

AUTONOMISATION

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Since I have never really looked into the concept of “autonomisation” in the context of my scientific research, I’ve looked up in a dictionary and here is what I have found. The Merriam-Webster defines the verb “autonomise” as “to make (something) autonomous” and assesses it was first used in 1871, which can certainly be related to the evolution of industrial and mechanical techniques in the Anglo-Saxon world. This has raised two questions in my mind: was its first known use about objects only given that the online dictionary mentions “something” and not “someone”? How and when has it got used for people? Indeed, for language teachers, the point of “autonomisation” is to make pupils, not things, become autonomous, acquire autonomy in language competences, and yet, autonomizing pupils thanks to things, and other people.... Take the example of walking: a toddler learns how to walk, so how to become physically autonomous, thanks to a grown-up who holds them and teaches them how to use their feet and legs to move from A to B. So, referring to my conceptual framework (cognitive neuroscience), I have wondered if learners’ brains have been progressively considered as made up of independent pieces that can become autonomous once they work together, once they are trained to work together - to echo the mechanics domain? And this question leading to another, I now wonder about the strategies that people – be they adults or other pupils - resort to so as to help learners become cognitively autonomous when they are learning languages... What tools do they use to “hold” their brains to guide them? So many questions that may find response soon if not already.

