, Sweden, Great Britain, and Spain. As a consequence, the book is a sort of 'live' and practical diary of these experiences, supported by background theory and description, plus feedback on the successes and failures of the various activities.

The volume is divided into six chapters, plus suggestions for further reading and references. It begins with a reflection on learner autonomy, including

some background theory. The first chapter, *Developing learner autonomy in a school context*, suggests five changes that exist between a teacher-directed teaching/learning environment and a teacher/learner-directed learning environment. These are stated as the shift in focus from teaching to learning; a change in the learner's role; a change in the teacher's role; the role of evaluation; and a view of the language classroom as a rich learning environment. The rest of the book, therefore, aims to cover these five defined changes, mainly through practical teaching and classroom ideas. In my opinion these ideas are clearly directly applicable for most teaching situations, but, moreover, I think they also help teachers to order the ideas and concepts in their own minds.

The next four chapters include two describing a step by step approach for actual class experiences at two different levels: beginners and intermediate, and two chapters describing a more general approach, one looking at the organisation of classroom work, and the other describing methods of evaluation in learner autonomy. The final chapter, *Developing learner autonomy in a school context - with what results?* is a broader reflection on the development of learner autonomy in a school context. The author concludes that the development of learner autonomy can be both hard

and painful, but that through the experiences covered, she feels that the successes outweigh the sum of the problems. These conclusions are not only made by the author but also by teachers and students who have put many of the ideas into practice.

Chapter two, *Beginning English - the first year*, works very thoroughly through a series of lessons aiming to develop autonomy right from the beginning, as can be seen from the title of the chapter. As well as actual lesson plans, this chapter includes both ideas for activities in class and for follow up homework. The chapter states clearly "what to do" by giving feedback on "good things" and "bad things", and concludes with a very illustrative diagram suggesting a "Simplified model of a teaching/learning sequence". The fifth chapter looks at how this experience can be developed and maintained as the courses progress at a higher level, namely, at *Intermediate English*. Similarly organised to the beginners unit with a series of practical ideas, this chapter also questions how the layout of the classroom with different activities on different tables can also be an important factor in the development of learner autonomy.

In chapters three and four, the focus is broader: chapter three looks at the question of organisation, *Important elements in the organisation of classroom work*, and then chapter four discusses the question of evaluation, *Evaluation - the pivot of learner autonomy*. In chapter 3, the author suggests a series of "criteria for choice of homework", a model which looks at "communicative abilities seen in relation to communicative activities", that is to say the specific skills needed to perform communicative activities, as well as discussing the use of diaries, posters and group work. This leads to an extremely clear and thorough diagram called "The Flower", a "negotiation" model which inter-links the learner's

role, the teacher's role, materials, aims and objectives, evaluation, and activities. In chapter 4, the author compares evaluation in general with evaluation in an autonomous setting. This includes a learner's reflection model that covers objectives/plans, outcomes, the learner's role, the teacher's role, materials and activities, and a reflection on evaluation approaches in general.

Chapter 5, *Intermediate English*, is a case study of an intermediate group, which takes us from the beginning of the first term, and includes a number of specific classes during various stages of the year. The planning of the year is based on the above mentioned model called "The Flower", and the chapter shows how the various elements of this model can be incorporated into a year's work. It starts with a clear description of "The Flower", with bullet points (Aims/objectives, Activities, Materials, Evaluation, Learner role, and Teacher role) which help to clarify the six aspects mentioned in the previous paragraph. In the form of a diary, it then gives specific lesson plans for specific and key classes, along with feedback both in terms of the results of the activities and the comments and thoughts of both the teachers and learners involved. The ideas work well in terms of showing how the model can work, and by explaining the background to this approach. However, I believe teachers in other learning situations would find it difficult to put some of the specific class ideas into practice. Nevertheless, I think the ideas could be sufficiently well interpreted so as to be transferred to other teaching situations.

The final chapter, *Developing learner autonomy in a school context - with what results?* is fundamentally a reflection in the form of quotes by teachers and students alike on the changes of approaches experienced, and finishes with a list of concluding remarks. The areas covered include a description of the "Successes

experienced by teachers when developing learner autonomy”, “Problems encountered by teachers”, “Learners’ views on their English lessons”, and “Concluding remarks”. This chapter maintains what I find is one of the best aspects of the book as a whole, and that is the honesty of the reflections which include a good balance between the description of the successes and the failures.

The book is useful for all teachers, both experienced and starting out, and, as well as the many practical suggestions, it acts as a useful opportunity to reflect on the reality of ideas and proposals for developing learner autonomy amongst our students. For this volume to be seri-

ously practical and useful, it requires teachers to be willing to experiment, and to accept that it is not a book of recipes, and is neither a coursebook, nor a source book. For me it is a clear guidebook for teachers already interested in the topic of learner autonomy but who have so far not developed a systematic approach to the development of learner autonomy amongst their students. And this systematic approach is for me the key contribution that the book makes to the field of learner autonomy.

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