

**Strategies for Student Autonomy in
Teaching and Learning English as a
Foreign Language in Poland and China**
Comparative studies

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I. Why Autonomy?

- **Being obedience can be dangerous**
- **The Milgram experiment** on obedience to authority figures was a series of social psychology experiments conducted by Yale University psychologist Stanley Milgram. The participants in the study showed their willingness to obey an authority figure who instructed them to perform acts to hurt others which are conflicting with their personal conscience. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdUu3u9Web4>
- Many people will do horrible immoral things if they are obedient to an authority figure. "I am just following orders."

Why autonomy?

- **Being autonomous can make people become more confident, courageous, and responsible.**
- My own experience of study.
- Bachelor's study: a university in China in 1990s. I learned the knowledge in the textbook from the teacher. I seldom went to the library.
- Master's study: a university in New Zealand in 2003-2004. I was told to choose a topic among many topics which are never taught by the teacher to write an essay. First I felt frustrated. I had to learn about the topic from books in the library. When I finished the essay. I felt very proud of myself. I become more confident in my learning. This experience of autonomous learning brought me happiness and gave me the courage to be autonomous in my later job and life.

Why China and Poland?

- Eastern culture Vs Western culture
- China: Confucius about loyalty, filial piety and other moralities
- Poland: Socrates

- Eastern school culture Vs western school culture
- Chinese school: collectivism and teacher's authority
- Polish school: individualism

Learner Autonomy in Language learning

- **Definition:** Learner autonomy is “the ability to take charge of their own learning” (Holec, 1981)
- **Levels of learner autonomy:** Nunan (2000) argues that autonomy is not an all-or-nothing concept which implies its varying degrees and types. Nunan (1997) involves a model of five levels of ‘learner action’ – ‘awareness’, ‘involvement’, ‘intervention’, ‘creation’ and ‘transcendence’.

Learner Autonomy in Language learning

- **Influential Factors in Developing Learner Autonomy:** According to Soufiane Blidi (2017), Voluntariness, learner choice, flexibility, teacher's role and peer support are the important factors in learner autonomy development.
- **Learning strategies and learner autonomy:** According to Rebecca Oxford (2017), Numerous researchers in the area of L2 learner autonomy identify learning strategies as relevant or even crucial to autonomy (see, e.g., Cotterall, 1995; Little, 2000; Littlewood, 1996; Oxford, 1999, 2011; Wenden, 1991).
- Oxford(1990) divides language learning strategies into 6 groups: memory, cognitive, compensation, metacognitive, affective and social strategies.

Learner Autonomy in Language learning

- **Learner autonomy in different cultures:** Blidi (2017) claims that there cannot be a “one-fit-for-all” approach to developing autonomy across cultures due to the variations of learners’ perception of learning and the resources and constrains of learners and teachers.
- Palfreyman (2003) states that the “interpretation of the particular cultural, social, political and educational context in which [autonomy] is located” (Sinclair2000: 6) is crucial in constructing local approaches to autonomy.

Theoretical Foundations

- **Adolescent Psychology:**
- Adolescent psychology is the field of psychology that focuses on the issues that are unique to adolescents.
- Erikson (1980) looked at adolescence as a period of identity formation and separation from adult caretakers
- Although they may appear aloof, independent, and impervious to adult guidance, adolescents are influenced strongly by the values and attitudes of parents and other trusted authorities. (Eric Hazen, Steven Schlozman and Eugene Beresin, 2008)
- Schools influence adolescents' social-emotional and behavioral development through organizational, social, and instructional processes. (Jacquelynne S. Eccles, 2004)

Theoretical Foundations

- **Constructivism:**
- According to Little (2007), all constructivists hold the idea that “we construct our knowledge by bringing what we already know into interaction with the new information, ideas and experiences we encounter”.
- Vygotsky (1978) asserts three major themes regarding social interaction, the more knowledgeable other(MKO), and the zone of proximal development(ZPD).
- The learners can become autonomous by reflection of the content and process of learning which is called “reflective intervention” (Bruner, 1986)

Theoretical Foundations

- **Critical pedagogy:**
- Critical pedagogy insists upon the student-centeredness. Freire (1973) objects the “banking model of education” in which “school knowledge” (Barnes, 1976) are transmitted to learners by teachers. Critical pedagogy focuses on the development of critical consciousness.

Research questions

- **What factors of teacher and learner's strategies can foster learner's autonomy in adolescents' English classes in Poland and China?**

There are five questions- specific research problems:

- What is the level of learners' autonomy in Chinese and Polish schools?
- What are the similarities and differences of understanding of learner autonomy strategies in different cultures?
- What strategies are used by teachers and learners to develop learner autonomy in Poland and China?
- What are the teachers and learners' attitude towards the strategies fostering learner autonomy?
- What is the role of language proficiency's orientation in teachers and learners' strategies fostering learner autonomy?

Research Methods

- This is an ethnographic study
- In this research, I will use observation and interview to collect data. I will enter into a primary school in Wroclaw, Poland and a middle school in Chengde, China. The data of observation and interview will be recorded through field notes and analyzed into certain themes.
- The observation will focus on the interaction between students and teacher, and also questions and homework.
- The interview for students will focus on why, how, and when students learn English. The interview for teachers will focus on who is in charge of the learning content, homework and discussion.

Ethical issues

- Ethical issues concern informed consent, privacy, confidentiality and trust. As an educational researcher, I am going to operate within an ethic of respect for anyone involved in the research they are undertaking.

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Thank you

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