

## **ICT PARADOXES FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF AUTONOMY TRAINING AND PLURILINGUALISM**

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### Résumé

Notre expérience à propos de l'introduction des TIC comme un outil dans les plans d'apprentissage personnels des apprenants de l'Université Jaume I, nous a conduits à réfléchir sur la relation entre Autonomie et TIC dans un contexte multiculturel et multilingue. Face à une idéologie de la rapidité et de l'efficacité, la présente réflexion met en question certains usages du terme *autonomie* dans le domaine de l'Apprentissage Assisté par Ordinateur, tout en soulignant l'importance d'une récupération des sources du Socioconstructivisme et de la Pensée Critique qui se trouvent à la base de la Formation à l'Autonomie. Par ailleurs, l'analyse des parcours et des stratégies d'apprentissage de différents types d'apprenants permet de constater que les effets d'amplification des TIC sur le triangle pédagogique supposent un enjeu pour le développement de nouveaux savoirs et savoir faire reliés à la compétence d'apprentissage autonome: a) la gestion de la complexité, b) le développement de la pensée critique ; c) la capacité de mettre en question les propres représentations, de les négocier et de prendre en compte les différences au cours des échanges interactifs.

### Abstract

The experience of introducing ICT as a tool in student learning plans in the Universitat Jaume I has led us to reflect on the relationship between autonomy and ICT in a multicultural and multilingual setting. Contrary to an ideology based upon the concepts of speed and efficiency, the present reflection leads us to consider the use of the term autonomy within the area of CALL, and to recall the sources of socio-constructivism and critical thought, which are found in the origins of learning autonomy. Our analysis of different types of learners' learning process allows us to conclude that the amplifying effects of ICT on the pedagogical triangle pose new challenges to the development of autonomising skills related to: a) the management of complexity; b) the development of critical thought; and c) the acquisition of the capacity for questioning one's previous representations, negotiating them and dealing with differences arising in the course of the interaction.

## Introduction

Faced with the simplicity of an idyllic representation of unilingualism that fosters the advocacy of a lingua franca as a common code, 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium communicative culture has become a complex culture, with all the etymological gravity the term implies. The reality of heteroglossia and the growing importance of exolingual communication are unquestionable indicators of the need for plurilingual competence amongst European citizens within the context of a culturally multilingual Europe. Specifically, two of the characteristics required by this competence are the development of learning autonomy and the consideration of linguistic competence as a complex competence. In addition, the increasing presence and use of ICT as tools for communication and language learning forces us to reflect on these aspects and to look for linking and integration concepts that will help to bring together and distinguish the different conceptions underlying the ever-growing use of the term autonomy in the field of computer aided language teaching-learning (T-L).

The development of an autonomous learning skill requires the learner to adopt an attitude of responsibility for learning that is also closely related to the metacognitive skill of reflecting on the very actions of learning. ICT offer the learner-user multiple communicative possibilities and tools to adapt learning to diverse situations. Through the use of ICT, the potential time and space for learning are extended, the sources and forms of counselling can become more flexible and a potential arena is opened up in which the learner might take decisions. However, the multiplicity of opportunities for action, the apparent immediacy between action and result, and the identification of efficacy and speed as evaluation criteria lead to the paradoxical situation in which ICT encourage learning behaviour where irreflexive action prevails.

The construction of plurilingual competence as an integrated skill cannot be separated from the development of autonomy and metacognitive ability. It is therefore of utmost importance that the role of ICT, their limitations, and what they offer are approached from this perspective.

### 1. The paradigm of complexity—unilingualism vs plurilingualism

The tendency to turn English into a lingua franca coexists with the reality of plurilingualism across the globe. According to an FAO report from the 1980s, more than 60% of the world's population is plurilingual, particularly in Asian and African regions with high rates of demographic growth. In Europe and America, phenomena of bilingualism are far from exceptional, as is clearly stated by the Common European Framework of Reference for the learning and teaching of languages in Europe (J. Trim, 1998: 33):

*European society is and will remain multilingual and multicultural. To move with increasing freedom and independence within it, individuals as social agents need to become increasingly plurilingual and pluricultural. Users should note that multi- is used here for the co-existence of a number of languages and cultures in a society, whereas pluri- is used for the knowledge of a number of languages and cultures by an individual. An individual can be plurilingual in a monolingual society and conversely an individual may remain unilingual in a multilingual society. Our concern is with the plurilingual development of present and future citizens in our multilingual European society.*

The ultimate objective is therefore to achieve social multilingualism and multiculturalism in a multilingual Europe, and the plurilingualism of its citizens. This aim clearly questions the appropriateness of unilingualism as an ideal state, a state that God punished in Old Testament Babel. As elucidated by Georges Lüdi and Bernard Py (1995, 1999), the message given by the divine castigation was reinforced at the time by the ideology underlying the birth of European nation-states, which used the existence of a national language as an argument to claim political unity. According to this ideology, linguistic and political territories constitute a single reality. As early as 1492, Antonio de Nebrija stated: "Language has always been the companion of Empire". Paradoxically, it should be remembered that all great empires in ancient times were plurilingual.

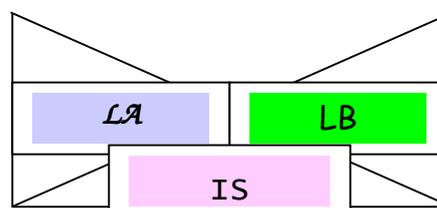
The phenomena of migration and population mobility propagate the richness and variety of communicative situations, specifically evident in the growing number of speakers who use a non-native language as their language of communication. This is known as *alloglossia*.

All recent studies within the field of bilingualism carried out in contexts of linguistic complexity in Canada, Switzerland or the USA (W. Lambert et al, 1963; C. Faerch & G. Kasper, 1983; G. Lüdi & B. Py, 1986; M. Siguan, 1987; J-F. de Pietro, 1988; J. Cummins, 1991; R. Landry et al, 1991) as well as studies on bilingual or plurilingual families (E. Harding-Esch & P. Riley, 2003; E. Esch 2000, 2003) provide sufficient data to support the positive influence of bilingualism and plurilingualism on cognitive development.

Where then, does monolingual ideology come from? This ideologically biased conception supports certain commonplace assumptions that lead many people to represent different language competences according to the following image:



This representation considers bilingualism and plurilingualism as cognitive overloads compared to unilingualism as an ideal situation. The above-mentioned works have shown, however, that there is an association between bilingualism and the ability to solve problems where no single solution is envisaged, but rather various possible answers should be imagined. One example of this is the test performed with children in which they are asked to imagine the possible uses for a cup (C. Baker, 1988; L. Ricciardelli, 1992). At the same time, skills associated with diagrammatic representation, spatial perception and perception of situational richness or cognitive skills related to linguistic operations are all found to be heightened (E. Bialystok, 1987, 1988, 1991). According to these studies, bilinguals and plurilinguals integrate linguistic representations (J. Cummins, 1991) as outlined in the following table, where IS stands for Linguistic Competence Integrated System, and differs from the sum of LA + LB:



This comes as no surprise if we consider that the development of linguistic and communicative competence shares general or common ground. In some countries, such as Denmark or Luxembourg, and at certain educational levels, the amount of time spent on second and third languages exceeds that devoted to the first language.

As we have seen, one ideological representation considers unilingualism as the original, perfect and ideal situation, and plurilingualism a perversion of it. This representation would therefore attempt to re-establish a mythical unity through the search for a “universal language of communication”. According to the alternative view, however, as put by Umberto Eco, the prototypical case is assumed to be plurilingualism, from which bilingualism is a variation, while unilingualism would be an extreme case brought about by specific cultural circumstances. This point of view leads us to reconsider the myth of Babel from another angle, and re-evaluate the reality of plurilingualism.

Disregard for the reality of heteroglossia is linked to a view of globalisation as a huge single market that, in theory, would benefit from the use of a single language. Other interpretations, however, represent a notion of globalisation with a sense of community of communication and constantly renegotiated intercultural values. Arising from this debate, the French term *mondialisation* has been suggested to differentiate between the two views. Whatever the case, globalisation is related to the growing need for foreign language use. If we analyse the need for contact between peoples and linguistic communities, we must accept the interpretation of globalisation in terms of language and cultural contact, and of interculturality understood as complex thought.

The epistemological bases of complex thought (E. Morin, 1993) are grounded in two revolutions: the *quantum revolution*, which broke down any mechanistic illusion of how the universe is represented, and the *systemic revolution*. The quantum revolution established principles such as those of indeterminacy and uncertainty, and the principle of non-separability of quantum systems. The latter establishes that the whole is much greater than the sum of its parts and that it is impossible to allocate an isolated objective description to an element of reality. From the point of view of language, numerous manifestations of this principle can be found in the construction of meaning in texts, the coherence of which is more than the sum of the enunciation. We believe it may also be applied to plurilingual competence as an integrated competence, the result of which is greater than the sum or the combination of competences in L1, L2, L3, etc. The systemic revolution on the other hand establishes the need to consider *context* when arriving at an explanation of a problem, whether it be linguistic, psychological, economic or physical. Within the field of communication and language learning, the interactional perspective cannot be isolated from the building of linguistic competence. This happens in at least three dimensions: a) the *pedagogical dimension*, which from a socio-constructivist perspective must take an ecological approach, adapted to the context and learners' characteristics; b) the *learning dimension*, which cannot be conceived without communicative action and interaction among equals, and also involves the development of a capacity to learn from situations of language use and linguistic exchange; c) the *communication dimension*, as a renegotiation of identities in interactive episodes, which has certain implications for the conception of plurilingual

competence as an intercultural and mediating competence.

A reflection on the relationships between this plurilingual conception of learning in a multicultural and multilingual context and the concept of autonomy now follows.

## **2. Autonomy, critical thought, and the culture of negotiation and mediation**

In recent years the use of terms related to *autonomy* and *self-instruction* has become widespread, in both institutional teaching and business fields. Unfortunately, the interest expressed in these concepts is often based on criteria of profitability. Self-guided learning systems are assumed to enable a maximum use of material resources with minimum staff requirements. This approach to autonomy comes from what might be called “superficial thinking” or “speed and product ideology”. However, the concept of autonomy has been associated from the outset to very different epistemological, psychopedagogical and ethical paradigms.

In order to understand autonomy, we have to adopt a globalising, contextualising and complex way of thinking. Linking pieces of knowledge, placing concepts in wider frameworks, analysing and differentiating without separating; these are the challenges we should be reflecting on. It is not enough to simply juxtapose or add on pieces of knowledge; “linking operators” must be constructed between disciplines. In order to think about autonomy we must be able to contemplate tackling interdisciplinarity from a reconceptualisation of the T-L practice.

Although this article does not set out to give an analysis of the philosophical nuances of the concept of autonomy, it may be interesting to remember that this notion has been historically linked to the reflections on the awareness of thought itself, the relationships with power, and the potential for the rational grounding of individual behaviour by subjects who freely form part of a community with which they establish relationships of reciprocity. Indeed, the concept of autonomy may be taken as far back as Socrates’ dialogical conception of knowledge construction; he encouraged rational self-examination in his disciples through irony and maieutics. The philosophical meaning of autonomy within 18<sup>th</sup> century Enlightenment thought may also be mentioned. According to Kantian thought, autonomy of reason implies rationality and freedom, the foundations of morality. In 1793, Kant condemned paternal government as contrary to all human dignity. Subjects are coerced as though they were children, behaving passively while the king or the Church teaches them how to achieve happiness. Kant maintained that there could be no higher despotism. The Enlightenment claimed the right to free thought and free examination for all individuals. Since everybody has the capacity to think for themselves, nobody can be coerced into thinking what they do not think, or believing what they do not believe. We should also bear in mind Voltaire’s famous statement in his *Treaty on Tolerance* (1763): “I may not agree with what you say, but will defend to the death your right to say it”. A characteristic that reason shares with light is its proclivity to spread; in the same way, the right to free expression as a condition for education and for the progress of mankind will also be demanded. Because it is applicable to everyone, the law must belong to everyone. It cannot be decreed by one individual. One person’s will cannot be imposed on everyone else; rather the common will must

be imposed on each and every member of society. Therefore, the autonomy of the (rational) subject becomes incompatible with his or her submission. These are the widely known views on education that Rousseau proposes in *Émile*.

This view of autonomy, linked to the awareness of each individual's own rationality and freedom, to the notion of citizenship and to the ethics of negotiation and dialogue, comes back in our times in the thought of Habermas (1991) and Lévinas (1991). These two philosophers have become a point of reference for any reflection on the issues of communication in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. Both defend the ethics of language and dialogue in a world where diversity and "foreignness", to be regarded as the other, are a dimension of humankind and citizenship. The Other is an alterity with whom I can *talk*. Habermas and Lévinas bring forward an "intersubjective" version of human rights through the ethics of communication.

Developing the capacity to argue, to understand the arguments of the other or others by working together to seek out links, is part of the development of an ethical consciousness of communication that is tied up with the development of multilingual and mediation competence. *Developing a mediation culture involves adopting critical thought on communication, on interaction and on learning*. The notion that the development of autonomy studies is inseparable from a capacity to participate critically in social interaction has been held for some time in this area of study (D. Little, 1995; W. Littlewood, 2002). This critical point of view is characterised by its complexity, since it must combine a capacity for both reflection and self-knowledge with communicative action. Particularly in exolingual communicative situations, collaboration in building a communicative episode always involves the renegotiation of communication roles and, to do that, a capacity to carry out seemingly opposed movements is vital: *becoming aware of what one does and distancing oneself from one's own behaviour, decentring and reorganising one's own reasons, acting and reflecting*.

All these *thought-word-action* skills are inconceivable if learning is not understood to include the development of autonomy. Being able to self-manage communicative resources is part of a metacognitive and metalinguistic ability that is found at the very heart of autonomy, as a progressive capacity to be responsible for one's own learning. Self-managing learning involves taking a step back, adopting a specific point of view to evaluate process and results, and being willing to take risks freely along the lifelong learning path. However, this decision cannot be made if the conditions are not in place to make this choice. At least two factors must be taken into account in this respect:

- the context within which the learning process takes place;
- autonomy training as a step from a teaching culture towards a learning culture.

With regard to autonomy training as deconditioning from a teaching culture, the new realities should promote the inclusion of new skills in the process, or of now more complex old skills that require a new approach within the ICT and exolingual communication framework:

- multilingual and multicultural mediation skills within exolingual

- communication;
- the skills typical of an integrated plurilingual competence, which promote different strategies in an *alloglossic* situation;
- critical skills to manage information sources;
- strategic information organisation and “appropriation” skills;
- skills in the selection of the guidance, counselling or “accompanying” forms in accordance with learning contexts and objectives.

### **3. Autonomy, interaction and self-knowledge**

*To learn it, do it!* (Robert Schank).

*Two birds, inseparably united companions, inhabit the same tree; one eats the fruit of the tree, the other looks on without eating.* (Atharva Veda, Mundaka Upanishad)

If there is a situation where the tension between action and metacognitive reflection is brought to the fore, it is manifest in the use of ICT supports in language learning, be they learning software or internet use (D. Little, 1996). Hindu iconography shows that the two birds mentioned in the Atharva Veda are in fact only one, sometimes represented as a two-headed bird, or one with two intertwined necks. The viewer and the participant are the same bird, in the same way that action, thought and language make up one unit (L. Vygotski, 1979; J. Bruner, 1984).

The term metacognition has been used in psychology since the 1970s. Flavell et al (1977) first introduced the notion of metamemory to refer to the knowledge individuals have of their own memory. Metamemory is our consciousness of our own knowledge and all that is relevant to the register, storage and recovery of information. Metacognition is the ability to know and acknowledge our own states and cognitive processes (A. Brown et al, 1983). These skills are obviously closely related to the processual learning of autonomy. A number of studies have focused on the subject of metacognition within this field (M. Oscarson, 1984; L. Wilkins, 1997; A. Wenden, 1999, 2002)

The awareness of our own learning is closely related to the development of the metacognitive ability, ie the ability to reflect on the learning strategies used and the targets set with the purpose of being able to self-evaluate acquisition. It is of course possible to help develop the metacognitive ability by providing metalinguistic tools, criteria on the communicative workings of languages, notions on the different learning strategies according to objectives (oral or written, understanding or producing, interactive or non-interactive situations, etc). This has been carried out in numerous experiences, including in the business world, that have offered training modules on autonomy.<sup>1</sup> However, it must be taken into account that the mind only remembers what it does; experience is the mind at work and experience is what will be remembered. The memory's syntax is related to meaning and use, and the development of metacognition will therefore be more significant if it is integrated into the student's own learning practice, and if the learning materials take into account planning, reflection on tasks, reorientation and self-assessment as part of the activities used in language communication.

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<sup>1</sup> Such as the CRAPEL experience with Renault employees.

Historically, the shift towards a learner-centred approach has been accompanied by an emphasis on the learning processes and an incorporation of the socio-constructivist points of view into L2 didactics. Already by the end of the 1970s, when T-L methodologies began to suggest that the focal point should be the learner, the *apprenti* or *apprenant*, the *aprendiz* or *aprendiente*, a pedagogical perspective taking a constructivist and socio-constructivist tradition was being reclaimed, a perspective that emphasises the processual aspect and diversity. The concept of pedagogical mediation also came under discussion; in other words, how the student's construction of significant knowledge might be favoured by teaching methods and by counselling.

The evolution of communicative approaches from the 1980s onwards can be described as a growing integration of cognitive and metacognitive factors, with a progressive emphasis on the development of a learning consciousness. Communicative competence, understood in its triple dimension (*strategic*, *discursive* and *cultural*), and metacognitive ability appear as inseparable. Indeed, the most recent models for learning through tasks and projects incorporate methodological and metacognitive aspects that concern the development of work plans, selection of tools to carry out the task, ways of doing the work, and the assessment and reorientation of the process (B. Kumaravadivelu, 1994, 2002).

The communicative dimension and the reflective, self-reflective dimension are two aspects of the same personal development (the two birds are in fact just one in the Atharva Veda). However, the ideology of speed criticised by Weinrich (1999) in *Éloge de la Lenteur* is also an ideology of superficiality, an ideology concerned with the quick result of action in terms of winner / loser and not as processual and negotiated approximations in what concerns interactions and the learner's interlanguage phases.

This ideology of speed appears to be reinforced by ICT, in which the terms self-learning or CALL are often perceived as synonyms for:

- more efficacy, understood as maximum resource profitability;
- individualisation, solitary or collective use of teaching products in any place at any time;
- speed of access and multiplication of the number of users of the teaching object.

#### **4. Effects of ICT multiplication: reproduction of the same or a resource for change?**

It is true that multimedia and hypermedia resources offer great potential for the development of autonomy because, among other things, they allow us to:

- multiply a diversity of stimuli and resources;
- cater for different paces and needs;
- accommodate a variety of learning styles;
- promote horizontal communication through forums and electronic mail;
- open up a virtual space for intercultural contacts.

However, these advantages are only a theoretical possibility for the development of autonomy since computer resources that are presented as self-learning resources often create a kind of tautological loop, according to which autonomy is assumed to be promoted; but this in fact is an assumption, a requirement, or a condition for its use, since the training for autonomy is not actually dealt with. The real challenge is to integrate these learning products into a personalised learning plan. Any technological product on offer requires an adaptation, a metamorphosis, an element of “do-it-yourself” that learners-users must tackle alone. Learning to bring about this transformation by integrating and harmonising resources in a personalised programme is precisely part of a *training plan* that should develop the ability to select, organise and manage the complexity of the product offered according to the learner’s own goals.

We believe that the boom in ICTs has been impregnated with a certain fetishism as far as their application to language teaching-learning is concerned. However, as we have already pointed out, introducing ICT does not automatically guarantee a mobilisation of the representations on languages and on their learning by those who conceive the products or learners themselves. Both tend to reproduce aspects of a teaching culture even though, at least potentially, ICTs offer new possibilities for interaction, access to information and communication, and knowledge management.

From the point of view of autonomy training there are three aspects that show how some software or CALL proposals involve “a repetition of the same”:

- a) *A linear and atomised conception* of the learning proposals, which brings about a disintegrated vision of learning in which activities are presented as a mosaic, as a collage. This does not help build up an integrated view of how languages work (R. Phillipson et al, 1991). It is precisely the ability to globalise and generalise that enables transfers to take place and, therefore, the ability to learn in an increasingly autonomous way.
- b) *A minimalist conception* (J. Tardif, 2002) of grammar activities, almost exclusively centred around sentence grammar. This does not make it easy to establish relationships between comprehension and production activities, and textual grammar. A semantic and pragmatic, not exclusively formal, approach would enable a real interaction between the learner and texts, thus promoting hypothesis construction and the development of autonomy.
- c) *A tautological conception* that leads to the increasing likelihood of proposals appearing on the web where autonomy is assumed, yet is at the same time taken as a learning goal. Packages are labelled as “self-learning” or “autonomous learning” although they do not deal with autonomy as an objective requiring an accompanying training process, but assume the user has already acquired it. The perverse effect is that the behaviours reproduced by the user are those derived from a teaching culture. It is not sufficient simply to say that it is a good idea to develop learning strategies and to provide a link to the dictionary definition. In order to learn how to use a variety of resources in different ways, an interactive

process is required that builds up significant (operational) knowledge on how to learn knowledge, specifically with ICT.

From 2000 to 2004, the GIAPEL group at the Universitat Jaume I carried out a research-action programme with SMAIL software<sup>2</sup> (M-L. Villanueva & M. Sanz, 2002), which was conceived to help promote the building up of a plurilingual competence. Diversified learning proposals based on authentic documents from various genres in French, English and German were provided, with methodological help designed to promote learning transfer. These could be used via a range of itineraries. Our conclusions largely confirm the importance of the role of representations on languages, on their learning and on the use of computer supports with regard to learning. Students familiar with ICT associate these technologies with practices that prioritise speed, and see the result or product in terms of victory / failure, winner / loser. Causing these representations to evolve is, as Gremmo and Riley (1997) point out, a slow process that involves learning moments, and reflection and analysis moments. Those who conceive these systems must carry out research into use and learning processes, and advisors, not only from the point of view of virtual mediation but also through personal interaction and the creation of reflection and exchange sessions involving learners themselves.

ICTs are an interesting tool with which to consider diversity. They have an amplifying effect on the field of experience through texts (generic variations, writing-image-sound combinations) as well as the potential to multiply documentation sources. However, ICTs do not modify practices or automatically shape autonomous behaviour, although it is true that they require an active attitude and strong involvement on the part of learners-users.

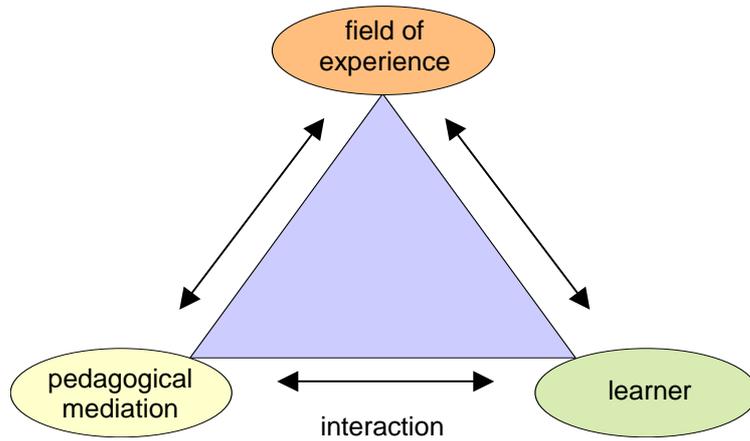
In effect, learners use the consultation, communication and production functions of web and SMAIL materials according to various means of appropriation constructed under the influence of previous representations. The four examples presented in the Appendix come from our case study in SMAIL experimentation and illustrate the influence that representations on language and learning have when learning takes place with the help of computer resources. It is pertinent to note that the most autonomous students are those who better accept and get more out of ICT language learning applications. In contrast, the multiplicity of information and the variety of resources, even when help in their classification and methodological guidance is given, overwhelm students with more dependent learning habits. ICTs do not generate autonomous behaviour; rather they require new approaches to autonomy training. These approaches are:

- learning how to manage complexity;
- developing critical and creative thought;
- learning how to manage interaction.

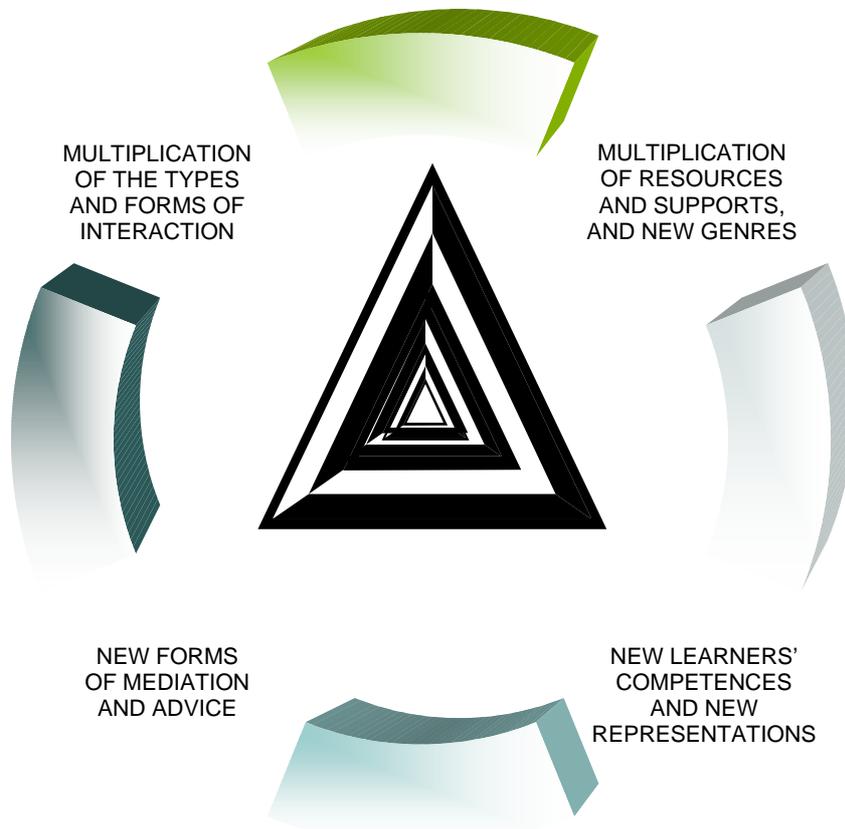
In fact, the use of new technologies in learning has a multiplying effect on the three vertices of the pedagogical triangle:

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<sup>2</sup> Multimedia System for Interactive Language Learning (French, English, German) (Sistema Multimedia para el Aprendizaje Interactivo de Lenguas, SMAIL). R+D project, TIC2000-1182, Ministry of Science and Technology, Spain.



As Jeanne-Marie Debaisieux observed at the 2004 TAAAL Conference,<sup>3</sup> there is a multiplication of resources, a multiplication—at least potentially—of expert “advice”, an amplification of contacts among peers (other learners) and with native speakers.



Each one of these amplifying movements forces us to adopt new thinking strategies:

- A reconceptualisation of the classical issues in the discourse on autonomy: methodological competence; development of learning plans and access to

<sup>3</sup> 1st International Conference on ICT and Autonomy Applied to Language Learning (1er Congrès Internacional TIC i Autonomia Aplicades a l'Aprenentatge de Llengües, TAAAL), Universitat Jaume I, Castellón, 26, 27, 28 May 2004.

the variety of assessment criteria available on the web; strategic communicative competence and learning strategic competence; the ability to represent the assessor's objectives and the learner's own objectives; new strategies for retaining the learner's own learning materials for documentation and self-assessment purposes; taking into account the various learning paths and differences in using multimedia possibilities; new forms of pedagogical mediation: the advisor's mediation in ICT environments (e-mail, etc); the mediating mediation and depersonalisation risks (tutorials, software help, etc); mediated mediation (WebCT, etc). Individualism versus personalisation.

- A conceptualisation of new questions: authenticity and the new discourse genres; the workings of hypertext with learning criteria; the management of complexity; virtual learning communities. New peer mediation possibilities: mediation competence and strategic communicative competence in virtual learning communities; intercultural communication on the web; speakers' representations: typicality and personalisation in virtual communication; intercultural competence and the culture of debate and argumentation.

## 5. What we mean when we talk about autonomy

A search for contexts of use around terms such as "autonomy", "self-direction", "training" and CALL in the TAAAL Conference interventions or in articles on the web attempted to assess whether it would be of future interest to carry out a concordance study between terms to identify likely "topic clouds" in various discourses on ICT. An initial approach confirms that the frequency of use and the context in which the terms appear mobilise different topic networks in autonomy discourses, in which similar terms sometimes take on different meanings and values. We now present an illustrative table (see over) on the search for contexts with the MONOCONC programme, some results of which have been organised around two fields: autonomy and CALL.

Most of the criteria in the table have already been dealt with in this paper. We now turn to focus on material authenticity, an important area in proposals for autonomy. From the point of view of autonomy development, approaching languages as spaces within the learning experience prioritises semantic and pragmatic aspects, and therefore learning from an *authentic* field of experience understood as contact with materials and situations that have socially recognisable discursive genres, of communicative situations that bring together the features of real communicative exchange situations. Within the context of autonomy training, the use of authentic documents is most appropriate as they enable new links to be forged between the learner's previous knowledge and their new linguistic experience. This not only facilitates a common meeting ground for languages and keys for the dialogue between learner and advisor, but also enables us to set learning objectives, unfold the appropriate strategies for these objectives and the features of the texts, and adjust the assessment criteria (of the result and the process followed) to the targets set.

However, we are aware of very few papers on generic changes or on the new

forms of the old genres from an autonomous learning perspective. Again, ICT use opens up a space for complexity and multiplicity: multiplicity of access to authentic documents, multiplicity of access to interaction, the chance to reinforce metacognitive ability through experience with others, via dialogue and knowledge of other forms and ways of tackling problems and learning styles, other perceptions of texts and discursive genres, other criteria and uses of formality and courtesy.

<b>+/- focus</b>	<b>+/- frequency</b>	<b>autonomy training</b>	<b>CALL</b>
pedagogical freedom		+	?
pedagogical efficacy		?	+
diversity		+	-
individualisation		-	+
personalisation		+	-
cooperative learning		+	-
collective learning		?	+
methodological training autonomy training		+	?
tutorials		?	+
forms of accompanying and advice		+	?
technical competence		-	+
authentic software		+	-
types of software		?	+
degrees of freedom with respect to self-directed learning		+	?
learning diaries metalanguage		+	?
self-assessment, metacognition		+	?
forms of assessment		+	+
types of training		<i>(cursus)</i>	<i>(curriculum)</i>
qualitative studies		+	-
quantitative studies		-	+

From the paradigm of learning autonomy, ICT may offer an attractive way forward for the intercultural dimension of reflection, since contact between Others encourages relationships between individuals and the enrichment of their own representations.

Some of the issues open to research may be summarised in the following questions:

- The type of pedagogical mediation: is cooperative mediation possible? What forms can it take?
- How is interactive communication between expert and learner affected by computer support? (E-mail; negotiated access to the learning diary; communication tenor and register, didactic or accompanying discourse genres, how to develop on-line help, how advice strategies are affected.

What is the discourse offered by the virtual “advisor”? What are the implications of the construction of a virtual communicative identity?)

- What changes do “traditional” genres go through in the new ICT supports and how do these changes affect the considerations of representations, which are to a greater or lesser extent shared, on discursive genres and text organisation? How is the meeting point of communicative and socio-cultural experiences affected?
- What are the implications of new electronic genres for learning?
- How much tension is found between socio-cultural differences and the tendency to uniformity in the cybergenre?
- What possibilities are opened up for communication and cooperative learning?
- Which new skills related to autonomy development must be faced by an autonomising plan? Technical and methodological skills, skills concerning material and resource search and selection, forms of assessment, etc?
- What representations will be activated in the process of developing these new skills and to what extent will they create conflict situations between two different ways of thinking? On the one hand, the way of thinking related to autonomy, to the development of reflection and, therefore, that which regards a certain “slowness” as a positive value, the stimulus to build up criteria for critical information selection and, on the other hand, the ideology of speed, of the pragmatism of superficiality, of information accumulation as a substitute for the building up of significant knowledge.

## Conclusion

If we accept the logic of this series of questions, the implication is that we already accept a certain conception of autonomy. If, as suggested by Wittgenstein, language has a generative character, ie words are not only the vehicle for thought but also drive it, these questions must be interpreted as spaces to reflect on ICT applications. And this must be done from a conception that seeks to link critical thought and autonomy, by recovering the roots of the concept to deactivate the fallacy that identifies the use of computer technology with autonomous learning.

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## APPENDIX

### Examples of the case study on the SMAIL experience <sup>4</sup>

M.C. Intermediate level B2. Cognitive profile and learning style: active, emotional, synthetic, verbal, deductive, individualist, teacher dependent.

- M.C. chooses paths other than those resulting from the tests and surveys of the SMAIL system. She prefers “a well established progression that follows on from simple to complex” (another option provided by SMAIL). She prefers “to always go forward, without looking back, without reflecting on what has already been done or taking risks down unknown paths”. However, she likes to “give her opinion on the learning plan”. She starts by exploring all grammar and lexical training resources. After the advisory session, she says, “I think I could start reading argumentative texts from the virtual library, maybe, at some point”. This over-careful reaction matches her psychological profile, but it is also related to a representation of language learning according to which grammar and lexis must be thoroughly known before tasks regarded as more complex, such as reading a text, are attempted. However, the synthetic capacity this student shows could enable her to carry out more global tasks by turning to different sources of information. Her advisor suggested trying out this type of activities.

M.T. Beginner A2. Cognitive profile and learning style: active, emotional, analytic, visual, deductive, cooperative, teacher dependent.

- Despite his degree of dependency, SMAIL advised M.T. to take a path the system metaphorically calls “a traveller with his/her own opinions” as this student’s aims were very well defined. In effect, what M.T. assesses most positively from the software is precisely “the possibility of choosing the activity you find most interesting”. However, M.T. decided to take the path corresponding to “a traveller who loves clearly marked paths”. He justifies his selection in the learning diary: “I prefer this path because what I want to learn is grammar, that’s where I have more problems”. In his assessment of written comprehension activities, he states: “I have not done any because they are not connected to language knowledge but to other types of knowledge or opinions”.

A.V. Advanced beginner A2-Intermediate B1. Cognitive profile and learning style: active, emotional, synthetic, verbal, inductive, cooperative, intermediate degree of autonomy.

- A.V. consults SMAIL resources and internet sites recommended by SMAIL in order to continue his learning autonomously. He often uses the learning diary for different purposes: to establish his learning plan, to write down the materials selected, to take notes from group reflection sessions, to prepare new sessions with the advisor and draw up new learning plans, to open new folders in which to store written production activities. He starts the

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<sup>4</sup> The letters A, B and C correspond to the nomenclature used in the Common European Framework of Reference for languages. The data on learning styles and degree of autonomy come from tests taken from SMAIL.

writing of an argumentative text by translating a text that he has previously written in Spanish. A.V. usually uses Catalan for metacognitive reflections and to take notes; the use of Spanish in this case may be explained by the fact that he worked with an automatic translator without the Catalan-French option: <http://www.freetranslation.com>. He states: “automatic translation may be a good starting point from which to revise my text later and focus better on the difficulties and requests for help”. It is interesting to point out that, despite his level of French, he evaluates the text provided by the automatic translator as not being highly reliable, and he asks the advisor to correct the text and check whether the translation expresses what he wanted to get over. His cooperative and emotional style plays an important role in his need to communicate his opinion to the rest of the group. His text deals precisely with communication problems and linguistic barriers. He finds the information on the web sites, classified and commented on, to be “very useful”. However, he only values the learning diary as “useful” although he uses it often and very meticulously.

P.T. Intermediate level B1-B2. Cognitive profile and learning style: active, emotional, verbal, inductive, analytical, cooperative, autonomous.

- P.T. does comprehension activities on various texts. She chooses grammar exercises that are related to the texts chosen (passive construction). She searches the internet to obtain complementary information on the content of the texts. P.T. sets out to write various argumentative texts that she classifies according to a genres of discourse criterion: “I am writing a review on the Goya film awards”. She writes down in her diary the research carried out on conjugation and grammar aspects in the text writing process. She establishes new learning targets taking into account the difficulties encountered. She sometimes makes lists of the activities carried out, giving the date and no other comments. “I listened to extracts from Chateaubriand and Mérimée, and I did grammar exercises on the *passé composé, imparfait*, 4/2/03”; “we did conversation practice at the CAL<sup>5</sup> and we looked at the materials available there, 5/2/03”. P.T. gives the impression of taking on tasks of great diversity, both in the type of activities and the topics and kinds of supports. She also shows an independent field style: she establishes relationships between the texts suggested by the software and her personal readings. She takes a cooperative attitude and brings texts to expand the group’s shared library. She positively assesses the tools that enable her to reflect on her own characteristics as a learner and states that she had been unaware of this approach to learning: “it was a nice surprise”. She finds that the knowledge provided by the software, as well as the information on the available resources on the web and the guidance on working methods, are going to help her continue learning in a semi-autonomous way. She insists on the importance of the advisor’s role as a support to autonomous learning.

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