Autonomy and Motivation in Language Learning and Teaching

Autonomie a motivace v jazykové výuce a učení

Ildikó Némethová

Abstract: This paper aims to explore the constructs of learner autonomy and teacher autonomy in the context of classroom-based and out-of-classroom autonomous learning. The key factor in the development of autonomy is the opportunity for learners to make decisions about their learning within a collaborative and supportive environment. In defining learner autonomy and related terms, the paper highlights the importance of motivation in developing a learner's capacity to be autonomous in the process of language learning.

Key words: affective, autonomy, cognition, motivation, learning strategies, metacognition

Introduction: Autonomy as a Multidimensional Concept

The development of autonomous language learning reflects a shift from teacher-centredness to learner-centredness. Learner autonomy and autonomous learning practices have emerged as responses to the challenges of the twenty-first century educational environment in relation to teaching and learning theories, learning styles and strategies, and approaches that can satisfy the needs of the job market. The development of learner autonomy depends on the responsible reliance on the teacher who provides the learners with learning opportunities and learning tasks and guides the use of such opportunities and tasks. Autonomous learners are expected to reproduce these opportunities and tasks outside the classroom in an autonomous manner.

From the socio-linguistics perspective, the shift equally implies a change in learners' profile from receptiveness and passivity as individual learners to activeness and productivity as learners interacting in a social context. The learner has moved onto the centre of the teaching and learning context. Benson (2011) notes that autonomous language learning focuses on the active roles that learners play in the learning process and the learners' deep-seated drive towards self-actualisation. Dickinson (1995) highlights that autonomous learning is always associated with greater recognised meaningfulness, personal utilisation, emotional contribution and a greater probability of internalisation. Allwright (1988) associates learner autonomy with a revolutionary restructuring of language pedagogy that involves the abandonment of the traditional classroom and the introduction of new ways of learning and teaching. Allwright (1988) believes that autonomy is both ability and willingness, but also action towards responsibility.

Holec (1981) defines autonomy as a learner's ability to take responsibility for all aspects of learning. The autonomous learner is capable of determining the objectives, defining the contents and advancements, choosing methods and techniques to be applied, monitoring the process of acquisition, and evaluating what has been attained. David Little (1995) defines autonomy as a capacity for disengagement, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. The capacity for autonomy is exhibited both in the way the learner learns and the way he transfers what has been learned to wider contexts. Dickinson (1987) claims that autonomy is a situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all the decisions associated with his learning and the implementation of those decisions. Dam et al. (1990) highlight the social aspect of autonomy and perceive it as a capacity and enthusiasm to function individually and in collaboration with others as a socially accountable learner.

Benson (2011) offers a multidimensional concept of autonomy, i. e. the nature dimension of autonomy, the sociability dimension of autonomy, and the teachability dimension of autonomy. The nature dimension of autonomy includes capacity and situational freedom. Benson (2001) notes that the capacity aspect refers to a set of metacognitive and cognitive abilities associated with the management of the learning process. These competencies also include learners' attitudinal ability to take responsibility for their own learning and the attribute value to their participation, and learners' social-interactive ability to accentuate and exchange their views with others. Benson (2011) argues that the situational freedom aspect refers to freedom to have control over one's learning and stresses the importance of structure in creating conditions that help teachers to abandon their control, offer the learner access to an environment that provides a range of options, and empowers learners to negotiate and shape the direction of their learning. The resources generated by the environment, and the social and discursive characteristics of the environment may determine the level of autonomy that the environment provides and hence may have an impact on the degree of autonomy that the individual establishes.

The sociability dimension of autonomy refers to independence and interpersonality. Deci and Ryan (1985) claim that social connections and relationships support learner autonomy. Little (1995) notes that collaboration is significant to the emergence of autonomy since the capacity for reflection and analysis depends on the development of a capacity to participate entirely and critically in social interactions. Bandura (1997) denotes that the development of learners' sense of self-efficacy through constant reflective practices, conscious learning from observing others is essentially necessary to the retention of autonomous learning.

The teachability dimension of autonomy relates to the aspects of natural propensity and development. Benson (2011) claims that autonomy is not only teachable,

but it needs to be consciously supported, fostered, and maintained. The development of long-term dispositional autonomy needs to be prioritised over scattered occurrent autonomy that integrates both the curriculum set-up and intervention arrangements and takes account of the psychological, social, political, and technical perspectives of autonomy in order to maintain learners' natural tendency towards controlling their own learning.

Benson (2011) claims that the autonomous learner takes control of his own learning only if he wishes and if he is allowed to do so by the material, social and psychological restraints to which he is subjected to. He argues that a competent depiction of autonomy in language learning should acknowledge the importance of three dimensions at which learner control may be exercised, i. e. learning management, cognitive processes, and learning content. These three dimensions of control are apparently interchangeable.

Developing autonomy requires encouraging learners to take more and more decisions about their learning. Nunan (1995) proposed a five-level scale of learner autonomy, with learner awareness at the lowest level and moving through involvement, intervention and creation and then towards transcendence at the highest level. Awareness raising refers to a process in which learners become aware of the learning goals and content as well as their preferred learning styles. Involvement refers to the choices learners make from a range of options offered. Intervention involves the modification of goals, content, and tasks. Creation engages learners in the process of setting forth their own goals and creating their own tasks. Transcendence is perceived as the moment when learners go beyond the formal educational institutions and take charge of their own learning.

The role of a resourceful and ingenious teacher should not be neglected since he provides learners with examples to help them make competent choices related to content. Nakata argues (2011) that teachers need to pay attention to three dimensions to promote learner autonomy: behaviour readiness to ensure that teachers are able to utilise strategies to enhance the development of learner autonomy; situational readiness to ensure that teachers can apply the most adequate strategies for specific groups of learners; and psychological readiness to ensure that teachers are devoted to promoting learner autonomy and embracing the relevant strategies. Teachers' engagement in curriculum construction and development encourages their inherent desires to affect the environments in which they work. Teacher autonomy can be defined as a recurrent process of investigation into how teaching can best enhance autonomous learning for learners.

Autonomous Forms of Learner Motivation

The development of learner autonomy and engagement in language learning activities are influenced by factors that include the acquisition of reasons for learning, the learner's concept of the self, need for application of knowledge to real-life situations, and the inherent desire to learn. Motivation is the impulse that under the right circumstances translates into an effort to learn. Autonomous learners are internally motivated to be reflective, resourceful, and effective as they strive to accomplish worthwhile endeavours when working individually or with others, and even when challenges occur, they endure. Deci and Ryan (2000) have identified the need for autonomy, the need for competence, and the need for relatedness as universal, fundamental, and broad ranging in their influencing on goal-oriented pursuits. If those needs are satisfied, learners' motivation will be autonomous, and their pursuit will be well adjusted to their sense of self and will reflect what they perceive as important. If not, their motivation will be more controlled, and their pursuit will be less self-determined.

Deci and Ryan (2000) define intrinsically motivated language learning as performed out of interest and requiring no external pushes, promises, or threats. Teachers need to socialise and instruct learners in ways that promote self-determined learning initiatives and thus contribute to intrinsically motivated learning. Deci and Ryan (2000) highlight three factors that promote self-determination in a language classroom: providing learners with meaningful rationales that will allow them to comprehend the purpose and personal importance of each learning activity; acknowledging learners' feelings when it is necessary to request them to carry out something they do not want to do; managing the classroom and instructing learners applying a style that accentuates choice rather than control.

Van Lier (1996) notes that motivational factors intrinsic to the language learning process such as enjoyment, sense of challenge, skill development, and those extrinsic to the learning process such as personal goals and endeavours are best perceived as working in harmony with one another in the good language learner. What appears to be essentially important is not whether these motivational factors are intrinsic or extrinsic to the learning process, but whether they are internalised and self-determined, thus originating from within the learner, or externally enforced and governed by teachers, peers, curricula, educational and societal expectations. Externally governed motivation can have short-term advantages only, the substantial aspiration is to cultivate learner's own motivation from within.

For motivation to be bolstered through the progressions of the language learning process, learners need to develop particular skills and strategies to keep them-

selves on track. These might include setting themselves detailed short-term targets, engaging in positive self-talk, motivating themselves with incentives, and organising their time productively to cope with manifold tasks and requirements. These strategies include self-motivating strategies (Dörnyei, 2001), affective learning strategies (Oxford, 1990), efficacy management (Wolters, 2003), effective motivational thinking (Ushioda, 1996), anxiety management (Horwitz, 2001), and motivational self-regulation (Ushioda, 2003).

Dörnyei (2001) defines motivational strategies as techniques that support the learner's goal-oriented behaviour. Motivational strategies refer to those motivational influences that are consciously wielded to attain some standardised and persisting affirmative effect. The process-oriented model of motivational strategies in the language classroom include: creating the basic motivational conditions (adequate teacher behaviours, a congenial and responsive atmosphere, a relentless learner group with applicable group norms); provoking initial motivation (glorifying the learners' language-leaning values and attitudes, increasing the learners' expectancy of success, enhancing the learners' goal-orientedness, creating realistic learner beliefs); maintaining and safeguarding motivation (making learning challenging and inspiring, demonstrating tasks in a motivating way, setting specific learner goals, creating learner autonomy); strengthening positive retrospective self-evaluation (providing motivational feedback, increasing learner satisfaction, offering incentives).

Autonomy-supportive teachers promote intrinsic motivation by understanding learners' perspectives, supporting their initiatives, creating opportunities for choice, being encouraging rather than demanding, and allowing students to work in their own way. They also promote internalisation by encouraging questions, and allowing expression of negative feelings, providing rationales that help learners understand the purpose and value of activities, stimulating interest, and supporting confidence. Autonomy supportive teachers offer their learners choices of alternative tasks in pursuing alternative ways to meet requirements. One way to build choice opportunities for learners is to set up learning centres where learner can work individually or in cooperation with peers on a variety of projects.

Learners tend to enjoy and become captivated in activities that are well adjusted to their prevailing levels of knowledge and skills and thus guarantee excellent challenges that allow them to develop their competence. Teachers need to make sure that learning activities are well matched to the learners' levels of knowledge and skills. Learners get motivated if they are offered opportunities to make spirited responses and get immediate feedback. In a classroom that features a positive interpersonal climate and norms of collaboration, learners are likely to experience enhanced intrinsic motivation when they participate in learning activities that allow them to interact with their classmates.

Affective and Cognitive, and Metacognitive Domains of Autonomy

Autonomy is associated with the development of affective, cognitive and metacognitive domains, i. e. with shaping attitudes, skills, and inspiring collaborative forms of work. Affective factors exhibit substantial influence on cognition and on behaviour. Camilleri (2000) claims that these affective factors include the will to learn, the desire to take initiatives, and a supportive disposition to change and innovation. The learners' motivation to take on responsibility for their learning as well as self-confidence, the comprehension of the value of one's own work, and intrinsic motivation, teacher-student rapport, classroom atmosphere, and constructive approach to error are fundamental means to attain learner autonomy.

Cognitive factors to be developed by an autonomous learner are reflected in their skills and activities and involve being capable of identifying what has been taught, draw up their own learning objectives, choose strategies that work for them, implement them in their learning and engage in self-assessment. Dam (1995) notes that cognitive factors include a series of steps such as sharing information about the objectives, helping learners implement their plans, encouraging cooperation, choosing attention-catching activities, delegating tasks and decisions, promoting them to appraise their own contribution to their learning. The cognitive process is divided into three phases, i. e. awareness raising, changing attitudes, and transferring roles. This is often achieved through the Portfolio or other forms of encouraging learner reflection.

Coffield et al. (2004) claim that autonomy is a series of conscious choices the learners make, which necessarily require their awareness of metacognition, accentuating the importance of developing the skills that allow them to consciously take initiatives in their own learning process. This can only be acquired if learners are made aware of which strategies they need and are suitably trained to use them for different tasks and guided to evaluate their suitability and efficiency. Metacognitive strategies are expected to enable students to set goals and develop adequate awareness of the psychological processes that shape their perception of autonomy.

Benson (2011) claims that control over one's own learning refers to control over learning management, cognitive processing, and learning content. Control over learning management is described in terms of behaviours involved in the planning, organisation, and evaluation of learning. Behaviours involved in autonomous language learning are associated with learning strategies that are defined as learning processes which are consciously selected by the learner (Cohen, 1998).

O'Malley and Chamot (1990) proposed a model of three major learning strategies: cognitive, metacognitive, and affective. Cognitive strategies are operations carried out directly on the material to be learnt. They include managing the material to

be learnt mentally or physically. Metacognitive strategies make use of knowledge of cognitive processes to regulate the learning process. They include planning for learning, monitoring one's own comprehension and production, and evaluating how well one has obtained a learning objective. Affective strategies involve the ways in which learners interact with others and control themselves in order to support their learning.

Classroom-based Approaches to Language Learner Autonomy

It is assumed that the key factor in the development of autonomy is the opportunity for learners to make decisions about their learning within collaborative and supportive environments. Allwright (1988) claims that autonomy is fostered when teachers examine the decisions that they normally regard as their prerogative and consider whether the learner should also be involved in taking decisions concerning the planning of classroom activities and the appraisal of their outcomes. Learner control over planning has been linked to differentiation in teaching and learning.

The ultimate goal of education is to encourage learner autonomy, to prepare and skill individuals for lifelong learning. That is why, the processes inside the classroom must inevitably be contributive to developing self-awareness and skills on an individual basis which will encourage autonomous learning. The provision of relevant learning experiences (teacher responsibility) and engaging in them (learner responsibility), driven by a shared understanding of learner as individual (teacher awareness) and self as learner (learner awareness) lead to a collaborative relationship between learner autonomy and differentiated learning. The essential principle here is that granting students a measure of choice in the activities they engage in can be an efficient way to provide learners in large language classes with adequate learning experiences.

The evaluation of classroom learning includes reflection on goals, learning activities, and appropriate assessment criteria. Oscarson (1989) identifies four main benefits of formal self-assessment for autonomous learners. First, it trains learners to assess the efficiency of their communication. Second, it raises learners' awareness of the learning process and encourages them to evaluate course content and assessment critically. Third, it promotes their knowledge of the variety of possible goals in language learning. Fourth, it broadens the range of assessment criteria to involve areas in which learners have exceptional competences. Self-assessment bolsters learners' motivation. A plethora of tools have been devised for self-assessment including self-marked tests, progress cards, self-rating scales, and portfolios. From the perspective of autonomy, it seems especially important that self-assessment tools do not simply focus on proficiency or ability, but also

encourage formative self-monitoring and a cyclical approach to the re-evaluation of goals and plans.

Classroom-based approaches aim to cherish autonomy by involving learners in decision-making processes in relation to the day-to-day management of their learning. This capacity is developed more effectively within the classroom, where learners are more readily able to cooperate with other learners and search for the support of teachers. Flexibility in the guidelines for the implementation of a curriculum often creates spaces in which individual teachers can allow learners a degree of control over aspects of their classroom learning. If flexibility is lacking in the curriculum itself, the degree of autonomy developed by the leaners will be accordingly constrained.

Out-of-Classroom Autonomous Language Learning

Language learners perceive out-of-class learning as essential to successful language learning and tend to regard in-class and out-of-class learning as serving different yet complementary functions. Out-of-class learning provides greater language input for autonomous learners, but in-class-learning is particularly indispensable in serving the metalinguistic function of output and contributes greatly to the development of productive skills such as writing and speaking.

Bailly (2011) lists three imperative components for autonomous language learning beyond the classroom necessary for success in learner autonomy development: motivation, learning resources, and learning skills. Learners' out-of-class engagement with technological resources for learning is subject to their will, interest, and motivation, their perception of the affordances of technological resources and interrelated activities, and their ability to make efficient use of the resources.

To promote autonomous language learning with technology, Reinders (2010) has developed a pedagogical framework and expanded the focus beyond the performance of a specific cognitive task. This framework starts by identifying a learner need, then continues by setting goals and planning learning, selecting relevant resources and learning strategies, practising the strategies in specific tasks, monitoring the implementation of the strategies, practising the strategies in specific tasks, monitoring the implementation of strategies through teacher and peer feedback, and ends with assessment and revision. The framework highlights the engagement of learners in continual reflection throughout the entire cycle, in pairs or group work and sharing sessions so that students can equip one another with the cognitive and affective encouragement required in order to engage successfully in the autonomy development process.

To bolster learners' determination and capacity to engage in autonomous language learning outside the classroom, it is necessary to help them perceive the con-

nection between in-class learning and out-of-class learning. Teachers play an important role in helping learners bridge in-class-learning and out-of-class learning experiences. Teachers are expected to align the nature of the course aims, curriculum, and academic work with the assignments that involve learners in applying what they have acquired in class in other aspects of life to enhance out-of-class learning. It is recommended to explain to learners the parts of the curriculum that link to out-of-class learning to help students identify the links between what they do inside the classroom and what they do outside the classroom. Teachers should exert their appreciation of learner-prepared materials and use the language samples that learners have prepared and gathered from outside the class. The diversity of in-class topics, activities, and resources should enrich the out-of-class repertoire of learners.

The design and selection of autonomous learning materials and tools need to take into consideration not only the quality of the materials in terms of their language potential but also the affordances and constraints of autonomous learning and learning beyond the classroom. Tomlinson (2010) highlights the following key characteristics of quality language-learning materials: diversity of language exposure and use; authenticity of language exposure and use; potential for affective and cognitive engagement; mechanisms for inducing noticing; and providing broader learning benefits beyond language gains.

Tomlinson (2010) argues that autonomous language learning materials should involve a wide spectrum of text types and genres in relation to topics, themes, and contexts. Technology supports four principal dimensions of learner experience: collaboration, publication, new modes of representation and expression through digital artefacts, and inquiry. Laurillard (2002) highlights the multifaceted use of new media forms in engaging learners in learning with technological resources: narrative media or non-interactive materials; interactive media or multimedia resources; adaptive media or computer-based media; communicative media; and productive media.

Modern utilisation of authenticity in language learning is concerned with the authenticity of the text or the origin of the material; the authenticity of the task or the reflection of the real use of language and activities in a target society. He claims that there is a need for an expanded view of authenticity. There is a need to go beyond the restricted focus of the authenticity of artefacts, texts, and learning materials to consider learners' perceptions of authenticity when engaging with the language. He asked for authentic materials associated with creation, innovation, and discovery, and the opportunities for personal expression and creativity.

Mechanisms for inducing noticing refer to the presentation of inputs in ways that enhance the importance of linguistic features and by engaging learners in various experiential and discovery activities. Textual enhancement, input flood, audio in-

put enhancement can enhance learners' noticing of linguistic materials. To arouse learners' affective and cognitive engagement in the learning experience, Tomlinson (2010) suggested the following strategies: creating and choosing tasks such as disputable texts or engaging learners with problem-solving tasks that could evoke learners' emotional responses and cognitive investment; engaging learners in thinking and feeling before, during, and after engaging with the resources; and giving learners directions that they could take using the materials and activities they choose from a pool of materials.

Conclusion

The development of autonomous learning refers first to supporting the processes associated with the development of the learners' cognitive and metacognitive skills so that they can make the transition towards becoming autonomous learners. Secondly, the development of autonomous learning refers to the provision of teacher education programmes to prepare teachers to understand the complexities of autonomous learning, so that they might be better placed to support their learners in their efforts to achieve autonomous learning as opposed to purely independent learning. Learner autonomy is an achievement, attained interrelationally between the learner and the teacher.

Autonomous learners are independent, self-directed, knowledgeable, have a positive self-esteem and self-concept, and are accepting of others. They are passionate about learning. They require effective learning which provides room for pre-thinking, participation, experimentation, and reflection. Autonomous learners need passionate teachers who are committed to find resources that will transform the learning process. They have a choice-driven intrinsic motivation and need to be involved in the planning and assessment of their learning. Their learning needs to relate to real problems, tasks, and challenges.

Lancaster (2019) notes that the effectiveness of autonomous learning is maintained by an inspiring multimedia environment that supports continual engagement through collaborative learning. Collaborative learning relates learning to specific personal performance needs, supports self-direction, and choice in who to connect with. The learning platform backs learners to stay agile and successful by helping them learn what they need to know to succeed and thrive. It quickly connects learners to the skills, learning opportunities and expertise. It brings together formal and informal learning. Every learner finds personalised development opportunities on the platform, which is intuitive and visually appealing. It is a cognitive learning platform that is the cornerstone of enabling autonomous learning. It puts learners in charge of their learning. It is full of brilliant topics, comprehensive, and reflective contents. Everything is well organised. Easily navi-

gated and crystal clear, a great variety of skillful trainings. It maintains an easy to track process.

Autonomous learners need digital skills and that is why, digital competence is also a priority in the learning process. They need to develop skills in time management, goal setting, information gathering, resourcing and self-evaluation. They require coaching to cultivate their ability to learn, monitor progress, and ensure success. Lancaster (2019) points out that coaching supports and highlights values that motivate individuals to be more self-directed in their own learning. Coaching aims to prompt autonomy and competence. It differs from mentoring and consulting, because learners coached already have the answers within them and the coach poses powerful questions to generate those answers by developing new levels of awareness in learners.

Learner motivation is greatly associated with the positive perception of learning. Learning should be perceived by autonomous learners as a refreshing and constructive experience that generates self-efficacy. Learning should be competency-based, i. e. all applicable knowledge, skills, and attributes must be linked to essential real-life challenges. The behavioural aspects of a learner's learning process include seeking feedback, using critical thinking processes, engaging in critical inquiry, vigorously collaborating with and learning from others. Such behaviours inspire high-engagement in learning. Motivation is personal, and learning is attained through daily learning interactions, which is then shared and embedded in classroom-related learning.

Assessment for learning as a unique type of feedback for autonomous learners generates motivation and triggers further autonomous learning. Such feedback acknowledges teachers as rational, modern, and well-informed professional decision makers and provides them essential information to alter the teaching and learning activities. Through formative feedback the learner is assisted to shape and direct the next phase of learning. Thus, the learner is given signals to review his learning and move forward.

Learning is development. The nature and intensity of change entail new challenges for learning. Learners operate in increasingly competitive scenarios that require improved performance, and innovation. There is an urgent need to define a new vision of learning for autonomous learners. That vision involves the creation of a new learning philosophy that redefines the design, facilitation and delivery of autonomous learning. Such learning must highlight unique learner needs and increase motivation and learning efficiency.

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Author

PhDr. Ildikó Némethová, PhD., Faculty of Applied Languages, Department of English, University of Economics in Bratislava, e-mail: ildiko.nemethova@euba.sk
Ildikó Némethová works at the Department of English of the Faculty of Applied Languages of the University of Economics in Bratislava. The main areas of her specialisation include Intercultural Communication, British Area Studies and English for Specific Purposes. She has been in the position of local coordinator for the Slovak team within the Erasmus + programme KA2 – Cooperation for Innovation and the Exchange of Good Practices; Strategic Partnerships for Higher Education entitled PROMINENCE (Promoting Mindful Encounters Through Intercultural Competence and Experience) since 2017 and CORALL (Coaching-oriented Online Resources for the Autonomous Learning of LSP) since 2019.