AUTONOMOUS LEARNING: WHAT MAKES IT WORK IN POSTGRADUATE INTERPRETER TRAINING?

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Abstract: Autonomous learning is a complex and multi-faceted construct. It can be defined as the learners' capacity to self-direct their own learning, which means taking responsibility for the decisions concerning the different aspects of the learning process. However, there is more to autonomous learning than its purely management aspect. Autonomous learning, first of all, means critical thinking, planning and evaluating learning, and reflection, a conscious effort on the part of the learner to continuously monitor the learning process from beginning to end. This is the cognitive side of autonomous learning. This paper reports on the findings of an empirical investigation conducted at the Interpreter and Translator Training Centre (ITTC) of ELTE University of Budapest, Hungary. ITTC offers postgraduate translator and interpreting training. The current research focuses on the role of autonomous learning in interpreter training. The study explores the research question whether interpreter training at ITTC develops the students' capacity to carry out autonomous learning. It also intends to ascertain what makes autonomous learning work in the context of postgraduate interpreter training.

Keywords: learner autonomy, learner training/development, cooperative leaning, self-access.

1. INTRODUCTION

Autonomy, in a general sense, means liberty and the right to self-government. In education, autonomy is associated with a certain form of freedom characterising the learning process, and the teacher-student relationship or the school. Autonomy in education is also related to the notions of negotiation, participation in classroom decision-making, reflection and choice, independence, self-evaluation and cooperation, among others.

Following Little argues that 's arguments, autonomous learning is not learning on one's own, without a teacher. In the classroom students are not given left fully responsibilityle for their learning. It is not a teaching method either, so it is not something you do to students. It is not an easily observable and describable way of behaviour. Neither is it a permanent and constant state reached by learners (Little 1990:7).

Autonomous learning is a complex and multi-faceted construct. According to Holec's definition, it can be seen as the learners' capacity to self-direct their own learning, which means taking responsibility for the decisions concerning the different aspects of the learning process. In self-directed learning, learners' choices remain mainly on the learning management level, i.e. the behavioural level of learning, and it self-direction relates to the practical side of learning such as selecting learning materials, methods, the place and time of learning, the partners, etc. (Holec 1981:3). According to a more recent definition of autonomous learning, however, there is more to it than its purely management aspect. Autonomous learning, first of all, means critical thinking, planning and evaluating learning, and reflection, a conscious effort on the part of the learner to continuously monitor the learning process from beginning to end (Benson 2001:59–60). This is the cognitive side of autonomous learning.

An autonomous learner is, therefore, a reflective learner, a person actively involved in reflective learning. Autonomous learners take responsibility for their learning not only on the level of learning management, but also in a cognitive sense, which means, as Little puts it, that they are willing to make a conscious effort to understand what, why and how they are learning (Little 1996:4). Generally, such learners are methodical, reflected, flexible, adventurous, curious and motivated. Their self-image is positive, they know how to rely on others and they possess the necessary interpersonal skills (Candy 1991:459–466). And, finally, autonomous learners are less dependent on their teachers.

There is no autonomous learning however, without an autonomous teacher (Benson 2001, Camilleri 1999, Fischer 1996, Little 1996). Autonomous teachers are independent, self-sufficient personalities, who assume ethical responsibility for their teaching. The primary role of autonomous teachers in the classroom is not the transmission of knowledge. Instead, they act as organisers, advisers, and sources of information.

1.1. Autonomous Learning and Interpreter Training

As Cammaert (1988) points out, in addition to interpreting skills, interpreters must keep learning throughout their professional life in order to be able to do high quality interpreting. From this it ensues that permanent learning, together with good listening comprehension and language skills is also a professional re-

quirement. One of the prerequisites of permanent learning is that would-be interpreters must learn how to learn and must possess the necessary learning strategies that make it possible for them to meet professional requirements. For this, they must become autonomous learners, and must be able to direct their learning cognitively: they must know how to plan, monitor and evaluate.

In this paper, I will describe the empirical research I conducted in the field of postgraduate interpreter training at ITTC. Second, I will introduce the research elements and aims, data collection, analysis and results. Before concluding, I will discuss the findings of my research and their implication for the general study of autonomous learning.

2. THE RESEARCH

The research I conducted at ITTC concerns the role of autonomous learning in interpreter training. The participants were It involves the students enrolled in the one-year Combined Translator and Consecutive Interpreter Training Programme in the 2002/2003 academic year. The study explores the research question whether interpreter training at ITTC develops the students' capacity to carry out autonomous learning. It focused on examines the overall concept and not just particularcertain components of autonomous learning. The study also tries to ascertain what makes autonomous learning work in the context of postgraduate interpreter training.

As autonomous learning is a complex concept, and as it depends not only on the willingness of the learners but also on that of the teachers and the school, I set out to examine the concept from different angles. In order to ensure triangulation of data, research data was collected with the help of three instruments: a questionnaire administered to the whole student population at the beginning and at the end of the academic year, interviews with the three head teachers at ITTC, and classroom observation. The measuring instruments were designed by myself.

2.1. Questionnaires

In the research project two questionnaires were applied. The main purpose of the questionnaires was to gain insights into the behaviour, views and experiences of the whole student population as a group. The aim here was not to look for intrapersonal correlations, nor was it to render data for statistical analysis, as the number of the students enrolled in this part of the training usually did not exceed 40. I piloted the questionnaires on five students before finalising and administering it.

As the whole research project wasis based on the understanding that autonomous learning has two levels, a behavioural and a cognitive one, both questionnaires contain questions concerning learning management and learning habits as well as metacognition, higher thinking (self-evaluation, self-assessment, etc.), motivation and attitudes to learning.

The first questionnaire (see Appendix I), administered at the beginning of the academic year, assessed the situation at the beginning of the training programme. The main aim here was to gain insights into the past learning experiences, habits, and motivation of the students as well as their experience in teaching (as most of them were qualified foreign language teachers) and in translation/interpreting.

The second questionnaire (see Appendix II), administered at the end of the academic year, aimed to examine whether the interpreter-training programme resulted in any change in the area of learner autonomy, attitudes to learning and more specifically,concretely, the learning habits of the students with regard to autonomous learning. The questions were about self-evaluation and needs assessment, the planning of learning, self-reflection, and independent learning management.

2.2. Interviews with the Head Teachers

During the academic year I conducted interviews with the head teachers of the three different language groups (English, French and German) at ITTC. All three of them have extensive experience both in translation/interpreting and in the teaching of translation/interpreting. They are responsible not only for their own contact hours but also for the success of the whole training course in their language group. Their tasks include course scheduling and syllabus design as well as the recruitment and initial preparation of the 'external' part–time teachers.

The interviews' (see interview questions in Appendix III) primary aim was to gain a better understanding of teacher autonomy, the freedom the teachers possess concerning the overall learning process, the syllabus and the selection of learning material. The second aim of the interviews was to verify certain results of the end-of-year questionnaire concerning learning patterns, independent practice, classroom decision-making, voicing students' opinions, and student activity in the classroom. I did not pilot the interview questions because I planned to conduct a semi-structured interview and my investigation was emergent in nature.

2.3. Classroom Observation

I observed classroom work (see Appendix IV) in the three language groups, at three stages: at the beginning and at the end of the first semester, and at the end of the second semester. In each of the three groups I observed altogether 6 contact hours, 2 each time. Classroom observation was followed by a very short discussion with the teachers, when they expressed their opinion about the success of the observed class.

The aim of the observation was not to observe the methodology of interpreter training. Classroom observation was conducted to observe the interaction patterns, the learning forms, the organisation of learning and tasks in the classroom in order to see the ways classroom activity facilitates out-of-class independent practice and autonomous learning. Another goal was to verify certain answers to the end-of-year questionnaire and the interview questions with the senior teachers.

3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The collected research data collected was subjected to analysed in a qualitative analysis.way. The most important outcome of the data analysis wasis that it confirmedjustified the starting hypothesis of the research, and thus it can be stated that ITTC's interpreter training develops learner autonomy. This point is illustrated below by athe discussion of some of the results of the different parts of the research and by citing some of the opinions expressed by some relevant citations from students and teachers.

3.1. Beginning-of-Yyear Questionnaire

The analysis of the first questionnaire showed that all the students had only participated passed throughin traditional education, which significantly influenced their expectations concerning their future studies and teachers. Their former learning experiences had been mainly characterised by individualistic goal structures and frontal instruction. The answers, however, also revealed that they were aware of the advantages of group or pair learning. Already at the beginning of the course they were reflective and conscious learners, which was proven, among others, by the fact that their enrolment in the training was not the result of pure chance, but they had specific expectations, objectives and aims. They were also strongly motivated to be successful in the training and set to obtain a their degree, as well as and use it in their future careers.

The findings of the beginning-of-year questionnaire revealed that the students were characterised by a certain degree of autonomy as learners as far as their behaviour and thinking was concerned. Nevertheless, it was also clear from the findings, that these characteristics and views had been formed in a traditional learning environment. It cannot be claimedstated that they had extensive experience in the fields of learning management or social learning skills.

3.2. End-of-Yyear Questionnaire

The most important outcome of the end-of-year questionnaire was that the students had successfully transferred their former autonomous learning habits to the knowledge acquisition methods and learning needed for interpreting. ThisIt is all the more essential for would-be interpreters becauseas, as G. Láng says, the information processing needed during an interpreting assignment differs to a great extent from anything that what our students have so far experienced so far. During their former studies they were required to gradually narrow down their fields of research and do knowledge as well as information acquisition work, and become experts on a specific topic. All this, tThey were allowed to do so able to do according to their own working tempo and time schedule. In professional interpreting, however, interpreters, in order to be able to build the necessary referential framework (mental model) for the correct understanding and interpretation of the source-language text, will need to be able to select and process huge amounts of material referring to a so far unknown field of expertise or knowledge in a very limited period of time (G. Láng 2002:80). The time factor is all the more important here as, according to Gile, 'in interpreting, Knowledge Acquisition occurs before the conference, during the last minutes before the conference, and after the conference has started' (Gile 1995:155).

The most important changes that occurred during the academic year concerned the students' relation to learning and the realisation of the need for life-long learning, as illustrated by the answers below:

- 'From now, I will always be learning.'
- 'I have realised: I will really need to study and learn during the rest of my life.'

Their learning strategiesmethods were more efficient than at the beginning of the year:

- 'I am much more concentrated, more up-to-the- point and focused now.'
- 'I am trying to be more concentrated and am more efficient. If I have only 10 minutes, I still sit down and work, and my attention does not diverge.'

The students' learning habits also changed:

- 'I watch TV more and read the newspapers, and use the Internet more – but now not just for fun, but really paying attention to them.'

- 'I pay attention to every word and take notes (!) at every moment of life. This is like a new hobby, it is a very satisfying feeling to find the target language equivalent of a given expression.'

They also said that they had become more conscious and active learners, and took more initiatives as far as their learning was concerned. Their social learning skills and strategies had also developed, and this made them more suitable forapt to autonomous learning management. This led to more experience in needs analysis, planning and monitoring learning as well as evaluating themselves, their peers, their teachers and their learning environment.

At the same time, their professional autonomy had also emerged been formed or developed in for those students who had already had practical experience formerly worked as interpreters.

- 'Now I think it is a more complex job that requires professionalism.'
- 'It requires more responsibility and at the same time more independence on the part of the interpreter than I used to think. […] It also gives more sense of achievement.'

They also appreciated the difficult nature of the profession, and considered it more challenging than discouraging:

- 'Always new tasks, which are not always easy, new people, new challenges.'

The survey also showed that the majority of students did outside-class independent practice. They were intrinsically motivated to do so. Most of them did it on a regular basis, once a week, in pairs or small study groups. This demonstrates not only that the students were aware of the fact that classroom work is only a starting point for success, but also that classroom work prepares students to carry out independent practice on their own.

The survey also revealed some of the reasons for fostering learner autonomy during the training. One of these was the structure of the training programme:

- 'The structuring of the programme is well-done.'

which allowed students to meet professionals as their trainers. This fact was highly appreciated by them..

- 'Our teachers are incredibly dedicated and well-prepared.'

Another reason, which is still connected to the training structure, was that the students had the opportunity to participate in classroom decision-making. They had a say in choosing the topics for speeches to be interpreted:

- 'We were allowed to could choose topics other than those of the teacher's.'

The students were also allowed and encouraged to express their opinions about different aspects of the training:

- 'We were asked to fill in a questionnaire evaluating a course.'

- 'If there was something we did not like, we nominated someone to talk to the head teacher.'
- 'We had a say in the exam dates, and the deadlines for the submission of written work.'
- 'Sometimes we managed to get the teacher to slow down a little bit.'

Another factor that was identified as fostering learner autonomy in this particularconcrete context was the fact that classroom work was most often characterised by pair and group work, which again developed students' capacity to organise extracurricular work efficiently.

3.3. Interviews with the Head Teachers

The first part of the interviews investigated teacher autonomy at ITTC. The analysis of the answers revealed that the head teachers possessedenjoyed a high degree great amount of autonomy. This teacher autonomy was manifested in severaldifferent factors. First, the teachers had a considerable amount of freedom and responsibility concerning the contents of their teaching:

- 'There is a general syllabus, on the basis of which I decide what kind of texts or speeches I use for practice.'

This is both facilitated and required by the process-oriented syllabus. The contents of the interpreting practice classes is constructed continuously according to a given set of principles each academic year. The main characteristic feature of the contents is that it is based on current issues:

- '[…] the methods are more or less fixed, the basics are the same every year, and the syllabus is built up according to more or less the same principles each semester, but the concrete texts and speeches that are used are always about topical issues.'

The fact that the content is based on current issues requires from the teachers tothat they follow the political, economic, and social changes and topical issues. Today, it is more and more often the case that the source of the texts used for practice in class is the Internet, or authentic conference speeches interpreted in real interpreting situations by the teachers. This is all the more possible as the teachers are themselves practising conference interpreters.

Another essential factor of teacher autonomy at ITTC is that, due to the flexible structure of the training, should any learning difficulties be encountered on the part of any student or students, the teachers can initiate modification or changes within the framework of a course or the syllabus.

- 'This training programme is flexible enough to adapt it to the current student population. […] depending on the character of the difficulty the

group is having, we can spend more time on certain things and less on others. […].'

Furthermore, the head teachers also carry out research in the field of Translation Studies. This need for continuous professional development is also a characteristic of autonomous teachers.

The second part of the interviews was designed to shed light on certain points of the student questionnaires from the point of view of the teachers. The questions referred to out-of-class independent practice, the in-class learning patterns, the students' participation in classroom decision-making, and their possibility to voice their opinions about variousdifferent aspects of the training programme.

As far as independent practice is concerned, the three interviewees agreed that it played a crucial role regarding the success of the training.

- 'Independent practice is of utmost importance here. I always tell them [students] that our class is a kind of consultation, we show them the techniques and methods for practice […]. But in-class practice is insufficient, it is only a kind of orientation session, where we initiate them to independent practice.'

They also agreed that independent practice should accompany in-class practice, it should be tailor-made to the individual needs of students but go parallel with classroom activities in order to automate the skills practised in-class.

- '[Students] should practise only those elements that we have already covered in class so they are familiar with the requirements […]. Independent practice follows the contact hours and focuses on the possible problems encountered in class.'

The interviews also revealed how contact hours prepared students for independent practice: by the structuring of classroom work (frequent pair and group work), the active in-class role of the students, their choosing and delivering speeches for in-class practice, and by self and peer-evaluation required offrom them in class. Technical and human support is provided for the out-of-class independent practice sessions.

Students could also voice their opinions about the training. ThisIt is usuallymost often done informally in the course of during the training in an informal way:

- 'Usually they do it in class and informally, whenever there is something they want to tell us […]. For example, if they have problems with the terminology of economics, then we organise a few sessions on it, or if they are unhappy with the requirements or the assignments, we try to adjust them, if possible.'

As for classroom decision-making, the following excerpt summarizes the three teachers' opinions:

- '[…] we listen to [students'] feedback, and we are trying to take their ideas into account. But, of course, it is not a request concert, they need to attain a certain level by the end of the academic year, and we [the teachers] know how to achieve it.'

The third part of the interview focused on other, so far not covered aspects of fostering learner autonomy, such as the concrete in-class role of the students and evaluation. As for the first aspect, it was revealed that the students played a very active role in class. They made speeches in their mother tongue and in their foreign language practically every time they did interpreting practice as well.

- 'They make speeches, they do interpreting and evaluate one another.'
- 'They play an active role in everything [making speeches, interpreting, evaluation]. Because in order to be able to do independent practice, they need to learn to listen to their peers, to notice problems, and to know their limits […]. They are capable of development only if they know what causes problems for them.'

As far as evaluation methods are is concerned, it wasis continuous and regular.

- 'We do it orally. At the beginning, I evaluate their presentations after every task. And later they evaluate one another'.
- 'The teacher together with the students evaluates their performance after each task. So there is this continuous type of evaluation. […] At the end of the first semester we have what we call the 'semester closing exams', which is a kind of mock exam that reflects the structure of the end-of-year certification exams. This is a snapshot of their performance at that time, but of course, gives a picture of the level they have reached by then. And then, we have the certification exams at the end of the academic year.'

To summarise, the success of the contact hours depends to a large extent on the students. The active role they are made to play in class prompts them to take more responsibility for their learning, and results in more reflective and conscious thinking. The active in-class role also prepares the students for out-of-class independent practice.

3.4. Classroom Observation

Classroom observation revealed that most of the time in-class atmosphere and communication was relaxed. With two exceptions, classroom work was characterised by frequent and regular teacher-student and student-student interaction. Classroom observation also confirmed the findings of the survey and the interviews concerning learning patterns (frequent pair and groupwork), learning organisation, the evaluation of in-class work as well as in-class 'freedom of speech'.

Classroom observation also provided insights into the way contact hours prepared for out-of-class independent practice. The above-mentioned factors, such as pair and groupwork, speech selection, self and peer evaluation and the responsibility they assume help students foster certain behavioural and cognitive components of learning management (also see Horváth 2005). The contact hours also provide help students by the fact that teachers providing guidance in give the aspects of speech selection, model speech preparation and delivery as well as provide guidance for evaluation. Students also use the technical equipment during every session, which also prepares them for out-of-class practice.

4. SUMMARY OF RESULTS

The research confirmed the starting hypothesis of the study: interpreter training at ITTC helps foster autonomous learning. Another result is that it shed light on the main training components which contributed to this development of learner autonomy at ITTC: student-centredness, cooperative learning, learner training and development, and self-access and out-of-class independent practice.

4.1. Students-centredness at ITTC

Interpreter training at ITTC is fundamentally student-centred, as it is characterised by the principles and practices of progressive pedagogy such as the teacher's guiding role, the active role of students, intrinsic motivation, outside-class learning, the equal importance of the cognitive and affective sides of learning, attention to processes, and effective learning achieved through action (Brandes & Ginnis 1985:13–16).

Another factor to be mentioned here is the intensive teacher-student and student-student interaction and communication observed, which are signs of a rather supportive learning environment and successful group dynamics. The classeslearning groups at ITTC seem to be what Hadfield calls successful groups (Hadfield 1992:10–12). This positive learning atmosphere facilitates not only in-class work but also out-of-class practice, as it is not on their own but with their peers that students carry out individual work. At ITTC, this positive learning environment is created and maintained not only by the factors mentioned above, but also by the common aims and the motivation of the students.

4.2. Cooperative Learning at ITTC

The implementation of the main principles of cooperative learning has a positive influence on learner autonomy (Benson 2001, Bolhuis 2003, Dam 1995, Ridley 1997). The training at ITTC is characterised by the principles of negotiation, process-oriented syllabus and positive interdependence. Students and teachers negotiate the organisational aspects of learning and teaching, the content and evaluation. Although full learner participation is not assured, 'an element of negotiation' is built into the different components of the syllabus. This is what Clarke calls a weak version of the negotiated, process-oriented syllabus (Clarke 1991).

Boekartes describes cooperative learning as goal-oriented and differentiated (Boekartes 2002:600). These two components are also characteristic of ITTC's training as individual students' performances and ideas are welcome, and they can represent their objectives in the different phases of learning.

As for positive interdependence, learners as members of a learning group understand that together they are more successful than alone. The group's success is considered to be an individual success and vicea versa (Sapon-Shevin & Schniedewind 1992), which entails that students depend on one another. This principle also characterises the training at ITTC, where learning success depends to a large extent on whether students select speeches for in-class and out-of-class practice that are relevant and appropriate as far as the linguistic and content input is concerned. Success also depends on whether they present these speeches in a way suitable for interpreting practice, and whether they take peer-evaluation seriously and give their fellow students useful feedback. This corresponds to Cohen's resource interdependence, as peers serve as resource for practice and evaluation. Individual students contribute in an active way to the success of their peers. In this sense, in order to fulfil group aims, the students mustare also dependent on one another, which is the principle of goal-interdependence (Cohen 1994:12–13).

A teacher's role is not to disseminate academic knowledge in the traditional sense, but rather to facilitate skills development. Teachers at ITTC possess a high amount of autonomy; they are flexible, responsible persons who are continuously learning. They share power in the classroom without giving up their authority. They are also practising interpreters, which provides role models for the students.

4.3. Learner Training and Development at ITTC

The third factor that has been revealed as contributing to the development of autonomous learning at ITTC is learner training and learner development. Pre-

paring students for autonomous learning, one of whose areas is out-of-class independent practice, is not done in a traditional, i.e. 'recipe book' learner training style. Instead, 'it is rather a question of developing relationships in which curricula and their goals are constantly open to criticism and negotiation' and 'learner training […] can only work if it is based on a cycle of reflection and action where students' decisions have real consequences' (Benson 1995:5). ThisIt is particularly true for interpreter training, where learner training makes a maximum use of the individual learner's characteristics and formerly acquired knowledge. At ITTC, preparing students for autonomous and self-managed learning is not achieved prescriptively, but instead, it is based on students' reflection. Individual students are guided and supported in finding the working method that suits them the best.

When analysing student preparation for autonomous learning at ITTC, it is useful to draw on Sheerin's distinction between learner training and learner development. The former is aimed at developing certain skills necessary for self-managed learning, for example using a dictionary for language learners, whereas the latter means an affective and cognitive development resulting in more aware students. The aim of learner development is to increase student responsibility (Sheerin 1997:59–60).

At ITTC, the tools of student preparation for autonomous learning are classroom-based learner training and development. Learner training is aimed at developing the following:

- using the technical equipment (conference room, audiovisual/IT equipment, self-access);
- techniques for practisingce speech preparation: topic search, resource search and use, selecting information, presentation);
- developing social learning skills: questioning, cooperation with peers and trainers, empathy, negotiation, feedback to peers, self-evaluation, common goal setting).

At the same time, learner development is achieved through the active in-class role allocated to students, which 'forces' them to take more responsibility and to reflect on their learning. One of the results of learner development is more effective and interactive classroom work. Another is that students realise the necessity of independent practice, and because they are aware of it, they do it on a regular basis.

4.4. Self-access at ITTC

It has also been revealed that self-access also contributes to the development of autonomous learning. Following Miller and Rogerson-Revell's classification, self-access at ITTC can be described as a 'supermarket-style' system, which en-

ables students to browse and select the items (Miller & Rogerson-Revell 1993:228–232).

Self-access at ITTC fulfils the general role of such systems, i.e. it provides space and material for individual work, this way enabling students to practise and learn according to their own pace (Aston 1993, Darleguy 2003, Jones 0995, Sheerin 1989, 1997). Students also receive 'training' in using the system.

In the light of the current research, it can also be asserted that other parts of ITTC's infrastructure, namely unrestrictedlimitless Internet access provided for the students, also contribute to the development of autonomous learning. It is all the more important as today the Internet is an essential tool not only for in-class but also out-of class work. It enables students to extend their background knowledge and collect information, search for topics for in-class and out-of-class practice according to their individual needs as well as to participate in mailing lists for professionals, which not only contributes to interpreting skills development but also plays an important role as regards professional knowledge and autonomy.

4.5. Out-of-class independent practice at ITTC

Out-of-class independent practice is crucial to the success of interpreter training in general and at ITTC in particular. It is not an 'if-you-wish' task, but constitutes an integral part of the training programme. What is interesting to note here though is that its completion is not checked in a traditional sense. It is voluntary as failing to do independent practice is not sanctioned by grades at ITTC.

The fact that the vast majority of students still organise such sessions for themselves is evidence of the efficiency of the training with respect to autonomous learning as out-of-class independent practice is not only the means but also the result and manifestation of learner autonomy. It also shows that students at ITTC are intrinsically motivated to do out-of-class practice. Students generally do it once a week at ITTC in pairs or in small groups.

5. CONCLUSION

Based on the outcomes of the current research project, it can be concluded that the major components that contribute to the development of learner autonomy at ITTC are the following:

- student-centredness (non-traditional student and teacher roles, action learning, dynamic groups, attention to processes);

- cooperative learning (peer teaching, peer evaluation, self-assessment, pair and group work, common goal structure of the group, resource interdependence);
- learner training and development (non-prescriptive, individualised, relationships-based, reflective);
- self-access and out-of-class independent practice (technical and human support, non-compulsory, intrinsically motivated).

It is important to note here that these components manifest themselves not on an ad hoc but on a regular basis. It is not to say, however, that there are no problem areas at ITTC where improvement is needed: not every student does out-of-class independent practice on a regular basis; not every class is as interactive as it could be; teacher training is also problematic; some teachers are more student-centered than the others, etc.

The findings reported on in this study constitute only main trends, and the variables mutually complement or reinforce one another: a not-so-student-centered teacher's impact on learner autonomy is counterbalanced by another's personality or the peers. Of course, there are individual differences between student groups and individual students, but the aim of the research was to give general insights into what makes autonomous learning work at ITTC.

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APPENDIX I
BEGGINING-OF-YEAR QUESTIONNAIRE
September, Academic Year 2002/2003

1. Former studies:
– Elementary school:
– Secondary school:
– Tertiary education:
– Other:

2. What kind of learning forms were characteristic during your former studies (individual, pair work, group work)?
– Elementary school:
– Secondary school:
– Tertiary education:
– Other:

3. As a student, which learning form do you prefer (individual, pair work, group work)?

4. As a student, which is the learning form you like the least (individual, pair work, group work)?

5. Have you got any teaching experience?

Yes / No

If yes, how much and what type?

If yes, what learning forms are most characteristic during your classes (individual, pair work, group work)?

6. Have you got any experience in translation/interpreting?

Yes / No

If yes, how much and what type?

7. What motivated you to enrol in a translator/interpreter training course?

8. What are your aims when you finish the course?

9. How do you think this course will contribute to your development?

10. What do you think you can do during the course in order to contribute to your development?

11. What kind of learning strategies have already worked for you?

12. Would you like to take part in classroom decision-making during the course?

Yes / No

If yes, how?

13. What do you think can make this academic year successful for you and your fellow students?

APPENDIX II
END-OF-YEAR QUESTIONNAIRE
MAY, ACADEMIC YEAR 2002/2003

1. Do you think your academic year was successful at ITTC? Yes / No
Who / What was it due to?
2. Do you feel you have used the opportunities offered by the course? Yes / No
Why?
3. What would you change if you could enrol once more?
4. What is that you would definitely not change?
5. What kind of learning forms were characteristic during the training (individual, pair work, group work)?
6. Is there anything you really liked during the training? (What is it?)
Is there anything you really did not like? (What is it?)
7. Did you have the opportunity to modify any aspect of the training during the course (schedule, content, timing, etc.)? Yes / No
Did you take this opportunity? Yes / No
Example:
8. Did you have the opportunity to give voice to your opinion during the course? Yes / No
Did you take this opportunity? Yes / No
Example:
9.Has the image you had of the translation/interpreting profession changed? Yes / No
How?
What do you find the most attractive in this profession?
What do you find the least attractive?
What are your career plans for the future (work, studies, etc.)?
12. Is there anything you still need to improve? Yes / No
If yes, what do you intend to do for your improvement?
13. Was this course different in any way from what you had experienced as a student before?
Yes / No
How?
14. Did you do individual practice outside class? Yes / No
Why?
If yes, how often, where, with whom, what, etc.?
15. Has your attitude to learning in general changed? Yes / No
If yes, how?
Have your learning habits changed (reading newspapers, TV, etc)? Yes / No

If yes, how?
Do you take more initiatives in the learning process now? Yes / No
Are you a more self-conscious learner now? Yes / No
Are you a more active learner now? Yes / No
16. Other:

APPENDIX III
Interview Questions

I. Teacher Autonomy:
1. What subjects do you teach?
2. Who decides what you teach in your classes (topics, skills, background knowledge)?
3. How is the syllabus designed?
4. How do you prepare for your classes?
5. What do the students need to learn?
6. Please give a short description of ITTC's students.
7. Please give a short description of ITTC's interpreting teachers.
8. What kind of learning difficulties do the students have (if any)?
9. What kinds of changes have been administered on the basis of these (if any)?
10. Do you do scientific research?
11. To what extent does your own research influence your teaching?
12. Do you have teaching difficulties (if yes, what kind)?

II. Questions verifying student answers:
13. What role does individual practice play in interpreter training?
14. What should individual practice consist of?
15. What kind of help students get for individual practice (in class and out of class)?
16. What kind of learning forms are characteristic in class (individual, pair work, group work)?
17. Are students given the opportunity to voice their opinions about the training? How?
18. How can students contribute to classroom decision-making?

III. Other aspects contributing to the development of learner autonomy:
19. What's the role of the students during contact hours (giving speeches, evaluation, etc.)?
20. How is student performance evaluated (continuous evaluation, mid-term, end-of-term evaluation, self-evaluation, external examiners, etc.)?

APPENDIX IV

CLASSROOM OBESERVATION SHEET

Group:
Date:
Room:
Number of students present:

Place of class in training:
Aim of class:

Seating:

Technical equipment used:

Task/Aim	Learning Form	Interaction

Other: