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Autonomy, Self-Directed Learning and Individualisation

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1. Introduction

That the terms Autonomy, Self-Directed Learning (SDL) and Individualisation overlap in their reference is very obvious. The extent of the overlap and the ways in which they differ is not at all obvious. In this paper I shall attempt to substantiate the following (rather tentative) conclusions.

1. That the term individualised instruction and/or learning, is used to describe such diverse programmes as to be useless for our purpose. Furthermore, it misses the point.
2. That autonomy represents the upper limit of self-directed learning measured on a notional scale from total direction to full freedom. Consequently, autonomy is one of a set of possibilities within the larger category of self-directed learning.

The task of substantiating these arguments is largely one of definition and my attempts at formulating satisfactory definitions have inevitably led me into the literature of these areas; some of these writings are only tenuously related to defining a particular area, yet they discuss much that is of interest in this field - particularly in self-directed learning. Consequently, in addition to arguing the points made above I will review a selection of the literature in SDL. There are few references in this literature to language learning; most of the writings are concerned either with education in general or with subjects other than foreign languages (FL). A major theme running through writings on SDL is, however, of great potential relevance to FL learning. This is the close relation between SDL and the affective domain. I have, consequently, examined a selection of the literature concerned with affective variables in FL learning; and finally I review two papers which describe FL learning/teaching methods which make a deliberate attempt to control affective variables and to build into the methods a degree of self-directed learning.

2. Individualised Instruction/Learning (II)

Logan (1973) offers as a minimal definition of II the situation in which

> "the teacher provides materials and activities with which students can work "independently", thus releasing the teacher to minister to individual needs." (p.15).

The period of time over which this is done is, of course, crucial. There is little new in a teacher telling the class to do exercises fifteen to twenty-five in the classroom! Logan recognises this and adds that

> in an individualised programme, the whole thrust of instruction is in this direction; the classroom structure is designed to allow this type of independent activity to have priority in importance and time over the more synchronised activity that traditionally has dominated the classroom scene. (p.15).

In an earlier publication (Logan 1970) he describes how the term Individualisation has been applied to programmes varying from 'the traditional "lock-step" operation' with added individual or small group help, to correspondence courses and totally independent study. He then states:

> "More closely approaching true[1] individualisation (my underlining) are those programmes offering individualised contracts to each student. Sequential learning packets which can be combined for different students in different ways: or even essentially random learning approaches." (p.1 & 2).

Making a similar point rather more strongly, Gibbons (1971) describes various possibilities some of which are labelled 'individualised' and some of which are not. He goes on:

> "Together such programmes constitute a widely diverse family. They are based on different interpretations of individualisation. They are inspired by different philosophies and theories, influenced by different technologies and expertise, and confounded by the ambiguity of their label. In fact, the term individualised instruction programme is used to describe such a varied assortment of curricula that it is no longer a useful, restrictive category of instructional methods. It likely never was." (p.2)

The first conclusion I was attempting to substantiate was precisely this - that the term II was used to describe such a wide variety of methods as to be useless. My approach to substantiating it was simply to quote other writers who say the same thing. However, even a cursory glance through the literature on II will show this diversity very clearly, and to presently attempt to enumerate a reasonable cross-section of this diversity would be very time consuming and very boring.

It is, of course, possible for a theorist to formulate a more restrictive definition of II and work within that. For example Altman (1971) adduces four characteristics of II which are, to him, essential. They are:

i) Each student is allowed to progress through his curriculum materials at his own pace.

ii) Each student is tested only when he is prepared to be tested. (Not all students will be tested simultaneously.)

iii) When a student needs help, he works individually with his teacher, or with some other resource person in the classroom in a tutorial manner, and

iv) each student is aware of the nature of his learning task and knows what he must demonstrate and with what degree of accuracy he must demonstrate it to receive credit for his work and to be able to move ahead in his material. (p. 89).

Altman's characterisation highlights the central contrast between traditional classroom instruction and II, and that is, of course, breaking the <u>lock-step</u>, and allowing learners to progress at varying rates suitable to each individual. However, this is <u>not</u> the central contrast between autonomy/SDL and other approaches to learning. Autonomy/SDL <u>entail</u> individualisation; its use is never in doubt; it is a necessary condition for autonomy/SDL. But it is by no means a sufficient condition. There are many individualised programmes which are the antithesis of self direction and autonomy; and so, from this point of view too, the term II is not useful for our purposes. The contrast we are concerned with is between <u>freedom</u> and <u>control</u>, between autonomous/SD Learning and externally directed, teacher directed learning. And this contrast is not restricted to matters like the student's pace through curriculum materials and when he will be tested, but includes the student's choice of what he will learn, how he will learn, when he will learn, and, indeed, <u>if</u> he will learn.

It appears, then, that the term Individualised Instruction/Learning is not useful for our purposes for two reasons. Firstly, it is used so widely that it no longer delimits a useful restrictive category of instructional methods; and secondly, because the contrast central to those concerned with autonomy/SDL is not that of working at an individual pace, etc. (conditions which are, in any case entailed by autonomous/SD learning), but the contrast between the

extremes of total freedom of choice in curricula, materials, ways of learning, examinations, etc., and total external direction in these areas.

3. <u>Autonomous Learning and Self Directed Learning</u>

Autonomous Learning - or autonomy - is (of course) the term used by the C.R.A.P.E.L. to describe their learning - and learner-centred strategy. Its major characteristics are set out in Stanchina (1975 b). The features she highlights are that the learner determines his own goals (aims and objectives), he also determines his mode of learning, the materials he will use and the pace of the intake of material. Furthermore the learner monitors his own performance and evaluates his own proficiency. She concludes:

> "Autonomy is an experiment in how learning can be freed from the bounds of any institution, and in how the individual can reclaim control of and responsibility for his or her own education, while investigating the opportunities to learn from a variety of authentic sources." (p.2)

(How this system operates is described in a number of papers from the C.R.A.P.E.L. including Riley (1974), Stanchina (1975 a, 1975 b), Abe & Smith (1975).

Describing the salient characteristics of SDL is more difficult, since the term tends to be used differently by different writers. Furthermore, the use of the term <u>Self-Directed Learning</u> frequently constitutes an act of faith, and (perhaps, consequently,) is rarely accompanied by a clear description.

Where a clear description is given, however, there is frequently a marked similarity between SDL and autonomy - which would lead one to suppose that these are two names for the same phenomenon. Boud and Sidery (1976) describe SDL as follows:

> "We understand self-directedness to imply maximum autonomy for the individual concomitant with concern for the autonomy of others, and the use of each others' resources in sensitive and effective ways."

> "Underlying this definition of self-directed learning is an assumption of what it means to be an educated person. The assumption is that an educated person is one who can identify his own needs, set his own goals, develop strategies for meeting his needs and be able to monitor his own action in this process. He can co-operate with others to obtain mutual support and assistance so that each may gain fulfillment." (p.2)

These definitions/descriptions of autonomy and SDL suggest, as I noted

above, that they are two labels for the same phenomenon. But I wish to offer another possibility. I suggest that what Boud and Sidery are describing is in fact autonomy in the C.R.A.P.E.L. sense, and that autonomy is only one of a set of possibilities within SDL. In fact, I shall argue that autonomy represents the upper limit of self-directed learning measured on a notional scale from fully directed to fully autonomous learning.

The C.R.A.P.E.L. view of autonomy has developed out of the need to provide FL learning possibilities for adult learners with special (if common) problems. Stanchina (1975 a) says:

> "What we are trying to do at the C.R.A.P.E.L. is to adopt an alternative teaching strategy that recognises the special conditions of adult learners:
>
> - their jobs do not allow them to attend classes with any regularity ...
> - they must devote time to their families.
> - they live too far away from the university ...
> - their timing does not coincide with the courses scheduled for an entire year.
> - their needs (are not appropriate to a conventional class organisation).
> - some adults prefer to keep away from the classroom atmosphere ...
> - (some learners) simply need a maintenance programme."
>
> (Brackets indicate my re-phrasing).

The strategy evolved is one in which "ideally the learner eventually becomes responsible for the whole of his instructional process, including the provision of materials. (Riley and Stanchina (1975)).

This strategy is the outcome of two preliminary stages - the systematic stage - traditional classroom teaching, and the non-systematic stage - a period of training for full autonomy. The learner then passes into the autonomous stage, using appropriate materials for his FL learning. (Riley 1974)

As I understand the papers available to me, the learner should make a linear progression through the stages, in one direction only. There appears to be no formal recognition of the need of some learners to move back and forth through the three stages - seeking further support when he feels the need for it in the systematic or non-systematic stages. However, some provision is made to give support through the 'helper' system. But the support has limits as Stanchina (1976) says:

> "Although the helper must always be available to see the learners, abuses must be avoided, for sessions that are too frequent leave learners no time to work independently, and may therefore increase their dependence on the helper and slow down their 'autonomization'."

Earlier in the same paper she observes: "Even though learners will claim to accomplish more in less time with the helper, ... they must understand that only working independently (of the helper) will allow them to develop the learning techniques most effective for them." (both quotes p.7)

I get an impression of an "all or nothing" philosophy from these papers. Either learners achieve autonomy or they fail. As I stressed above the C.R.A.P.E.L. are working with learners who have very severe limitations on their availability and time scheduling, and this attitude may be a necessity with those learners. However, not all learners - not even all adult learners - have these severe limitations, and so - for others, - broader, more flexible programmes can be offered without compromising the ideal of self-direction.

A person can be self-directing in his/her sexual life without being forced into auto-erotocism. It may even be that he or she gets their kicks out of subjugating themselves to their partner and consequently chooses to do this - chooses to relinquish his/her freedom. Is this no longer self-directing? If I wish to become a competent carpenter, I may choose to read books and practise on my own, or I may choose to join a class in carpentry. In my view, both are examples of self-directed learning. The vital factors are the individual specification of functional aims, and the free choice of means of achieving those aims. The process of achieving learning objectives is not one of making an initial decision - self-direction or other direction and then progressing linearly; it is rather a progression along a path which has frequent forks - some many-pronged. The defining characteristic of self-directed learning in my view, is that the learner makes a free choice at each of these forks. This free choice may in fact be a choice to relinquish his/her autonomy over a particular stretch for a particular purpose.

A third example illustrates this. Suppose you were engaged in research in semantics - research which you had chosen to do because of your interest

in the field. At some point in your reading you would discover that certain aspects of semantic theories were often expressed in symbolic logic; furthermore, if you did not understand symbolic logic, you would find that there was much in semantics that you could not follow. It happens that at just this time, you discover that there is a course in symbolic logic just beginning. Also, it is held at a time during the week when you are free. Thus, you have the choice of going along to the course, or of going to the library and finding introductions to Symbolic Logic. Whichever path is chosen, the choice - and the learning approach - remains self-directed. In one path, however, the autonomy of the learner is maintained. In the other it is partially relinquished, for a particular purpose.

Diagram 1 shows the choice of paths for individuals through a particular learning programme. This model attempts to reflect the reality of most learning programmes in that self-direction can enter in - or be relinquished - at various points. Thus, even though a student - a school child for example - may be externally directed to learn English, or French (hereafter X), there is still scope for self-direction within the learning programme. Alternatively, though another student may make a self-directed decision to study X he may, for example, choose to relinquish his autonomy in particular areas, in varying degrees. Thus, he may choose to work in a group of self-directing individuals. In so doing, he is pre-empting his full freedom of choice at other node-points. For example, the choices of when to study and where to study are no longer fully autonomous since agreement must be reached with others. Similarly if a student chooses to follow a class for some aspect of his study - say the phonology of the target language - then he may relinquish a proportion of his freedom to choose materials.

In this diagram the heavily marked path represents autonomy, which is, as I earlier remarked the upper limit of self-directed learning. Conversely the lower limits are set by the student who freely chooses to be fully directed throughout his study of X. This may be a <u>reductio ad absurdem</u> argument against the model. It appears necessary to establish the limiting case of self

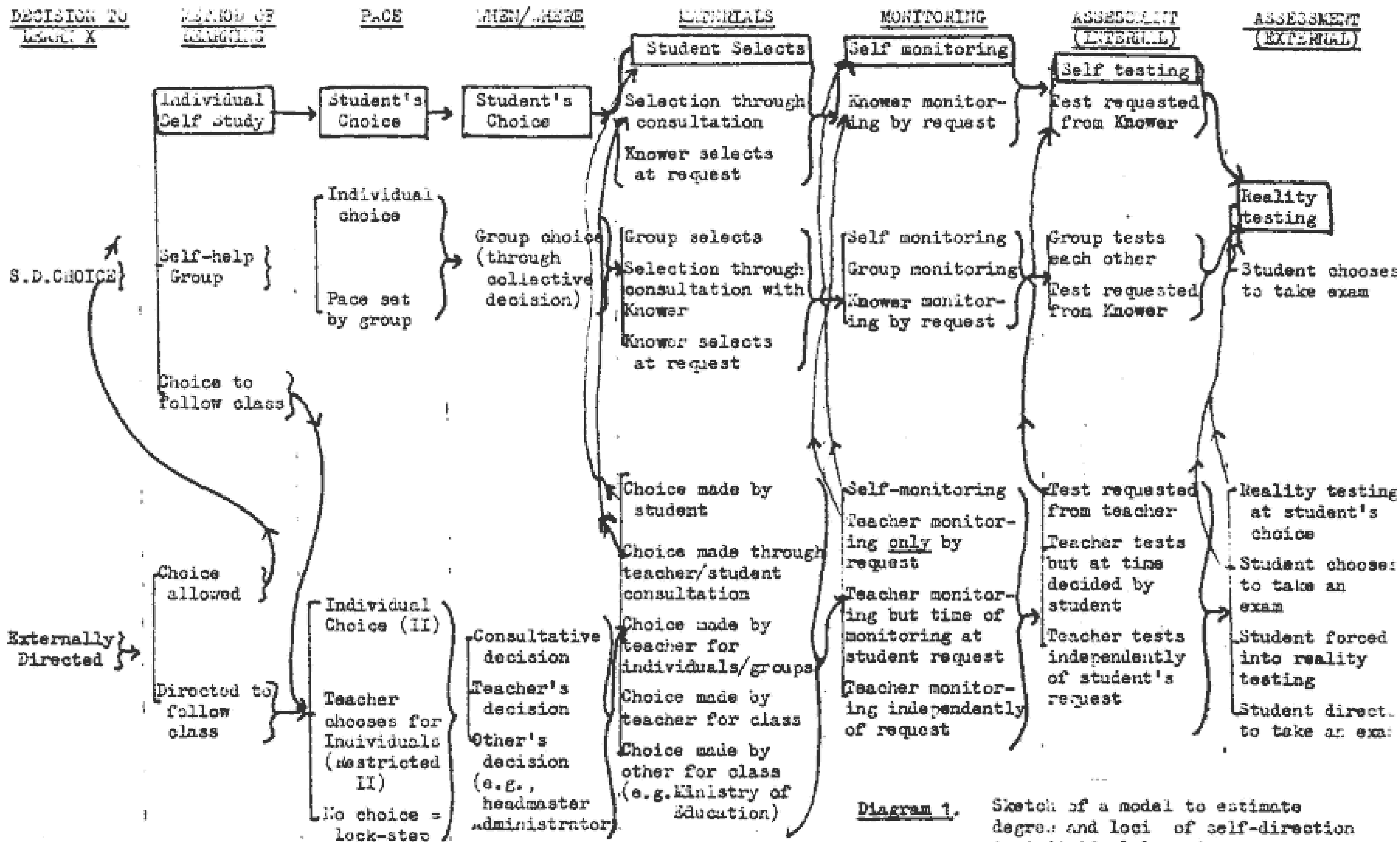

Diagram 1. Sketch of a model to estimate degree and loci of self-direction in individual learning.

direction somewhere above this level, but how this is done, and indeed if it is valid, I am not sure.

To conclude this section then, I have argued that autonomy and SDL differ in that autonomy is one of many possibilities within SDL. It is the upper limit of SDL. The defining characteristic of SDL is that the learner makes free choices at each of a series of node points in the learning path. Where all of these choices are made freely, we have fully self-directed learning, where only some are freely made we have some degree of self-directed learning.

4. A Glance at the Literature

Except for the very interesting work going on in the C.R.A.P.E.L., I know of few reported studies in self-directed learning in FL learning. Writings on SDL in other fields, however, serve as test cases for the definition I have offered above, and I shall quote two of these. I shall then consider some of the educational research and thinking which supports SDL, including, especially, work relating affective variables with learning. This work leads naturally to a consideration of two language learning/teaching methods which attempt to control some of these affective variables by building into the method a proportion of self-directed learning.

The first of the SDL reports describes an introductory course in psychology conducted by V.E. Faw, reported in Rogers (1969). The course covered five aspects of human psychology: (1) Persons, (2) Interactions, (3) Procedures, (4) Content and (5) Institutional Press, though the emphasis was on the first two. The main interest in this course is the structure set up by Faw to facilitate it. For example he offers the following arrangements of the class. An initial interview with the instructure to sort out 'the dynamics between student and teacher'. This can be followed up - at the students choice - by working through a programmed set of ten lessons in interpersonal relations. Second, half the class time is spent on student centred sessions. These 'may be of two general kinds: first, those in which student-centred discussions are prominent and second, those in which students present their research, demonstrations, reviews of journal articles, etc.' The role

of the instructor here is in helping to maintain students' academic freedom and inner freedom by listening respectfully and acceptingly. Third, in the other half of the class time, the position is reversed. The instructor voices his ideas and thoughts while the students play the role of therapist, helping to maintain the instructor's academic freedom and inner freedom by listening and responding in an understanding manner.

Though credit points are given for attending these class periods, no penalties are suffered for missing some or all the classes. Indeed, students are encouraged not to attend classes when they believe that the work they would otherwise do would be more useful. Furthermore, the timetable of class-sessions is "self-directed" by both students and instructors. A "sign-up sheet" is posted on a notice board and students and instructors book class time for presentations.

Faw goes on to offer sixteen 'Optional Responses Instrumental in Achieving Goals'. These include

1. Initial interview with the instructor (mentioned above).
2. Statement of goals.
3. Review of Journal Articles and presentation in writing.
4. Research proposals ... 'Three levels of proposals are acceptable.

   Level 1: the mere idea of "I wonder what would happen if we did this!"

   Level 2: the idea plus a survey (of previous work).

   Level 3: the idea with a survey of literature plus the experimental design to be used in testing the hypothesis.

5. Individual experiments.
6. Group projects.

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8. "Reading of assignments and taking examinations over readings ... Students may choose not to take examinations; however, these examinations constitute one of the greatest single sources of credit at a minimal amount of effort ..."

16. "Self evaluation. The student may review the work he has done during the course and evaluate it in terms of how meaningful the experience was to him in relation to the goals he set for himself.

I have described this at some length to emphasize the point that a programme in self-directed learning is not necessarily one in which the student is left entirely to himself and his own resources. He can be offered a substantial degree of support, especially in the area of 'learning structure'. However, he is free at each point to choose within the structure offered, or to choose to ignore it. Notice also, of course, that this course operates within the credit system, though there are many options open for gaining credit points.

The second report is of a very different kind. It is taken from Pirsig's '<u>Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance</u>' (1974) and describes what the author considers to be an ideal university. I precede it, however, with a statement of ideals made by Carl Rogers (Rogers 1969) in his book on SDL "Freedom to Learn". Rogers lists five implications of his thinking on teaching and learning. I report the first 4.

(a) .... we would do away with teaching. People would get together if they wished to learn.

(b) We would do away with examinations. They measure only the inconsequential type of learning.

(c) We would do away with grades and credits for the same reasons.

(d) We would do away with degrees as a measure of competence partly for the same reason. Another reason is that a degree marks an end or a conclusion of something, and a learner is only interested in the continuing process of learning. (p.154)

What would be the results of such momentous moves? Pirsig (so far as I know, quite independently of Rogers) offers the following suggestion. He describes an imaginary university - the Church of Reason - which awards no degrees - and consequently work is not graded. It exists to enable people to learn. Pirsig suggests that, typically, a student attending this university would initially react to the freedom by neglecting to do any work. His lack of reading and thinking would result in the classes becoming progressively less meaningful. Soon the student would realise that he was not learning

much and then, because of other pressures - e.g. social life - he would stop attending classes altogether, and then stop attending the university. In this ideal world, neither the University nor society would censure dropping out, and in any case, there would be freedom to re-enter the University again whenever the student wished. It is right, argues Pirsig, that the student should drop-out. He was not at the university to learn, but to get a degree.

This imaginary student might then get a job as a mechanic. He might develop a real interest in engines, perhaps modifying them, then beginning to build his own. Further, he might realise that to design an engine well he needed to learn a great deal more about the theoretical aspects of engine design. So, he goes back to the university - but this time he is primed to learn. He does not want a degree. He wants to learn about engines. Pirsig continues:

> "So he would come back to our degreeless and gradeless school, but with a difference. He'd no longer be a grade-motivated person. He'd be a knowledge motivated person. He would need no external pushing to learn. His push would come from inside. He'd be a free man. He wouldn't need a lot of discipline to shape him up. In fact, if the instructors assigned him were slacking on the job, he would be likely to shape <u>them</u> up by asking rude questions ..."

> "Motivation of this sort, once it catches held, is a ferocious force ... he wouldn't stop with rote engineering information. Physics and mathematics ... Metallurgy and electrical engineering would come up for attention. And ... he would be likely to branch out into other theoretical areas that weren't directly related to machines but had become part of a newer, larger goal. This larger goal wouldn't be the imitation of education in Universities today, glossed over and concealed by grades and degrees that give the impression that something is happening when, in fact, almost nothing is going on. It would be the real thing." (p.191)

Here we have a vision of a self-directed learning situation, but one in the context of certain aspects of a university structure. The imaginary student may attend classes, but who would say he is not self-directed?

Attempts at justifying a self-directed learning approach (in contrast to a directed learning approach) can be made by considering three sorts of experimental studies. The first group relates to McGregor's dichotomy of how human beings are perceived. His <u>Theory X</u> and <u>Theory Y</u>. The second set of studies compares the results of SDL programmes with those of directed programmes, and the tendency is to find few differences in achievement. Finally, a consideration of work examining the relationship of affective variables with learning

on the one hand, and the relation of affective variables with SDL on the other offers support for SDL approaches.

It would be misleading to describe what follows as a review of the relevant literature, since this implies that what is offered is carefully considered on the basis of full information. What is offered here, in fact, are indications of areas of research worth, in my opinion, further, more careful, examination. They are almost all taken from secondary sources - i.e., other authors' reviews of research, and I have had no opportunity to assess carefully the quality of the research reported.

McGregor (1961) hypothesizes that people are viewed in one of two ways with respect to their motivation to work. (His hypotheses originally referred to American executives but can easily be adapted to students.)

The traditional education view of students (McGregor's Theory X) is that they:

1. Dislike and avoid study.
2. Must be coerced, controlled, directed and threatened with punishment to get them to direct their efforts toward achievement of educational goals.
3. Prefer to be directed, wish to avoid responsibility, have little ambition, and want security above all.

McGregor argues that though traditional educators perceive students in this way, it is the fact that they are perceived in this way (and have been over many years) which leads students to behave so. McGregor argued that the converse view is more realistic. Thus, his Theory Y states that students:

1. Regard mental and physical work as natural as play or rest.
2. Exercise self control and self-direction.
3. Are committed to objectives because of the rewards of achievement.
4. Accept and seek responsibility.
5. Exercise a high degree of imagination, ingenuity and creativity in solving problems.

(Bockman and Bockman (1972) p. 56)

McGregor argued that these were self-fulfilling prophecies. Thus those 'teachers' who believe Theory Y, and who demonstrate their belief in their activities tend to find that their students manifest the attitudes described

by Theory Y. On the other hand, those teachers who believe Theory X similarly tend to have their beliefs confirmed by the evidence.

Rogers (1969) reports a number of studies tending to support this view. The most conclusive (Macdonald and Zaret 1966) concludes that "teachers who are interested in process, and facilitative in their interactions, produce self-initiated and creative responses in their students. (Whereas) Teachers who are interested in evaluation of students produce passive, memorized, "eager to please" responses from their students." (p.118) Beach (1974), in a study of self-directed learning, found "clustering ... among a number of variables, demonstrating the value of the free interaction found in the small, self-directed student group. For example, as rated by the participants, quality of study, quantity of study, critical thinking done in the course, seeing applications and implications of the study material, and motivation to meet extra times as a group clustered together." (p.193)

In further support of <u>Theory Y</u>, and also indicating how students learn how to learn, Gruber and Weitman (1962) (reported in Beach op cit) conclude that "placing a major responsibility on the student for his own education has real possibilities for developing attitudes towards learning which result in the students continuing search for knowledge after the formal classroom experience is over."

An important, if negative, justification of SDL is its effectiveness in leading to learning in comparison with more traditional methods. The indications are that on courses judged as successful by other criteria there is little or no significant difference from conventional approaches on such measures as examination results, other measures of quantity of material learnt, coverage of material, attendance and so on.

Williams (1930) for example conducted an experiment in SDL over a period of 6 months with delinquent children in U.S.A. After giving details of the gains in "educational age" and other changes he says "This experiment is interesting chiefly for the fact that it seems to indicate that a group of delinquent boys of varying ages and capacities will, if given an opportunity and supervision, improve more in educational age when left alone that they will under ordinary schoolroom conditions with formal instruction." (p.718)

Faw, whose programme was reported on above, carefully observed the effects of the programme compared with traditional teaching approaches. His observations are reported in Rogers (1969) P. 45. He reports no significant differences in attendance between the SDL programme and the conventional one (percentage attendance of 4 x 35 students in conventional courses with obligatory attendance - 87.2%. In SDL courses with optional attendance - 86.8%.) There were similarly no significant differences in achievement on objective type examinations.

Beach (1974) reports similar findings from his own experiments with SDL. However, he adds another dimension.

> "It is significant in itself that students in the experimental self-directed study groups did not suffer in course content learning from being deprived of the classroom and being placed in the interactive, instructionless learning setting. At the same time, they appear to have profited more in terms of "other desirable outcomes" in the course and, as indicated in other ratings and written comments, found the group experience rewarding and satisfying."

The third group of studies relevant to a justification of SDL are those concerned with links between affective variables and learning, and, of course, the links between these variables and SDL. There is growing evidence that certain affective variables are important in FL learning.[2] For example, Titone (1973) discusses the importance of personality factors (sociability, life-style) in language learning aptitude. He also reports on Curran's (1972) observation (also made by other people) that during learning to speak an FL they become anxious and feel threatened. Curran sees a similarity between this state of mind and that of the client in psychotherapy. (He follows the similarity through by adopting some of the counselling techniques from psychotherapy into the language learning process. This is reported more fully below.)

Brown (1974) also mentions Curran in his discussion of the affective variable of inhibition - which he suggests, "may be one of the key obstacles to any learning which necessitates communication or interaction with another person." 'Ego' is also suggested as another important affective variable in

the FL learning process. According to Brown, "The self-knowledge, self-esteem and self-confidence of the language learner could have everything to do with success in learning a language ... Any language acquisition process that results in meaningful learning for communication involves some degree of identity conflict ..." (p. 233)

Arising from this is the hypothesis that the reduction, in the learning situation, of such factors as threat to the learner's ego, inhibition and so on may facilitate the learning of language.[3]

Rogers (op cit) argues that there are important connections between types of teacher attitudes and the reduction or increase of the factors noted above. He reports work done by Schmuck (1963) for example, who attempted to show "that in classrooms where pupils perceive their teachers as understanding them, there is likely to be a more diffuse liking structure among the pupils." This means, according to Rogers, that "where the teacher is empathic ... liking and affection are more evenly diffused throughout the group." Rogers goes on to discuss a later study (1966) in which Schmuck "has shown that among students who are highly involved in their peer group significant relationships exist between actual liking status, on the one hand, and utilization of abilities, attitude toward self and attitude toward school on the other hand." Rogers interprets this (and other evidence) as indicating

> "that in an understanding classroom climate where the teacher is more empathic, every student tends to feel liked by all the others, to have a more positive attitude towards himself and toward school. If he is highly involved with his peer group (and this appears probable in such a classroom climate), he also tends to utilize his abilities more fully in his school achievement." (p. 118)

Further support for this is obtained from another area - that of psychotherapy. The research findings of Barrett - Lennard (1962) indicate that "if, in therapy, the client perceives his therapist as real and genuine, as one who likes, prizes, and empathically understands him, self-learning and therapeutic change are facilitated."

La Forge (1971) commenting on Bradford (1960) highlights the conflict situations which develop when the teacher dominates and controls class activities. "Basically, parts of the class are at war with other parts"

insofar as "each student tends to be in a competitive situation - winner or loser in the learning game." This is a common experience of anyone who has taught in a traditional classroom setting. Pupils working together are perceived as cheating (What? Whom?). Assignments, tests and examinations are used to establish rank order among the learners, and for the pupil, the important fact is not what he can learn about his own learning from the results, but his position in the rank.

The traditional, teacher dominated, classroom then, tends to increase negative affective factors. How might a self-directed learning situation differ from this?

Firstly there ceases to be a set of common objectives towards which every student is working in competition with every other student. Students may work individually, or together in groups, to specify their objectives, and they are responsible for selecting the materials for the achievement of those objectives. As I have tried to show above, this need not be totally autonomous, but can be within a supportive structural framework of options - always including the possibility of particular students choosing not to work within this framework (see, for example, the Faw programme). Furthermore, much of the threat, anxiety and competition can be taken out of assessment. External examinations may remain, of course, (if only to validate the SDL programme in contrast to directed courses), but internal assessment can be based on a series of options worked out between student and facilitator,[4] and different forms of assessment may well be chosen by different groups or individuals.

The role of the facilitator is of great importance. Firstly, of course, anyone who gets himself into such a position is already converted to McGregor's Theory Y, and so is already doing a great deal to reduce tensions and conflict and to facilitate learning. Secondly, he would "regard himself as a flexible resource to be utilized by the group ... He makes himself available as a counsellor, lecturer and adviser, a person with experience within the field. He wishes to be used by individual students, and by the group, in the ways which seem most meaningful to them insofar as he can be comfortable in operating in the ways they wish." (Rogers, 1969, p. 165)

As I observed above, there are few reports of SDL schemes in FL learning in the literature. However, reports of two unusual language learning/teaching methods have highly relevant features. Gattegno's method - 'The Silent Way' (1972) is reviewed by Stevick (1974). Gattegno states five basic principles of learning.

1. Teaching is subordinate to learning.
2. Learning is not imitation or drill.
3. In learning, the mind equips itself by its own working.
4. The mind draws on its previous experiences.
5. The teacher must stop interfering with the learning activity.

In language teaching by the silent way, the teacher produces each new input "very clearly". The students do 90% of the talking, with the teacher remaining almost completely silent. "In the case of a correct response ... the student must learn to do without the overt approval of the teacher. Instead, he must concentrate on developing and then satisfying his own "inner criteria". This means that the teacher is supposed to react never verbally and very little non-verbally to a correct response."

Mistakes (errors) appear to be used positively, both affectively and pedagogically. "The student who made the mistake has 'stuck his neck out', acting vicariously for the whole group. The content of the mistake is an invaluable clue to where students are in the development of their 'inner criteria', and so provides precious guidance for the teacher's next step."

The emphasis placed on the development of "inner criteria" has important relevance to SDL and the need to develop self-monitoring. The teacher's reaction to correct utterances appears to be designed to encourage self-dependancy in the students, both in terms of their "inner-criteria" and in the development of self-confidence. The importance of the supportive group, independent of the teacher is hinted at in the section on errors.

The second method relevant to SDL is that described in Curran, C.A., Counselling - Learning: A Whole-Person Model for Education (1972). Curran's work is reported more accessibly in La Forge (1971) and Stevick (1973). In

this method the principal activity is learner-directed free conversation, right from the very beginning. The students, called 'clients', sit in a closed circle facing one another. The 'counsellors' ('knowers' - people who know the target language) are outside the circle. In the first stage, a client will decide what he wants to say and says it aloud in the L_1; he receives it back from the counsellor in the TL, "reflected ... in a warm, accepting tone." The client then repeats it in the TL. "After 2 to 3 hours clients usually begin to speak about topics that really matter to them, including their language fears and insecurities. This breakthrough makes possible the eventual establishment of feelings of security and belonging, and conversation begins to flow more freely."

This is the first of five stages. The second is the stage of self-assertion, where the clients begin to try out TL elements directly. The counsellor gives help when he perceives it as necessary. In the third stage - the birth stage - the clients operate mainly in the TL. The counsellor keeps quiet unless help is positively requested by a client. In the next stage - the reversal stage - the clients are now sufficiently secure in their new language identities to accept correction from the counsellor whenever errors occur. Finally; the independent stage - the counsellors become fully integrated into the group, freely intervening not only to offer correction but also to improve style.

The client is free to shift at will from one stage to another, in either direction. In the early stages the client resolves his anxiety through total trust in and commitment to the knower. "He thus abandons ... something of his old self. Soon, however, a new self begins to develop ... This "new self" inevitably runs into conflicts with the knower's self, but in the later stages these conflicts are resolved and the "new self" completes the transition from embryo to adulthood." (Stevick p. 264).

The deliberate attempt by Curran to use his experience from psychotherapy relates to certain aspects of the facilitators role in SDL. Also, of course, the therapy is "client-centred" in that the clients make the running so far as what is being learnt, and what help is given from counsellors. This is SDC within a fairly well-defined structure.

These methods offer suggestions of ways in which SDL can be incorporated into FL learning. They are different in many respects from the approach taken by the C.R.A.P.E.L. but they seem to me to fit into the description of SDL I offered above.

Notes

1. Logan is, of course, begging the question here.

2. I am grateful to David Carver, Scottish Centre for Education Overseas for drawing my attention to many of the papers mentioned in this section.

3. Also, of course, such an hypothesis gets strong support from common sense.

4. The terms 'teacher' or 'instructor' are not suitable in SDL for evident reasons

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