Chapter 4

Teaching for autonomy—challenges and possibilities

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Part One

Isabel's story

The development of learner autonomy has been one of the general goals of the Portuguese educational system for about 20 years now. In fact, the concept was first explicitly used in our foreign language syllabi in 1991, but at the time 'most innovative' foreign language teachers were still mainly concerned about doing a good job within the principles of a communicative approach.

I was one of these teachers until 1993 when the announcement of a teacher development course entitled 'Pedagogy for Autonomy', to be held at the University of Minho, in Braga, by Flávia Vieira and her team, appeared as the first opportunity for me to learn something that I expected would go beyond the repetition of the fashionable expression 'learning to learn'. Hoping to find what I was looking for, I enrolled in the 30-hour course with great enthusiasm, willing to dedicate six Saturday mornings of my life to this new cause, but still unaware that this was the beginning of what turned out to be one of the most significant changes in my (professional) life.

But significant change is never a simple process as it entails questioning personal beliefs and practices. After the first 30 hours, in which theoretical input was well combined with systematic reflection on personal pedagogical beliefs and practices, my natural sense of professional disquiet increased. I realized that I had already reached a certain compromise between the assumptions of the communicative approach and those of learner-based teaching, but, however open to pedagogical innovation I considered myself, I still felt that I needed to take a further step forward if I wanted to implement pedagogy for autonomy—I would have to pay extra attention to the development of my pupils' learning competence.

In spite of my readiness to accept change, it took me some time to 'digest' some of the new concepts, and psychological preparation to be able to manage emotional states that ranged from idealistic enthusiasm to change the (language teaching/learning) world, to frustration caused by the obstacles I had to face. At this stage, I knew that I would never be able to implement pedagogy for autonomy as defined by Henri Holec (1981), but I was determined to experiment with some aspects of the new approach with my students. Despite all my doubts, the course helped me reach a new level of inquiry, which made me feel more confident to introduce changes into my practice.

In my critical report on the theoretical part of the course, I expressed my intention to establish a relationship between pedagogy for autonomy and learner motivation as a way to bring the newly acquired theoretical knowledge into practice. The opportunity to do it appeared sooner than expected—in September 1993, a new school year began and I soon realized that one of my classes seemed to be there just to challenge me, to give me the chance to confirm or reconstruct my personal theories and pedagogical beliefs. The

existence of a concrete problem (the learners' shocking awareness of their lack of preparation to cope with the demands of the Year Ten syllabus) was an important stimulus for me to experiment aspects of pedagogy for autonomy as a means to solve it. In this attempt, I had to identify the real causes of the problem and decide what to do in order to help the class overcome their frustration, and motivate them to learn English.

Getting the learners actively involved in the learning process was not an easy task, as they tended to resist giving up their 'comfortable' position as knowledge recipients (or mere passive spectators). But after some initial effort, I started getting precious feedback from them—a fairly good number of them kept learning diaries, and answering questionnaires in which they expressed their opinion about different aspects of the teaching/learning process gradually came to be regarded as a natural classroom activity. Taking all kinds of feedback into account, implementing different forms of collaborative work in the classroom and giving pupils the chance to choose activities according to their learning priorities, as well as letting them select or produce materials for the classroom, I was trying to cater for my pupils' individual needs.

It was particularly gratifying to find out that I could actually do what at first seemed impossible. I proved to myself that a learner-centred approach, which I had only thought feasible with small groups of learners, was also possible with large classes.

In this process, I could count on invaluable help from Flávia, who showed me the links between pedagogy for autonomy and action research as a teacher development strategy. Adopting a reflective/investigative approach to teaching was an exciting experience, not only because it was new to me, but also mainly because it helped me manage some conceptual conflicts derived from my recently enlarged pedagogical horizons and the contextual constraints I had to deal with. Besides, I had no doubt that while I helped my students think about strategies that might enable them to regard the learning process as something they could control, I also learned to look at the teaching/learning process as something that I could manage based not just on my representations of good teaching practices but particularly on the learners' needs, preferences and cooperation.

Thanks to the support I got from my university colleagues, I never lost my sense of professional security, because, besides all the practical orientations they provided, they helped me overcome my anxieties and reassured me about the relevance of my work.

It was at this point that my professional life changed radically. Before the end of the school year I was invited to join my university colleagues, which meant the beginning of a new cycle in my personal and professional development, and a new level of commitment with the theory and practice of pedagogy for autonomy, now in the role of teacher educator.

After 14 years of a very challenging professional journey, in the course of which I had the gratifying opportunity to disseminate my work and research at national and international conferences, where I had the privilege to meet many prominent personalities in the field of pedagogy for autonomy, I came back to my school, where I'm now sharing with other colleagues what I've learnt along the path to learner and teacher autonomy.

Frank's response

I note that Isabel like me was an experienced teacher when she encountered 'autonomy'. I wonder if she believes that it is necessary to have established one's credentials as a 'teacher' before embarking upon the revolution that autonomy is. I feel that a new, inexperienced teacher would have great difficulty coping with the challenges and collegial and parent opposition that autonomy entails in the initial stages. Isabel too

mentions obstacles and contextual restraints. I think it would be interesting to hear what these were and what strategies Isabel used to overcome them.

An interesting aspect of Isabel's story is that the class she begins with seems to be weak and initially unmotivated, but Isabel doesn't use these (my) negative terms. Instead she describes the learners' self-awareness of difficulty of the task as being a motivating factor for her, the teacher, to adopt autonomy. In this way it seems the students are active agents rather than passive recipients even before autonomy is introduced. It would be interesting to hear whether these students almost demanded autonomy, and what was Isabel's role.

I know that an important moment on my road to autonomy was discovering that it opened learning to weak students who had been previously cowed by the standard achievement expectations of teacher-centred classroom. I would very much like to hear/read about Isabel's experiences with weak learners and autonomy. Autonomy generally means moving the focus from teaching to learning. Isabel too says that she devoted greater attention to pupils' learning competencies. In the classroom I encourage learners to reflect on their learning strategies in their logbooks: how does Isabel improve learners' learning competencies? Personally I regard logbooks/learner diaries as an essential part of the autonomous classroom. Were learner diaries in Isabel's classroom optional, and was their gradual increase in popularity due to peer pressure or teacher influence? Why did their popularity grow and, if they were not obligatory, then how could Isabel monitor her learners' development?

Isabel says her 'change' to autonomy took both time and a re-evaluation of personal and pedagogical beliefs, and that she realised she could not implement Holec's version of autonomy. It would be interesting to hear about what autonomy challenged in Isabel's original beliefs and in what ways Isabel's definition of autonomy differs from Holec's and why.

Finally I was intrigued to read that autonomy has been a general goal of the Portuguese educational system since 1991. How influential has this goal been on educational/pedagogical development in the country in general and is there a difference in the degree of implementation between different education sectors (primary, secondary, tertiary)?

Vivien's response

There are three aspects to Isabel's story that I am particularly interested in: the questions regarding her personal beliefs and practices, the action-research scheme she took on, and the challenges faced during the process of promoting learner autonomy.

With the attempt to make a 'change' in her teaching practice, Isabel took the initiative to bring elements of learner autonomy into her teaching practice. During this process, Isabel commented on her experience of 'questioning personal beliefs and practices'. I first encountered learner autonomy through a course given by Dr Barbara Sinclair. I was fascinated by the potential of this concept, especially with regards to teaching practice in Taiwan. However, I was also concerned with two issues regarding the promotion of learner autonomy: could the concept of learner autonomy be accepted in the relatively traditional teacher-centred context of Taiwan, and would the teacher and the student be willing to adjust their beliefs regarding their roles in the teaching and learning process? The major element that surrounds my concerns was mostly associated with sociocultural factors of teaching and learning. I am therefore interested in knowing more about the questions raised by Isabel and the possible factors behind these questions.

Another aspect Isabel mentioned was about linking pedagogy for autonomy and action research. As an action researcher, I have also benefited from conducting action

research projects on promoting learner autonomy in classroom settings. Through these projects, I have learned to develop a better understanding of the interpretations of learner autonomy in dissimilar contexts, as well as its potential benefits and issues in its implementation in more traditional classrooms. In my experience, the promotion of learner autonomy in the Taiwanese context requires greater attention to the psychological preparation for the students to adjust their beliefs in the initial stage, and to later learning-how-to-learn training activities. It would be interesting to know how Isabel linked pedagogy for autonomy and action-research. While Isabel considered that pedagogy for autonomy defined by Henri Holec (1981) was not suitable in her context, it would be helpful to know the working definition of learner autonomy Isabel took in implementing pedagogy for autonomy. In addition, I am extremely curious about the approach she took to promoting autonomy in her teaching practice, the support she provided to students for greater development of their autonomy, the scheme of her action research project in relation to her professional development, and her perception of changes during the course of implementing her pedagogy for autonomy.

The final point I noticed from Isabel's story was the challenges mentioned in various stages. For example, what exactly were these 'conceptual conflicts' and the 'contextual constraints' mentioned in the action research experience? How did Isabel deal with these conflicts and constraints, and how did the reflective approach help? What types of resistance did Isabel find in her students and how did she tackle them? From my experience of promoting learner autonomy, determining and then dealing with these issues has helped me to develop both professionally and personally in significant ways.

Part Two

Isabel's story continued

Both Vivien and Frank focus on important aspects of my first encounter with autonomy, but however important that first experience was in the (re-)definition of my professional identity, it was just the beginning of a journey in which I have had the privilege to go on learning how to improve learner and teacher autonomy. I will therefore try to answer their questions by using them as bridges between the past and the present whenever I feel that what happened in between is significant to my story.

One of the main points I would like to make with this narrative is that teacher education/development is a determining factor in pedagogical innovation aimed at educational reform, and I believe it is all about predisposition and opportunity. In fact, I think that a long teaching experience may work as a constraint on change rather than as a facilitating factor, since deep-rooted beliefs and practices are always harder to change. My first encounter with pedagogy for autonomy represented a turning point in my career, because it opened a wide road of opportunities for personal and professional growth, but this would not have happened had the circumstances been otherwise. Besides my willingness to keep growing as a professional, I must admit that in 1993 I was particularly lucky to have had the chance to attend the above-mentioned teacher development course on learner autonomy.

More than my previous experience, what really enabled me to embark on my first adventure was the newly acquired knowledge and Flávia's support for my first modest attempts to adopt a more learner-centred approach to teaching and learning. Thanks to what I had recently learnt, I knew that the communicative approach was not enough to promote learner autonomy, because it did not explicitly focus on aspects of the learning process. So I tried to introduce tasks that involved using different cognitive and metacognitive strategies, so that the students might develop language and language learning awareness. They would frequently reflect upon their difficulties, the causes of

those difficulties, and strategies to solve them. This could be done in their learner diaries, if they wanted, and those who did revealed some improvements. I cannot say that diaries became popular, because only some students kept them systematically, but the results were reassuring as to the benefits of this practice. Besides frequent reflection upon the learning process, I also created conditions for pedagogical negotiation, both through collaborative work and choice of tasks that met their own learning needs.

Catering for different needs, and finding time to focus on the learning process, were the biggest challenges of the new approach, as this involved a radical change in teacher and learner roles. I had to learn to let go of some of my power so that the learners might participate in the decision-making process. And I had to learn to manage the inner tension between what I aimed at and what I felt capable of achieving. I soon realised that Holec's 'strong version' of autonomy (see Smith, 2002) is not workable in a context where many curricular and organizational decisions are beyond the teacher's control. Still, bearing in mind that there are degrees of autonomy (Sinclair, 2000), I have also learnt that a lot can be done to help learners develop their learning competence without going against the system.

The obstacles and constraints I was particularly aware of at the time derived mainly from my class's unpreparedness at all levels and my own inexperience in this new way of doing things. Besides that, and although I felt free to experiment with new teaching and learning strategies, I knew that my work was an isolated effort. On the other hand, the learners were used to a 'pedagogy of dependence' (Vieira, 1997), showing signs of complete discouragement when they became aware of their immense difficulties. When they realised that, despite their good marks in the previous year, the great majority of them was almost completely incompetent users of the English language, they were in shock, and their self-esteem suffered a hard blow. It wasn't easy for them, and their parents, to face the reality, but as we tried to understand the situation and started identifying some of the causes of their problem, they adhered to my pedagogical proposals. They felt that I was really committed to helping them solve a situation they were not entirely responsible for.

It was at this point that I learnt that this process of identifying a problem, taking action to solve it, analysing the results and taking further action was the essence of action research. Adopting a more systematic reflective stance towards practice made me aware of the importance of situational factors for my students' and my own development process, and also of the fact that learner and teacher autonomy are the two sides of the same coin, which means that to enhance students' autonomy teachers need to be willing and able to be critical about their own practice, and prepared to reconstruct it. But only as a member of Flávia's team did I have the chance to start doing action research in a more consistent way. In 1997 I presented my first project at the International Meeting on Developing Learning held in Barcelona (Marques, 2000), and from then on, all my work as a teacher educator consisted in using action research as the main supervision strategy, aiming to develop my student teachers' abilities to promote learner autonomy (Moreira et al., 1999; Barbosa & Paiva, 2002). It was also in this professional context that I developed my MA and PhD projects, both involving work in the field of pedagogy for autonomy in combination with action research, becoming gradually more at ease with the theory and practice of pedagogy for autonomy, but also more aware of the complex framework for its development (see Jiménez Raya et al., 2007).

When I returned to my school in 2007, I started doing with my students what I had been trying to help my student teachers do with theirs—creating conditions for learners to play a more active role in the learning process by engaging them in reflection, experimentation, negotiation and self-direction processes. But this time I was determined to 'spread the news', and so I started a project involving colleagues from different

disciplinary areas with whom I have been trying to explore aspects of pedagogy for autonomy in our classes. We meet regularly to reflect on our achievements and/or frustrations, feeling that however 'weak' our version of autonomy may be, we are doing our learners a good service.

Within this project, a significant number of learners have had their first chance to have a voice in the teaching/learning process, namely through active participation in the evaluation/assessment process. Assuming that formative evaluation practices are central to the development of their autonomy, I have used a few test correction strategies that include individual reflection upon performance, difficulties and ways to overcome them, as well as collaborative work to find the correct answers to the questions. In each group there must be at least one student that can help the 'weaker' ones, and they usually solve all their problems among themselves. I monitor their work, supporting them as a last resource. Most students enjoy doing it this way, because they can learn from one another, being able to choose what to focus on according to their learning needs. Besides, it is a good way to involve the 'stronger' ones in an activity they might otherwise perceive as useless.

Besides this attempt to use tests as a learning tool, I also engage them in self- and peer-assessment of speaking skills. We all use a grid containing five/six previously negotiated criteria, whose descriptors, also previously analysed, they must have in mind when filling it out. At the end of the assessment process, students are grouped randomly, coming up with a mark for each member of the group. To avoid injustice in this process, as some students tend to be too 'generous', or simply not capable of being accurate in their appreciation of their own and their classmates' performances, my mark makes up two thirds of the final assessment of this skill. I always explain to them that my decision to include them is based on my conviction that they have a right to take part in such an important aspect of their academic life, and also on the assumption that together we can reduce the natural subjectivity of the evaluation process.

The local nature of individual or (still very rare) collective initiatives shows that the inclusion of autonomy as a general goal of the Portuguese educational system for 20 years now has not been the driving force of pedagogical development in the country. In fact, there is still a wide gap between discourse and practice, mainly because educational reform is neither common nor systematically supported by teacher development programmes. On the other hand, not many teachers (and students) seem to be willing to change what they believe has worked well for years. Pedagogy for autonomy implies rethinking pedagogical roles, which in turn demands the capacity to problematize and reconstruct one's pedagogical theories and practices. This reflective stance can threaten one's sense of professional self-confidence, which may explain a still very generalized resistance to the adoption of pedagogy for autonomy, be it at the primary, secondary or tertiary level. In fact, and although teachers often complain about students' lack of autonomy, most of our learners get to their tenth year of schooling as rather passive participants in their own learning process. Noticing this in my 'best' class this year, I had to ask them to reflect in writing about it, and from their reflections I selected a few ideas[1] that confirm my conviction that school practices still reveal predominantly teacher-centred approaches that go hand in hand with a pedagogy of dependence (Vieira, 1997):
* *We are used to listen to the teacher… and when it comes to take the initiative… we don't do that.* (Learner 1)
* *I think the best solution would be if the teacher started to choose who's answering and asking people to go to the board, so the rhythm of the class would become more natural and the environment more comfortable to the ones that wish to participate.* (Learner 2)
* *I don't like to be the first to speak and I'm not the only one who thinks this way. Choose someone would be easier.* (Learner 3)

* I think we are shy to show our answers and we don't want to expose them in front of the class.
(Learner 4)

These examples show that regardless of students' level of communicative competence, there is still a long way to go if we assume that it is the school's mission to prepare active and responsible citizens willing and able to engage in a lifelong learning process, without which they will not cope with the challenges of our society. Teachers and learners must redefine their notion of a 'good' teacher or learner, which is not a conflict-free process. When exploring new possibilities, it is often difficult to be certain about the quality of one's action, because it sometimes happens that what one believes is right does not work as expected. Despite my enlarged experience in this field, this kind of conceptual conflict is always there, reminding me that there cannot be simple answers to what is complex by nature. Accepting this and struggling not to give up hope are the greatest challenges I face every day.

Frank's second response

In my first response I argued that many years of experience and perhaps frustration could act as catalysts to change, when triggered by appropriate in-service teacher training courses that would make the experienced teacher more willing to embrace autonomy. Isabel seems to disagree, saying that 'deep-rooted beliefs and practices are harder to change'. Yet her own experience is very similar to mine. She too had been teaching for some years when she 'had the chance to attend a teacher development course on learner autonomy'. This course then gave her, the experienced teacher, the necessary impetus and input to change and embrace learner autonomy. I still believe that 'the system' demands that you do your time as a traditional teacher and build up respect (like money in the bank) which you must draw upon when you change to a pro-autonomy approach. That's because the initial reaction, in my experience, from parents and colleagues is very sceptical. If a new teacher has not had time to build up his/her credit rating and were to embark on autonomy, I believe they would probably be dismissed both intellectually and in reality.

Like me, Isabel had a mentor. I wonder if this is a prerequisite. To go against conventional practices and centuries of teacher-centred education is difficult. Perhaps only few have the courage to do it without having a mentor to guide them.

I love Isabel's comment, '… although teachers often complain about students' lack of autonomy or initiative, most of our learners get to their tenth year of schooling as rather passive participants in their own learning.' Why is this the case? Teachers who make such complaints must at some level realise that their teacher-centred teaching is not working. Do we as teachers cherish our power too much to relinquish it? Or is it just laziness? It is easier not to rock the boat. But is that why people choose to be teachers? I believe that most teacher trainees start with a dream of making a difference in education, so what happens to their dreams and goals? Why do teachers conform and still complain that their students are not active in their learning? Isabel says that introducing autonomy demands of a teacher that they 'reconstruct his/her pedagogical theories and practices'. I would suggest that most teachers worth their salt find that their personality and their identity as a teacher are tightly interwoven, and that changing to autonomy is, from this point of view, an existential struggle to redefine one's whole self-image.

Isabel says that her students 'felt that I (Isabel) was really committed to helping them…' Yesterday (14 June 2012) I had two lessons with my 15-year-old students to evaluate the year's work with a special particular focus on autonomy. I received a similar response from my students, who explained that they felt autonomy would not work with all teachers. They said exactly what Isabel says: it is important for them that a teacher really cares about their students' learning, and they believed that I cared. This raises the

issue of the teacher's role, which I think is not just about giving away authority, but also about being personally involved with the students. There must be a clear affective relationship, meaning that students feel obliged to prove that they are worthy of the trust that their teacher invests in them. This is an area that I think has not been sufficiently investigated. Dörnyei (2001) says that autonomy (and not a teacher) motivates students, but while a teacher cannot motivate a class, a 'bad' teacher can demotivate a class. I believe that the committed teacher, not just autonomy, can and must motivate, as I think is clear in Isabel's case.

Ema Ushioda said in a lecture at the IATEFL conference in Exeter in 2008: '… we need to hear the learners' voices. Research needs to focus on their needs and experiences…' Isabel's account of classroom practice is for me the most interesting part of her story. Here we get a privileged insight into autonomy in practice and hear the students' voices and the practising teacher's. And I feel I want to hear more, much more. Very often I find that articles and books on autonomy are overly theoretical, and we seldom read about real-life autonomy, in real classrooms, with real kids. Isabel opens her classroom door to us and invites us in. She quotes students who are themselves reluctant to venture into the personal responsibility of autonomy, and Isabel too struggles to maintain hope. I can identify with these experiences and feelings. I too have students who, on the one hand, love working autonomously, but who, on a day-to-day basis, are still just teenagers with a need to challenge the teacher and provoke. At times I feel weary of the constant necessity for my mediation of motivation and scaffolding. There are moments when just doing the textbook is almost tempting. I do not do that, just as Isabel does not, and, like Isabel, I fight to maintain my belief that autonomy is about empowering people not only to take charge of their learning, but also to take democratic responsibility in their own society.

Vivien's second response

One of the most intriguing aspects of Isabel's change in her approach to promoting learner autonomy was her attempt to encourage the students to take part in the decision-making process through a certain level of empowerment. Despite the notion that empowering learners is an essential element of promoting learner autonomy, many teachers, especially those from more traditional teaching contexts, may find it difficult to let go of their power. Nevertheless, Isabel took on an approach that may not be considered 'mainstream', and she dealt with her 'inner tension' and tried different ways to promote learner autonomy for her students. During the course of this experiment, Isabel went through a process of constructing and reconstructing her thoughts of teaching through her learning about pedagogy for autonomy, as well as engaging in reflections on her teaching practice. Seeing myself as a constructivist researcher, I have also experienced something similar to what Isabel mentions in her story. For me, this (re)construction process has been full of resistance incidents, frustrating moments, organisational pressure, and peer pressure. Yet this was of tremendous help for my professional development. Not only have I developed greater teacher autonomy, I have also gained better knowledge and strategies about how to help my students learn how to learn.

Another interesting aspect of Isabel's story is about the types of activities used in promoting learner autonomy. Through altering the more teacher-centred model towards a more learner-centred one, Isabel's approach centred on different important aspects of the learning process such as reflections and learning strategies. In the implementation of pedagogy for autonomy, engaging learners in reflecting on their learning in a critical way as well as offering strategies for learners to experiment with and reflect on are recognised as indispensable elements. In addition, she gave the students the opportunity to

participate in the process of assessment, which allowed them to develop greater metacognitive knowledge, another element essential for the development of learner autonomy. I also used some of the same types of activities as Isabel in my projects with primary and secondary level students. Like Isabel, I found them to be relatively effective in helping the students to understand better their own learning process, become more aware of their learning needs, and take a more critical stance to what they learn and how they learn.

Putting pedagogy for autonomy into practice is surely not an easy task and a certain level of resistance from students seems unavoidable. Isabel identified possible causes for resistance in her students' voices, and these mirror very closely the reasons given by my own students:

* *I feel strange to speak in front of my classmates…* (Learner 1)
* *I don't want my classmates think that I am showing off…* (Learner 2)
* *We are always told to listen to the teacher in class…* (Learner 3)
* *If my answer is wrong, I will feel so embarrassed and ashamed. So, I would rather choose to keep quiet in class…* (Learner 4).

These extracts somehow indicate the students' worries and anxieties about taking more responsibility for their learning. Exploring further the possible roots of their anxiety, I was convinced that the anxiety was largely associated with the students' beliefs about teaching and learning. Since dominant discourses and practices in Taiwanese society are based on Confucian concepts, a good teacher is generally considered 'an authoritative truth-giver who lectures to the students, controlling the information students receive and expecting that information to be given back on tests' (Torkelson, 1995: 135). Although a weaker version of such a notion remains salient in modern Taiwanese society, students are somehow still expected (and reminded by their parents) to respect and obey the teacher, and this may explain partly why students are hesitant to be active in taking part in classroom activities. And that is why my approach to promoting learner autonomy normally (and necessarily) commences with a series of psychological preparatory tasks such as reducing their anxiety about, and building their confidence in, autonomous learning.

As described by Isabel, educational reform in Portugal was not supported by appropriate teacher development programmes despite the fact that autonomy was included as an official aim of the educational system in Portugal. Interestingly, the situation in Taiwan is relatively similar in this case. Educational reform in the 1990s in Taiwan included autonomy in the curriculum guidelines, yet learner autonomy schemes have not been implemented widely in this context. Since learner autonomy is unstable and varied by nature (Sinclair, 2000), pedagogy for autonomy needs to take into account a wide range of political, socio-cultural, learner and learning factors that have interwoven effects on one another. Accordingly, it might be unrealistic and impractical to expect that teachers in any context would be able to embrace and initiate pedagogy for autonomy without adequate training and sufficient contextual support.

A final interesting point for me in Isabel's continuing story is the reality that dealing with students' perceptions and beliefs takes time. This is why long-term measures are indispensable in putting pedagogy for autonomy into practice. To make this happen, students should be given the opportunities to construct, co-construct and reconstruct their meanings of autonomous learning at their own pace in a socially constructed learning situation. As teachers aiming to implement pedagogy for autonomy, we will have to continue believing in its potential benefits for our learners in their future life-long learning. We should also try to make more effort about its implementation through individual and/or collaborative means in the hope that our learners will eventually become more autonomous and effective learners.

Note

1. The learners all gave me permission to make their statements public, which I have transcribed unedited.

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