

**INTRODUCTION**

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In 1999, twenty years ago, Henri Holec wrote an article in this journal, devoted to the self-direction of learning from the perspective of innovation<sup>1</sup>. He distinguished between innovation as a product, "an object or fact, an act, a process, a technique, etc.", and innovation as a process, "an action or doing, a process or evolution considered in their chronology, etc." (1999: 93).

To clarify product innovation, he stressed the need not merely to describe the innovative product, but to consider it in terms of its difference from the existing system (hetero-directed learning), the differences that can affect the structural functioning, the functions of the actors involved, and their ways of fulfilling them.

To define innovation as a process, consisting in setting up a product innovation, he specified a three-phase process: initiation (deciding to implement a change to "respond to a situation considered unsatisfactory"), implementation (introducing product-innovation, which leads to changes in learners and teachers), and integration ("change is becoming more commonplace as it is being institutionalized and eventually becomes part of the existing situation that can be transformed" (1999: 96).

Each of these phases requires support so that the actors in the process of innovation do not reject their new tasks, get bored with them, or find it difficult to carry them out.

Nearly twenty years later, a symposium entitled "Autonomy in Language Learning: Experiences, Actors, Resources" was organized in December 2017 in Bolzano (Italy) by Daniela Zambaldi, Director of the Centro Multilingue Bolzano and Mediateca Multilingue Merano (Multilingual Language Centre Bolzano and Multimedia Language Centre Merano). The symposium brought together participants from a variety of backgrounds (practitioners and researchers) and revealed that the issue of self-directed learning as an innovation is still relevant in many institutional contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> *Mélanges Crapel* n°24, « De l'apprentissage autodirigé considéré comme une innovation », p.91-110, available on line <http://www.atilf.fr/spip.php?article3462>

The articles which were selected from the proposals received following the symposium correspond to varying degrees of progress in the reflection on autonomy or in the coherent establishment of Self-Access Language Learning Centres (henceforth SALCs throughout this issue).

Reading these texts reveals that the questions asked by innovation stakeholders vary substantially, depending on the contexts in which self-directed learning is implemented.

In the first article, an overview of SALCs in Japan, **Jo Mynard** distinguishes three types of SALCs, and explains an initial delay in Japan due to prevalent representations and beliefs about language learning in this country. It also shows that these beliefs are changing, on the one hand through research, and on the other hand through new priorities of universities and government agencies, which are contributing to the evolution of SALCs. She concludes with possible future research directions for Japanese researchers.

**Daniela Zambaldi, Maria Giovanna Tassinari and Emmanuelle Carette** suggest opportunities for reflection on the evolution of the notion of autonomy and its reception by learners and society, as well as the means that can be implemented to contribute to its dissemination, by describing the creation and development of two public resource centres for language learning. Daniela Zambaldi, the director of the two centres, strives to remain open to new ways of approaching language learning and learning, by integrating the resources present in the territory and thus opening the doors of the centres to public spaces. These attitude and practices are in line with what Holec (1999) writes:

*In the integration phase, it is necessary to ensure the survival of the changes introduced, i.e. not to fix as they stand the new situation created, which cannot remain unchanged and must therefore be able to evolve over time, but to avoid a return to the previous situation. (Holec, 1999: 105)*

The following article discusses the creation and development of a SALC in a university, a widespread context in SALC scientific research. **Luisa Maria Sartirana** illustrates the theoretical framework for the creation of the SALC, and highlights the evolution of its structure and organization according to the learning needs of students and to their representations, as well as the representations of university administration. Despite frequent technical developments and organizational choices

within universities that contravene the goal of learner empowerment, the author's intention remains to promote a dynamic and responsible learning culture by investing in teacher training and student support.

The article by **Renata Cavosi** and **Laura Cont** takes us back to the two public centres run by Daniela Zambaldi. They provide a detailed description of advising sessions for German which took place for almost a year, following the learners in their learning project. The interest of the article lies precisely in the elements studied, which relate participation in SALC advising sessions to the gender, age, level of study and objectives of learners in these centres open to the whole population.

**Marina Mozzon McPherson's** article provides a direction for research on an innovative topic: the impact of mindfulness practice on the professional development of advisors. Based on a state-of-the-art review of the practice of mindfulness, of its contribution in helping high school students overcome the stress related to their living conditions, studies and personal development, and of the role of emotions in language learning, the author arrives at the context of advising for language learning. By highlighting points of convergence between the advisor's professional and personal skills and the benefits of mindfulness, she suggests ways to develop research on the interaction between the two fields.

**Martina Šindelářová Skupeňová's** article also focuses on the advisor's professional development, here through an autobiographical reflection in which she describes her path to become a language learning advisor. Through several stages of professional development as well as the emotional states she goes through, she manages to question her own way of advising. Through these particularly interesting reflections for teachers engaging in advising practice, she shows us the beginning of an endless process of training.

Finally, we hope that the reader will find elements in this issue to redefine and complement the concepts of Self-directed Learning, Self-Access Language Centre, and ideas to continue research on what still appears as an innovation. In any case, it is clear that neither reflection nor research are meaningful without reference to a given context, which it is important to always carefully specify.