


The Challenge of Bringing Autonomous Learning into EFL Settings

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The goal of education, if we are to survive, is the facilitation of *change and learning*. The only man who is educated is the man who has learned to learn; the man who has realized that no knowledge is secure, that only the process of seeking knowledge gives a basis for security. Changingness, a reliance on *process* rather than upon static knowledge, is the only way that makes any sense as a goal for education in the modern world



The Origins of Autonomy in Language Learning

It appeared in 1971 through the *Council of Europe's Modern Languages*. One outcome of this project, the *Centre de Recherches et d'applications en Langues*, directed by Yves Châlon, started working extensively on autonomy



Defining autonomy

Holec, Châlon's colleague, defined it as the ability to take charge of one's learning and is a natural product of self-directed learning. Here the objectives, progress and evaluation of learning are determined by learners themselves.



Defining autonomy

Benson and Voller (1997) suggest that autonomy is used to discuss:

- a. Situations in which Ls study entirely on their own
- b. A set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning
- c. An inborn capacity suppressed by institutional education.



Defining autonomy

- d. The exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning.
- e. The right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

How much freedom do we give our EFL learners? Why so?



Autonomous Learners

They commonly

- a) have insights into their learning styles and strategies
- b) take an active approach to the learning task at hand
- c) are willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the L2 at all costs
- d) are good guessers



Autonomous Learners

- e) attend to form as well as to content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy
- f) develop the TL into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply
- g) have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the TL.



Why autonomy?

Several advantages are evident:

- a. Learner autonomy enhances the learner's motivation and leads to more effective learning
- b. It provides learners with more opportunities for English communication in a non-native environment



Why autonomy?

- c. It accommodates to the individual needs of learners at all levels (place, times, skills, proficiency levels)
- d. It has a lasting influence on learning habits.
- e. Helps Ts cope with scarce resources, limited time for instruction, mixed proficiency levels.



How to start?

- Convince students to experience self-learning and help them set realistic goals for their level.
- Group learners to promote cooperation and outcomes
- Collect relevant materials and topics for the syllabus and curriculum



How to start?

- Work on flexible schedules for finishing the tasks (a movie, an article, a newspaper, creating a superhero), but keep deadlines.
- Provide the tools learners need to carry out independent work and give clear, specific directions that can be understood and followed by limited proficiency students.



How to start?

- Keep track of your students progress by means of assessment tasks (quizzes, finished products) and make them keep track of the goals they set initially by means of reflection

What might prevent you from working with autonomous learning?



How to know if it works

In order to measure if autonomy is working ask yourself:

- Do Ls make and use learning plans or follow those suggested by you?
- Do they participate in classroom decisions?
- Do they reflect upon their learning?
- Do they initiate exchanges in the L2?



What can you do in class?

Imagine the topic for the class is weather. Learners can do this:

- Brainstorm and make a mind map of ideas associated with the moon.
- Find three poems about the moon and share them with your group.
- Collect facts about the moon. Finally, give them a short lecture on the moon and weather and assess them.



Quick things to try out

- Going over homework

One student asks the first question to a classmate. If the answer is right, that student asks the next question to another classmate. If the answer is wrong, any person can provide corrective feedback. This works better when dividing the class in small groups and reporting back



Quick things to try out

- Applying student created tests

Ask Ss to get in groups and come up with one or two questions and write them on the board. Then correct the questions and select the best ones to be included in an upcoming test or quiz.



Quick things to try out

- KWL Charts

When a new topic is taught, Ss fill out a chart with what they **know** about it, what they **want** to know about it and what they **learned** in your class. At the end of a term they can be used to assess your students.



Quick things to try out

- E-mail, blogs, social networks

Ask your Ss to leave a comment,
answer a question, open an e-mail
account, post messages in
Facebook, join discussion groups

Post 1: Do Over: Early English/Colonial Literature - Internet Explorer provided by Dell


http://angloamericanlit.wordpress.com/post-1/

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Post 1: Do Over: Early English/Colonial Literature ...

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Post 1: Do Over: Early English/Colonial Literature

Given that the first time I asked you to write a comment on this poem some of you just copied some bits and pieces of web pages on literature, I have decided to give you another chance to analyze this piece of writing. I want you to do this following one of the approaches described in the article we read at the beginning of the semester about literary analysis in the EFL classroom. You will use **Approach 3: Stylistics** in order to write a personal comment on what you read. You have until may 4 to post your comment.


The link is this: <http://www.luminarium.org/renlit/departure.htm>

See you,

Ana C.

31 Comments

ANA C. SÁNCHEZ



Ana C. Sanchez

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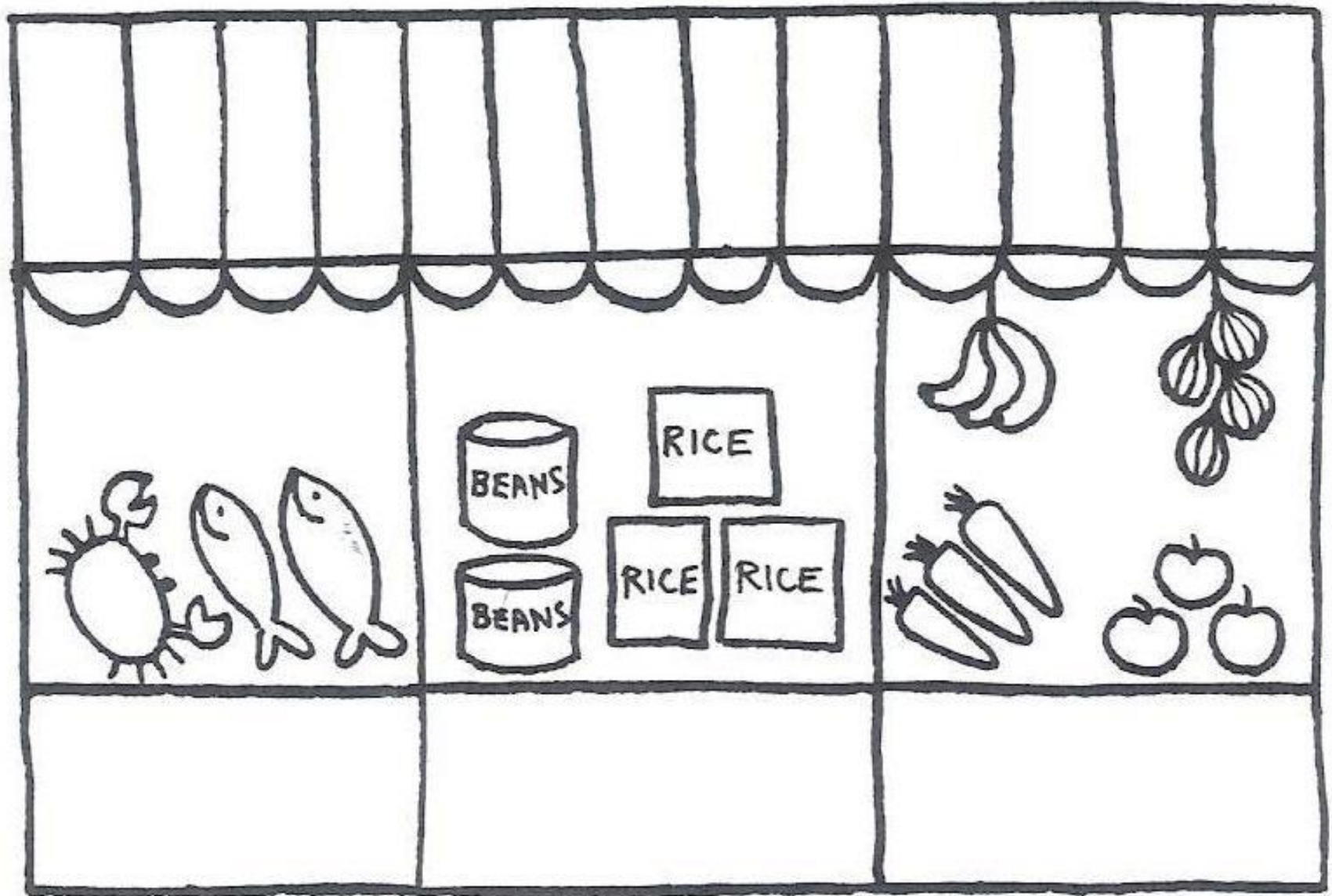
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Quick things to try out

- Jigsaw activities with simple topics and tasks such as divided paragraphs that students have to study to be put together later are effective with different proficiency levels and large groups.

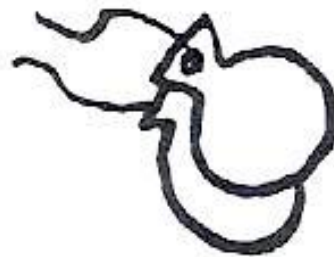
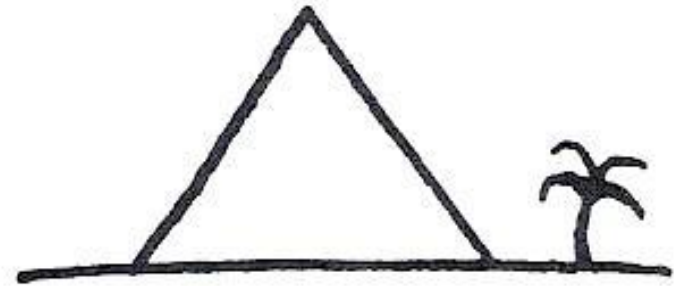
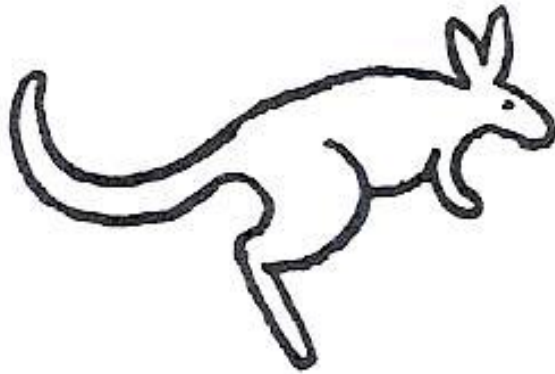




Quick things to try out

- Long term projects where students have to look for information and come up with a written or spoken product (a brochure, a short article, a wall chart, a five-minute presentation) are feasible tasks.

But remember: clear directions and deadlines and clear assignment of individual tasks are key!





Your turn...

How can you turn these topics into tasks where you apply autonomous learning?

- Teaching the verb to be
- Teaching about food
- Teaching about daily activities
- Teaching about simple past
- Teaching about professions



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Thank you very much 😊
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