Undoubtedly, Cohen´s work could serve as a useful reference text for administrators and curriculum designers involved in the recent reforms introduced here in Spain in foreign language studies in primary and secondary education, since there exists explicit reference to the development of learning skills and learners taking responsibility for their own learning in the curriculum.

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Phil BENSON & Peter VOLLER (eds.). *Autonomy & independence in language learning.* New York: Longman, 1997. vii + 270 pages.

Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning is a compilation of articles contributed by some of the most outstanding figures in the field. As stated in the introduction, one of the main objectives of the book is "clarifying and problematizing" the meanings of autonomy and independence, two concepts which have caused a great deal of uncertainty in this area. The term autonomy has been used to refer to situations in which learners study entirely on their own, for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning, or, following Holec (1981:3), for "the ability to take charge of one's learning". In this sense, the general introduction by Benson and Voller makes an extremely useful contribution to the field as it helps to clarify the differentiation between these ideas.

A second aim of this book is to explore the "discourses and applications" of these two concepts for language learning, merging the theory and practice in this field. These applications are, nevertheless, brought to scrutiny in this volume, presenting not only suggestions for implementation but also pointing out the problems that may arise. This aspect will surely be much appreciated by language teachers who often find the implementation of autonomous learning in the classroom rather difficult. As the authors put it in the introduction: "whenever autonomy and independence figure in concrete language education projects, there is always a risk that underlying conceptual differences will emerge in the form of conflicts over the practical steps to be taken" (Benson & Voller, 1997: 2).

The fact that the book has many contributions from different authors does not make it simply an anthology of autonomy in language learning. It is obvious that the authors worked careful-

ly on the organization of the different articles, since the book is so coherent that it seems as if a single author had written it. Besides, a large number of interconnections between the different issues and chapters give the book a clear sense of unity. A good example of this can be found in chapter 6, where William Littlewood refers to some teaching methodologies that are reconsidered and expanded all through Part III. This makes the reader feel that the different authors' contributions have not been brought together for the sake of forming a collection of articles on autonomous learning, but that they have been selected to constitute a book with an introduction, a body and a well-connected conclusion.

Altogether the volume is composed of seventeen chapters, divided into three parts, which reflect "the major questions that need to be addressed if the gap between theory and practice is to be narrowed" (p. 2-3). Part I, namely "Philosophy and practice", introduces the first question to be considered: *What kinds of autonomy or independence are aimed at and how can they best be achieved?* The answer to this question is provided by Phil Benson (chapter 2), Alastair Pennycook (chapter 3), Susan Sheerin (chapter 4), Gill Sturtridge (chapter 5) and William Littlewood (chapter 6). While the first two authors establish the theoretical grounding of concepts, the rest concentrate on the methods of implementation, self-access and self-instruction. The issues handled in chapters 4 and 6 are taken up again in Part III; whereas Sturtridge's chapter points forward to the concerns of Part II. In this way, Benson and Voller start to establish the already mentioned interconnections between the different articles that compose the book.

While the first part provides the necessary theoretical background to the field, the second part, "Roles and Rela-

tionships", opens a more practical path; that is, it gives different alternatives to traditional classroom teaching, while addressing the second question, namely *What changes are envisaged in the roles and relationships of teachers and learners?* The five chapters in this part recover Sturtridge's claim about "a re-evaluation of the roles of both learners and teacher, the relationship between them, and the relationship of both to institutions of learning" (p. 93). Peter Voller (chapter 7) and Philip Riley (chapter 8) provide an overview of the two terms that concern this second part, evaluating the variety of teacher roles and the nature of counselling for autonomous learning, respectively. Along the same line, Michael Breen and Sarah Mann (chapter 9) are interested in the development of a pedagogy for autonomy in the classroom, taking into account both learners' and teachers' perspectives. They see autonomy as an innovation and as a "reaction against the 'culture of authority'" (p. 95). As Nunan (1997) puts it in his book, *The Learner-Centred Curriculum*, "autonomy is like a step forward to this type of curriculum, where students have an active participation in preparing its content and how it is taught» (Nunan, 1997: 2). The issue of the collaborative effort of students is taken up again and extended by Nunan in this volume in Part III. Finally, Part II is closed by Felicity O'Dell (chapter 10) and Edith Esch (chapter 11), who present case studies on the roles of teachers and learners respectively. The presentation of actual data makes the book more reliable and accessible, and helps to achieve its second aim, namely, to conciliate theory with practice.

After having reviewed the theory and having seen some actual implementation and observation of the mentioned issues, Part III, "Methods and materials", aims to provide an answer to the last question, *What specific methods and materials might*

best contribute to overall goals?, an issue which was already raised by some of the contributors to the two previous parts. Andrew Littlejohn starts this section arguing that self-instructional materials should be open-ended and should encourage creativity, rather than just engage learners in reproductive language use. This is a key point for those who claim that self-access facilities do not help students develop their productive skills. In chapter 13, David Nunan follows on by looking at textbook materials to promote autonomy and independence. He believes not only that teachers should produce materials, but also that learners should break the barriers between the classroom and the world beyond it by producing their own working resources. Guy Aston (chapter 14) promotes negotiated self-access work with electronic text corpora, thus immersing students in an environment of authentic language, rather than letting them choose from a selection of pre-constructed materials. The importance of authentic materials is stressed again in chapter 16 by David Little, who strongly believes in the interaction between learning and use. In between these two chapters, Stephen Ryan presents his experimental course in a Japanese university. Again, Ryan suggests that students should be encouraged to go beyond the classroom and develop methods of working with authentic resources. He mentions many of the resources that were available for the learners in Japan and how these materials were taken advantage of. Finally, despite all the controversy raised by the use of new technologies in autonomous learning, John Milton's conclusive contribution aims at giving a positive view on materials of this type. He suggests that "new computer technologies, especially the Internet, hold the potential to create 'virtual target language communities' for communicatively isolated students" (p. 180). Milton emphasizes the importance of keeping these tools under the control of their users, so that they represent a positive instrument in developing learners' autonomy as writers.

To conclude, this book is a useful tool for researchers who want to broaden their knowledge of autonomy and independence in language learning, as well as for those teachers who would like to foster autonomous learning with their students. Despite the book's major focus on one specific type of implementation, self-access learning, most of the insights revealed in each of the chapters can be easily transferred to other self-directed learning schemes as well; that is, the case studies and experiences presented by the different authors provide enough information for guiding teachers –or even proficient learners- through their way to independent language learning. Hence, apart from being an obligatory work tool for both teachers and researchers in the field, this book should certainly be included in second language teaching methodology courses as compulsory reading.

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