Journal of Modern Education Review, ISSN 2155-7993, USA
April 2016, Volume 7, No. 4, pp. 255–263
Doi: 10.15341/jmer(2155-7993)/04.07.2017/004

http://www.academicstar.us

Promoting Learner Autonomy in EAP Courses for Arab Students

Filomachi Spathopoulou
(American University of the Middle East, Kuwait)

Abstract: Learner autonomy has been a matter of interest among educators in a variety of teaching contexts; however, providing autonomy in the context of EAP can be rather daunting especially when it involves accommodating cultural particularities. This article will look into the challenge of promoting learner autonomy on EAP courses for Arab students. It will analyze learning habits, preconceived learner and instructor roles, as well as cultural and societal limitations. It will also suggest the use of authentic/real life projects and explain how they can help ensure learner autonomy while at the same time turning cultural limitations into useful learning and teaching tools. The article will also focus on motivational patterns and will highlight their correlation with learner confidence and ownership of learning. The article will include a brief review of the existing literature but will mainly focus on the practical aspects and will discuss real problems.

Key words: learner autonomy, Arab students, EAP, alternative assessment

1. Introduction

Learner autonomy is defined as “a matter of the learner’s psychological relation to the content and process of learning” (Scharle & Szabo, 2000, p. 76). Learner autonomy is an issue much talked about, particularly when it comes to teaching English for Academic purposes. Learning is part of a learner’s integrated identity where some level of autonomy is significant. However, providing sufficient autonomy to learners doing an English course, especially English for Academic Purposes, is problematic for many reasons. One of the challenges is that EAP is not only emphasized by the undifferentiated unitary mass but also deals with different subject-specific literacies (Alexander et al., 2008). The primary aim of EAP is to provide students with language support for pursuing learning of other subjects in English. Besides, the study course is often designed through assessment of the learners’ needs. The reasons why EAP programs generally encourage instrumental motivation can be quite obvious; however, it is also important to note that EAP courses also provide real-life parameters which can set the ground for structuring a task-based syllabus that assesses specific language outcomes. The problem is that very often these courses fail to produce the outcomes they are designed to, and a rather large percentage of students face serious difficulties in their undergraduate courses, which can become highly problematic for all involved (Blue, 1993). In such cases, what institutions and tutors often do is blame students’ poor English language skills, and suggest that adding more hours of language tuition might be the solution. However, according to Sowden this does not always help (Sowden, 2003). So, what is to be done when students fail? How can we account for students’ failure to achieve the required level of competency? Does the answer lie in the students’ lack of the appropriate

Filomachi Spathopoulou, Ph.D. in English, American University of the Middle East; research areas/interests: students’ motivation, EAP, cultural teaching, alternative assessment. E-mail: Filomachi.spathopoulou@aum.edu.kw.

language skills, or should one look into the students learning behavior? Ballard (1996) suggests that often students perform below standard not because their language skills are poor but mainly because in Western term they are simply weak students. In the case of Arab students they come from a culture which does not value self-direction or independent thinking; students are not trained in how to use sources while at the same time avoiding plagiarism; they cannot use evidence in a critical way so as to form original arguments. Therefore, blaming students' academic problems solely on their level of English represents a rush to judgement to say the least. The problem is much deeper. Students need to adjust to an academic culture that is totally new. They need to adopt a different way of thinking and of processing information. Analyzing the importance of culture in Language Teaching, Kramsch (1993) talked about a third place, somewhere between the learners' native culture and the target culture that learners must define for themselves. It is this "middle landscape" that will provide the fertile ground necessary for learning to take place. If this process is successful, then it should be possible for students to use English effectively in an Academic context.

Considering the above, one can easily realize that fulfilling the expectations and needs of students while at the same time developing their autonomy on EAP courses is a complicated task (Alexander et al., 2008). Over the past several years, the term "learning autonomy" has dominated the field of foreign language education and particularly when the focus has been set on lifelong learning skills. The term has been widely used; however, there have been different divergent interpretations. A foundational definition describes autonomy as an individual's ability to take control of his/her learning through planning, choosing materials, controlling his/her progress through continuous self-assessment (Holec, 1981). Moreover, it can also be defined as, involving "the capacity for detachment, reflection, making decisions and taking independent action" (Little, 1991, p. 78). Whichever way one uses to define learner autonomy it will include key ideas like "control, responsibility, learner training, collaboration and critical reflection", which are also key terms in the literature on autonomy from a wider perspective (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Benson, 2001; White, 2003). Holec (1981) believes that autonomy is not simply about becoming responsible for one's own learning. It is rather more about a learner's ability to be in control of the learning process. In order to achieve this, learners must be equipped with tools that will enable them to take control. Broady and Kenning (1996) and Hurd (2000) claim that helping students develop certain strategies that will allow them to achieve autonomy becomes very important. Based on this background, this paper examines the challenges of encouraging and promoting learner autonomy on EAP courses for Arab students while considering learning habits, preconceived instructor roles and learner roles as well as societal and cultural limitations. Furthermore, it suggests the use of real-life projects as a means of improving learner autonomy. The paper also focuses on motivational patterns highlighting their correlation with ownership and learner confidence.

2. Brief Review of the Existing Literature

The development of the concept of learner autonomy has heretofore been aided by significant contributions from a variety of fields, with political science, philosophy, sociology and psychology all playing a part. The post-world war two periods provided fundamental theoretical shifts, and their effects on the development of the concept of learning autonomy and in particular in the field of education have been substantial. The primary paradigm shift took place in the area of psychology from the perception of a behaviorist to that of a humanist and then to the perception of the cognitivist (Ridley et al., 2003). The behaviorists perceived learning as a phenomenon which is malleable and externally controllable. On the other hand, the cognitivist and humanist

perceptions approached learning as a capacity that people possess and a social phenomenon that essentially occurs through interactions that are meaningful. Such paradigm drifts not only resulted in the development of learner-focused education. They also enabled the preparation for communicative approaches that considered the aspects of communication, interaction and learning autonomy, as well as the learning needs of individuals.

The other major influence was from the area of political science. The interest in the rights of minorities began to influence the policies of governments. That had an underlying impact on how adult education developed in Europe and resulted in the emergence of the concept of learning autonomy (Riley et al., 1989). The first influence manifested itself at the level of an institution at the inception of Centre de Recherchesetd' Applications Pedagogies en Languages. To widen access to learning and promote lifelong learning values, an adult center was developed to enable learning of foreign languages without direct instructor instruction. There, they were able to make a distinction between the self-directed learning, literally referred to as a desirable learning behavior or situation, and learner autonomy referring to the capacity for behavior (Ferlazzo, 2013). On the other hand, the concept of EAP first manifested itself at the level of an institution when the British organization focusing on special English language materials for students in an overseas university (SELOUS) was founded. According to the English Teaching Information Centre, known as ETIC, EAP primarily focuses on the communication skills that are particularly needed for studying in English formal learning systems (Scharle & Szabo, 2000).

3. The Challenge of Promoting Learner Autonomy in EAP Courses for Arab Students.

Today, one can find a good number of higher academic institutions in the countries within the Gulf Cooperation Council, which borders the Arabian Gulf: Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Oman, and Qatar. Most of them have EAP as a requirement for their student bodies. Most of the training is conducted in English; therefore, English language courses are a requirement for most of the institutions (Ferlazzo, 2013). Once the courses are completed, students must endeavor as best as they can to meet the demands of studying the major of their choice. The development in quality English language learning, however, does not meet the needs of the Arab society. In the process of studying English for Academic Purposes, both students and teachers are met with several challenges which are not always easy to overcome.

4. Learning Habits

The majority of the Arab students have limited English proficiency since the English curriculum is only provided in the early years of their low secondary education. This has a major impact on their learning habits when adults. Most of the students do not make an attempt to practice speaking English with the native speakers claiming that the environment is not suitable, and the classrooms are often too crowded to provide a supportive learning environment. The students fear speaking English primarily because they lack the confidence but also because they experience feelings of shame deriving from the fear of making mistakes. The Arabian curriculum can also work as a barrier for students since it fails to motivate or help them improve their English language skills. In this way students develop the perception that the English language is difficult to learn (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014).

Another challenge in their study of English comes from their study habits and learning styles. The Arab culture is believed to be an oral communication culture. Arabs like getting involved in long conversations, and debates and discussions form an integral part of their social life. Despite the fact that the Arabic language is a

phoneme-rich language and students have no major problems in pronunciation and no crucial barriers to communication in spoken English, most of the Arab students lag far behind. On top of this, when it comes to writing, even advanced students find it difficult to spell basic words. It is more than often that even the most articulate and intelligent students are unable to write a coherent or a legible paragraph.

However, the curriculum and the students' learning habits are only partly to blame for this. The English teaching materials and methods are repetitive and dry, and most of the students do not have much discipline in relation to school work. According to the Arab linguistic tradition, language is essentially a verbal communication tool where writing follows the spoken language pattern more closely than it does in English. In written English, there is the use of a syntactically clean sentencing which only favors concise and complete expression of ideas whereas the written Arabic often meanders around the information or ideas just as it does in their spoken language (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014).

5. Learners' Preconceptions

Arab students usually have a preconceived notion about learning English for Academic Purposes. The majority of the students often feel that English instructors are not well trained, and the fact that some of the teachers use the Arabic language when teaching does not help change things. Therefore, students lose interest, perform poorly, and fail to trigger the interest of other students. Students also attribute their problems to their weak background, methods used in teaching and the environment in their country (Al-Mahrooqi & Denman, 2014). They feel that weak foundations together with their instructors' lack of interest have resulted in their limited English proficiency and affected their motivation to learn. This often results in difficulties with vocabulary and inability to perform well in class presentations. Students also lack important vocabulary when they engage in authentic communicative situations such as speaking and writing which is why they feel unable to express their ideas accurately and freely. Furthermore, students also face difficulties in grammar. Grammar is an essential need for conveying messages, so it is important to create materials that can enable students to progress in the learning of EAP (O'Rourke & Carson, 2010). What also needs to be taken under consideration is the fact that students prefer doing their assignments at home because they feel they can work faster and still get good grades.

On the environmental reasons, students feel that excessive use of their mother tongue is also a major challenge in promoting the learning of EAP. In relation to that, one should not forget that there are limited opportunities and time to practice English seeing that classes are usually very crowded, and teachers do not always find time for close teacher-student teaching. Furthermore, they feel that some of the cultural practices limit their study. For example, it is culturally inappropriate for boys to work with girls; therefore, it makes it hard for them to freely participate in group work or to even sit together (Alexander et al., 2008).

On the other hand, it is observed that most of the students state that the teaching methods are inappropriate. A general complaint is that some of the teachers have low proficiency in English and resort to Arabic when they want to explain key aspects of the language. However, teachers are not the only problem. Students also face difficulties during lectures. Taking notes, coping with stress when demanded to actively participate, understanding the use of metaphorical language used by the tutors, processing of visual information, and responding to questions asked during lectures can become a challenge due to their limited vocabulary. Different lecturing styles such as conversational style and discussion style can also prove a source of difficulty for Arab EAP students. Finally, making sense of facial expressions and gestures in authentic lectures that are devoid of written text can be highly confusing.

6. Preconceived Instructor Roles

Teachers teaching Arab EAP students on the other hand also have preconceived perceptions of their own. Most of the Arab EAP instructors, for example, have a preconceived notion that the Arab culture is oriented towards the group rather than the individual. In reality, however, the Arab students have a pervasive, more organic, and less monolithic sense of the group. Learners help and support each other within their study groups, constantly socialize and participate in group rituals.

6.1 Some of the Preconceived Challenges Instructors Face Include

- *Preparation of suitable course materials*: Many EAP instructors in Arab contexts have difficulty finding and preparing suitable teaching materials. There is always difficulty in getting access to subject-specific data and information, as well as to various necessary academic conventions of the target discourse community. Furthermore, sometimes there is lack of cooperation from the staff in the specialty departments. Other parameters that hinder effective teaching by the instructor include a lack of experience, creativity, self-confidence, and lack of credibility with the students (Alexander et al., 2008).
- *Student Motivation*: This is a major challenge for EAP instructors because university students do not invest as much of their time in studying English as they do their specialty subjects. Students do not see any significant role of English in any discipline. Students feel that learning English is an obstacle to their motivation to learn, which explains why the reaction of the student body towards EAP classes is so complex (Cowie & Heaton, 2007). Although most students know that English will be essential in bettering their career after school, they neglect it justifying their decision by thinking that they will invest time in studying English after graduation.
- *Cultural limitations*: The Arabic culture is very dynamic, and instructors should be aware of the various aspects of the culture. English instructors often feel that if they know the Arabic culture this will help in supporting the studying of Arabic-speaking ESL/EAP students in the class (Cowie & Heaton, 2007). However, becoming aware of their learners' needs is not something instructors can achieve easily. The task can be even more challenging when they are not convinced that there is a lot to gain from getting to know their students' cultural needs.
- *Time*: Instructors also insist on the significance of time availability that will allow learners to practice English while at the same time having the necessary support. However, Arab EAP classes have a large number of students thus limiting the time for student-instructor interaction.

7. Cultural and Societal Limitations

Culture influences EAP learning styles directly. The Arabic culture is diverse, and some aspects affect the learning process. Initially, the Arabian Gulf was highly traditional and had low literacy levels among its population. However, with the arrival of the wealth from oil there was a demand to educate and develop a local work force to take over management of the organizations. In the meantime, since there was shortage of well-qualified people, westerners were hired to run the operations of the organizations. The attempt to educate the population, however, proved rather challenging when some cultural practices hindered the promotion of education.

Being part of a culture influences human behavior; therefore, exploring culture became an insightful and

important issue. Cultural tendencies have an impact on the way students participate in education, and the influence of cultural beliefs about EAP learning, participation styles and the value of education in most Arabic countries should not be underestimated.

Arab students have the tendency to be very quiet in class. To them, making or keeping direct eye contact with the teacher is thought to be inappropriate. On the other hand, American students are taught the significance of having an active classroom discussion, and looking teachers in the eye is a sign of respect. Along the same line, teachers view student participation as a sign of competence and engagement (Cowie & Heaton, 2007).

The Arabic culture is hierarchical, and teachers usually expect students to have particular ways to show respect to their teachers. While students view instructors as experts who impart knowledge to them, discussions and debates are not encouraged because challenging what the instructors say is considered to be a sign of lack of respect for them. However, in cultures that favor equality, instructors perform as facilitators and expect debate and discussion from the students.

In the mid-1990s Gloria Ladson-Billings introduced the term “Culturally Relevant Teaching” to refer to teaching that incorporates students’ prior home and community experiences as well as their background knowledge into the curriculum (Ladson-Billings, 1995). It is an approach that understands how important it is to include students’ cultural references in the various aspects of learning. A decade later Gay (2000) and Villegas and Lucas (2002) use the term “Culturally Responsive Teaching” to refer to teaching that realizes that students learn differently according to their cultural, social and linguistic background. According to Brown-Jeffy and Cooper (2011) “Culturally Responsive Teaching” is more than just acknowledging the cultural “uniqueness” of each student. Rather it is about using it to create conditions that will facilitate learning.

Considering the belief that culturally responsive teaching helps to increase students’ motivation, Wlodkowski (1999) proposes the “Motivational Framework for Culturally Responsive Teaching”, which is a model devised for the higher education context, and suggests practices that are appropriate for a learning environment suitable for adults where “inquiry, respect, and the opportunity for full participation by diverse adults is the norm” (Wlodkowski, 2004, p. 161). The model uses four elements: “establishing inclusion, developing attitude, enhancing meaning, and engendering competence” to categorize its norms and practices (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Wlodkowski, 2004). Of these four elements, the third element, enhancing meaning, is concerned with practices which can lead students to become engaged in deep reflection and critical inquiry, and the fourth element, engendering competence, includes practices that use assessments that make use of the learners’ experiences (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009; Wlodkowski, 2004). This model is what provided the framework for the theoretical foundations and principles that lie behind culturally responsive teaching practices that can be applied to EAP classrooms.

8. Motivational Patterns and their Correlation with Learner Confidence and Ownership of Learning

The ultimate objective of EAP programs is to transform the student’s ability to provide skills and knowledge by instilling the desired virtues and building character (Cowie & Heaton, 2007). However, in delivering EAP programs there are always challenges especially in the area of student and teacher motivation. In most cases, students depend on themselves, their friends, and their teachers because there is limited English reading material. There is also little support from the parents either because they do not know English or because they are simply

unavailable. In addition to the above, there is often no motivational drive to read because of limited reading materials and divergent reading interests (Hyland, 2006). Furthermore, most of the Arab students do not see the need of learning English for Academic Purposes; rather they invest most of their time in their specialty areas justifying that they will pursue English after graduation.

However, depending on the teacher and the attitudes of the student, motivation for learning can be enhanced resulting in increased energy and effort. This can happen when students see that their EAP learning activities are directly related to their goals and needs, and can be the factor that will determine if they will pursue learning wholeheartedly. Motivation, intrinsic and/or extrinsic, derived from learning EAP can help direct the student's behavior towards a certain goal (Hyland, 2006). It can also affect the cognitive processes as to how the learner pays attention to and thrives on understanding classroom material. Initiation and persistence, energy and effort, cognitive processing and impact of consequences can lead to improved academic performance.

The choice of an appropriate assessment tool is also very important in ensuring students will not lose interest in their course. Assessment should not be perceived as a threatening and stressful experience. With this in mind, educators have come to realize the importance of alternative assessments in highlighting students' academic and linguistic development (Tannenbaum, 1996). According to Hancock (1994), by alternative assessment we mean the ongoing process which involves both students and teachers in making judgements about the former's linguistic progress through the use of strategies that one could describe as non-conventional. Hamayan (1995) defines alternative assessment procedures as "those techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom" (p. 213). In the case of Arab students one should consider that the countries of the Middle East share a culture characterized by a rather collectivistic orientation. The Arab society is well-known for its tribal nature which, together with the tradition of extended families, forms a way of dealing with difficulties and challenges that follows a communal process of problem-solving and decision-making (Adler, 2002; Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Thus, students raised in a society that is rather group-oriented feel more at ease when working in a team that will support them than when working individually. Taking all this into consideration one cannot ignore the benefits of implementing an assessment approach that assesses students while they are working on a project in a Project-Based Learning (PBL) environment. According to Briguglio (2007) PBL regards classes as "living laboratories' in which students should be encouraged to solve real-life communication problems, negotiate actual meanings, choose appropriate communication strategies to influence real counterparts, and observe the consequences of their interactive efforts". According to Gültekin (2005) PBL allows students to improve their research skills, become more efficient at solving problems, and be able to use higher order thinking strategies. Teamwork is at the core of PBL making it more appealing to Arab learners. Originating from nomadic families of merchants and traders, students from GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council) countries have for centuries developed their own way of perceiving the world, and conventional boundaries are seen in a different light (Nydell, 2012). This explains why Western educational systems are often stressful for Arab students. It can also explain why they tend to reject the imposed rules and requirements that often affect their performance and morale in a rather negative way. On the other hand, PBL can bring in real-life experiences thus making it possible for the students to relate to the course.

Another advantage of PBL lies in its principle that allows students to play a role independent from the instructor in planning and implementing a project consistent with their own interests. In a PBL classroom environment, it becomes very important for students to be able to question the unknown, think critically, and reach their own conclusions (Valiente, 2008). This becomes particularly important if one considers that Arab students

are required to make a conscious decision to abandon passive dry memorization for learning practices that require analytical thinking.

The hypermedia environment can also prove to be of extreme value not only because it is easily accessible online and allows interaction with the system, but also because it can provide assessment tools that could foster learner autonomy. Moreover, besides being potentially useful for learner autonomy, virtual environments can be especially valuable in developing learning and communication skills (Monereo, 2005; Arnó et al., 2006).

9. Conclusion

In conclusion, it is evident from the above discussion that although there are always challenges in promoting learner autonomy in EAP courses for Arab students, there are some measures that can be incorporated into learning programs. With collaborative efforts from both students and teachers, it is possible to have full ownership of learning. Culturally Responsive Teaching combined with the adoption of an alternative assessment tool could increase the level of motivation in the EAP class. Project Based Learning could be used to bridge the gap between the Arab students' culture and the western character of EAP class requirements. Designers of the Arab education curriculum of EAP should try to find ways to incorporate the cultural particularities of Arab learner's in order to make the learning experience more meaningful and ensure higher standards of academic performance.

References

Adler N. (2002). *International Dimensions of Organizational Behavior*, Cincinnati, OH: South-Western, available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1002/tie.5060280112.

Alexander O., Argent S. and Spencer J. (2008). *EAP Essentials: A Teacher's Guide to Principles and Practice*, Reading, UK: Garnet.

Al-Mahrooqi R. and Denman C. (2014). *Issues in English Education in the Arab World*, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars.

Arnó E., Soler A. and Rueda C. (2006). "Information technology in languages for specific purposes: Prospects on a brave new world", in: Arnó E., Soler A. and Rueda C. (Eds.), *Information Technology in Languages for Specific Purposes: Issues and Prospects*, New York: Springer, pp. 247–261.

Ballard B. (1996). "Through language to learning: Preparing overseas students for study in the West", in: H. Coleman (Ed.), *Society and the Language Classroom*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 148–168.

Benson P. (2001). *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*, London: Longman.

Blue G. M. (1993). "Nothing succeeds like linguistic competence: The role of language in academic success", in: Blue G. M. (Ed.), *Language, Learning and Success: Studying through English*, Southampton: Modern English Publications in association with the British Council, pp. 4–13.

Briguglio C. (2007). "Educating the business graduate of the 21st century: Communication for a globalized world", *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Vol. 19, No. 1, pp. 8–20.

Broady E. and Kenning M. M. (1996). *Promoting Learner Autonomy in University Language Teaching*, London: Association for French Language Studies in association with CILT.

Brown-Jeffy S. and Cooper J. E. (2011). "Toward a conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy: An overview of the conceptual and theoretical literature", *Teacher Education Quarterly*, Vol. 38, No. 1, pp. 65–84.

Cowie A. and Heaton J. (2007). *English for Academic Purposes: Papers on the Language Problems of Overseas Students in Higher Education in the UK*, London: BAAL/SELMOUS.

Ferlazzo L. (2013). *Self-driven Learning: Teaching Strategies for Student Motivation*, New York: Routledge.

Gay G. (2000). *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, New York: Teachers College Press.

Ginsberg M. B. and Wlodkowski R. J. (2009). *Diversity and Motivation: Culturally Responsive Teaching in College* (2nd ed.), San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Gültekin M. (2005). "The effects of project-based learning on learning outcomes in the 5th grade social studies course in primary education", *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 548–556.

Hamayan E. V. (1995). "Approaches to alternative assessment", *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, Vol. 15, pp. 212–226, available online at: http://dx.doi:10.1017/S0267190500002695.

Hancock C. R. (1994). "Alternative assessment and second language study: What and why?", ERIC Digest.

Hofstede G., Hofstede G. J. and Minkov M. (2010). *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (3rd ed.), New York: McGraw-Hill.

Holec H. (1981). *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning*, Oxford: Pergamon (first published 1979, Strasbourg: Council of Europe).

Hurd S. (2000). "Strategy use and distance language learners: Perceptions, practice and possibilities", *Links & Letters*, Vol. 7, pp. 61–80.

Hyland K. (2006). *English for Academic Purposes: An Advanced Resource Book*, London: Routledge, available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.4324/9781315852515.ch26.

Kramsch C. (1993). *Context and Culture in Language Teaching*, Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ladson-Billings G. (1995). "Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy", *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 32, No. 3, pp. 465–491, available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.3102/00028312032003465.

Little D. (1991). *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems*, Dublin: Authentik.

Monereo C. (2003). "Internet y competenciasbásicas", *Aula de Innovación Educative*, Vol. 126, pp. 16–20.

Nydell M. K. (2012). *Understanding Arabs: A Contemporary Guide to Arab Society*, Boston, MA: Intercultural Press.

O'Rourke B. and Carson L. (2010). *Language Learner Autonomy: Policy, Curriculum, Classroom: A Festschrift in Honour of David Little*, Oxford: Peter Lang.

Ridley J., Ushioda E. and Little D. (2003). *Learner Autonomy in the Foreign Language Classroom: Teacher, Learner, Curriculum, and Assessment*, Dublin: Authentik.

Riley P., Gremmo M. and Moulden H. (1989). "Pulling yourself together: The practicalities of setting up and running self-access systems", in: Little D. (Ed.), *Self-access Systems for Language Learning*, Dublin: Authentik in association with CILT, pp. 34–65.

Scharle A. and Szabo A. (2000). *Learner Autonomy: A Guide to Developing Learner Responsibility*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Soler A., Rueda M. and Arnó E. (2006). "A hypermedia project for EAP students: Interactive materials in a virtual learning environment", *V CongrésInternacionald'AELFE (Associació Europea de Llengües per a Finalitats Específiques)*, Saragossa, pp. 572–581.

Sowden C. (2003). "Understanding academic competence in overseas students in the UK", *ELT Journal*, Vol. 57, No. 4, pp. 377–385, available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/57.4.377.

Tannenbaum J. E. (1996). "Practical ideas on alternative assessment for ESL students", retrieved from ERIC database (ED395500).

Valiente C. (2008). "Are students using the 'wrong' style of learning?", *Active Learning in Higher Education*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 73–91, available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/1469787407086746.

Villegas A. M. and Lucas T. (2002). "Preparing culturally responsive teachers: Rethinking the curriculum", *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 20–32, available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022487102053001003.

White C. (2003). *Language Learning in Distance Education*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, available online at: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511667312.

Wlodkowski R. J. (1999). *Enhancing Adult Motivation to Learn: A Comprehensive Guide for Teaching All Adults* (Rev. ed.), San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Wlodkowski R. J. (2004). "Creating motivational learning environments", in: Galbraith M. (Ed.), *Adult Learning: A Guide for Effective Instruction* (3rd ed.), Malabar, FL: Krieger, pp. 141–164.