

Mamadou KANDJI (Ed.)

ELT IN THE 21st CENTURY

Ten Critical Essays
in the Senegalese Context



GET IN LANE !

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

The present book is a compendium of ten critical essays about “**ELT in the 21st Century**”. It covers the theme from various perspectives which can be subdivided into six main headings:

- 1- Learner Autonomy
- 2- Teacher Professional Development
- 3- New Paradigms and Technologies in CLT
- 4- Skills Development
- 5- Opportunities and Challenges Facing the Teaching Profession
- 6- Other Issues in Today's English Teaching

The essays collected here discuss crucial issues in ELT in the Senegalese context.

The book consists of three main chapters:

Chapter one, **Learner Autonomy and 21st Century Skills**, opens up new heuristic perspectives about issues related to learner autonomization within the teaching/learning process. Ibrahima FAYE posits a new approach to learner autonomy in 21st century ELT with teacher creating an appropriate environment to enhance learners' ability to organize their own learning process. In the same vein, Aminata BADIANE LO analyses ELT Challenges and Opportunities in the 21st century. Mansour GUÈYE suggests that teaching writing as a communicative skill will develop learner autonomy. These contributions validate the claim that when learners are put in situations to cope with different challenges in their day-to-day practice of English, they highly develop their autonomy in the language learning process.

Chapter two singles out **Learner Engagement in Classroom Activities** as a top priority in ELT. In this context, Aladji Mamadou SANÉ points out recourse to technology as an important tool to enhance learner engagement in order to place it at a higher gear in classroom activities. In the same perspective, that of enhancing learner engagement, Mathiam THIAM proposes reading through matching as a highly motivating and truly pedagogic game for learners. THIAM shows how a learner's mind tries to square its perception of a written message with the sender's intended meaning, in order to build up autonomization, by placing its approach upon communicative theories. Astou FALL revisits theories and practices of teaching popular songs in secondary schools, as a valid approach to semantic and grammatical acquisition in a playful context, that of game with a purpose combining learning with pleasure.

Grounded on pragmatics, the third and final chapter of the volume marshals the issue within **Teacher Professional Development** and an **Assessment of CLT**. In this way, it explores new avenues with broad scope and vista. El Hadji Cheikh Kandji's paper shows how scientific tools such as diagrams, charts and graphs can be fully used in the design of didactic activities for students in scientific streams. The paper is grounded in the basic fact that diagrams, charts and graphs, which are elaborate systems of representation, are part and parcel of 21st-century communication. As a result, they can play a prominent role in the development of didactic strategies targeting communicative competence.

Baïdy DIA probes into the modalities the English language teacher can make and shall make the difference through effective leadership and personal development within schools. Diome FAYE pinpoints the mandatory necessity to re-consider the teaching of speaking due to the fact that the oral proficiency tests for the BAC and BFEM

exams in Senegal have a few distinct advantages over traditional written tests, in so far as they put the learner in a practical language use context. In the same line, Mamadou Malal SY casts a critical glance at practical approaches to integrating the four skills in ELT, that is to say the necessity to dovetail listening, reading, speaking and writing.

The editor would like to thank all contributors for, not only providing instructive, insightful, breakthrough, albeit epiphany papers; but also for sharing experiences with colleagues and other ELT professionals alike. However, he would like to stress that individual contributors are responsible for the ideas and opinions expressed in their respective papers.

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CHAPTER I

**LEARNER AUTONOMY
AND 21ST CENTURY SKILLS**

RETHINKING LEARNER AUTONOMY IN 21ST CENTURY ELT

Ibrahima FAYE¹

Introduction

The concept of learner autonomy, in the Senegalese EFL context has to be more rethought to the extent that a language is undoubtedly for communication. Thus, this paper aims at raising awareness about confidence building within students and their active and independent participation in classroom learning-based activities. In this regard, the teaching / learning process is not to be confined only to the classroom, rather, it has to shape responsible and active citizens able to contribute to their country's development and beyond, provided that the world is now a globalized one.

Research on learner autonomy is now the EFL/ ESL teachers' concern, but already in the early 1970s, it began to be explored but limited to cooperative, collaborative, peer-interactive, and peer-tutoring approaches. Nevertheless, the commonality of these attempts is that, with learner autonomy the approach minimizes student learning through student-student rather than direct teacher-student interaction. That is why, according to Lisa Marie Ilola and al. in *Structuring Student Interaction to Promote Learning*, Classroom may be short of computer, teacher aides, or the

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latest in sophisticated materials, but every classroom has students (1989/1993: 2).

Furthermore, the learner, to be more performing and productive, can be helped by one's fellow learners without any teacher intervention. In the same vein, according to Finocchiaro (1988), in what he names "Buddy System", rather than peer teaching, learner autonomy is a motivation factor that places extra responsibility on the shoulders of the more able students by getting them cooperate within the group.

Practically, this paper aims at raising awareness to any actor in the realm of the EFL teaching/learning context, which is linked to pedagogical approaches about learner autonomy. Therefore, the concept of learner autonomy is meant to be more considered and redefined without leaving behind how important someone's learning can be autonomous. Then, the strategies empowering students' autonomy are to be highlighted. Eventually, a typical class experience that illustrates autonomous learning will be shared in this paper just to combine both theory and practice in so far as learners engage with different learning assets.

I. Elements of Definition:

The term *Learner Autonomy* was first coined in 1981 by Henri Holec who based it upon the ability to take charge of one's own learning. Phil Benson reinforces such a definition stating that Autonomy is recognition of the rights of learners within educational systems. Therefore, the concept of learner autonomy is, obviously, all about the learner, not just about the learner learning alone, but taking responsibility in one's proper learning

To build confidence within learners in the 21st century; learner autonomy seeks to enhance their awareness about what kind of approaches they liked in the teaching/learning

process. In fact, today's learning should be linked to what is called the multiple intelligences provided that learners can have different learning preferences. In this regard, for instance, while some prefer to work in groups, others would be more at ease to learn alone.

Furthermore, a concept closer to learner autonomy is *personalization* that is about the teacher and the learning materials. So, the teachers being aware of the learners' different intelligences have to reach the learners' different needs because they work at different speeds as well. As for the teacher's role in the realm of learner autonomy, being sure that the learners have materials that are right for them can be an asset in allowing them to be autonomous. More, managing the pace of learning is also part the teacher's role, without neglecting to get them adapt these materials so that they are meaningful for them.

II. The Importance of Learner Autonomy

A lot of research shows that good learners tend to be autonomous learners. They take responsibility for their learning. Right now, in the 21st century, it is worth rethinking to reconsider, more than ever, the importance of this issue. So, thanks to the digital tools that gain more and more ground, lots opportunities about what students want, when they want it and how they want it have become real.

However, issues can be raised critically about the changing of the teacher and / or the learners' roles in the classroom and outside the classroom. That is why today's teachers, to promote learner autonomy, should be aware that:

- Learning at home autonomously does not mean that the Teacher is less important!
- The Teacher can help students choose their learning path ways

- To provide right answers, the Learner may resort to on-line research.

- The Learner can also be off-line to learn. Ex: Reading a book, then giving a reading feedback without any teacher intervention!

III. Strategies in Enhancing Learner Autonomy

Enhancing learner autonomy should be any teacher's concern provided that students need to be guided and the way to learn autonomously. Therefore, strategies leading them to learn by doing consciously and also rely on themselves through decision – making, risk taking and problem solving, can be strongly fruitful to all in the teaching/learning processes. In this regard, the following points are strategic ways that can boost any student's learning awareness and build high confidence in them:

1.1. Awareness Raising

After a teaching session, the teacher may ask learners to write down what they:

- Found easy and difficult
- Liked and did not like

Here, the rationale is that any teacher should be aware of this, for in a quite long period of time, there will be visible improvement among learners.

1.2. Prediction

Putting learners in conditions of prediction about testing issues in terms of content, difficulties can lead them learner autonomously. Thus, about testing, learners may be asked to focus on:

- How about doing the test
- What is important for them
- Which areas they might have problems

In the same vein, the teacher may also:

- Expect from them oral answers to these questions and take notes

- Give them forms to fill in, then return them back

Eventually, the following step may be that the teacher composes the test outcomes and their predictions to share with the learners for the sake of evaluation. And such an evaluation is going to influence the learners' autonomy.

1.3. Task-Based Assignments

In the EFL teaching / learning context, learners should be given responsibility in their learning process to build self-confidence and reliance within them, even at the absence of the teacher. Therefore, the teacher has to pave the way to them so as they can go and research on a given topic related for instance to a project-based learning in which they even go outside of the classroom, find information, analyze them, then eventually come back with solutions.

In fact, rather than always get answers from the teacher, learners themselves may also provide right answers of their own. They can provide their own answers of an issue because digital and traditional opportunities are currently on hand more than ever. On-line tools more and more gain ground and the libraries as well.

1.4 Using a Menu in The Class

Rather than a recipe, a suggested menu gives more opportunities to learners in their learning decision-taking. In this regard, the teacher may follow these ways:

- Write a list of activities on the board
- Tell learners to decide which ones to do
- Tell them how they would like to do it (in large groups? Small groups? Individually?)

1.5. Guidance to Study Outside the Classroom

Like in the menu, learners can be given learning options such as:

- Using on-line tools either in the classroom or outside (ex: E-dictionaries)
- Highlighting labs
- Making them be aware that tools do not have to be digital, they can be traditional too (eg: readings)

IV. Learner Autonomy: Exemplification and Outcomes

In the context of teaching English as a foreign language, a typical example of an experience of learner autonomy was used in a middle school in Dakar. In fact, the teacher (myself) suggested a list of topics on the board and asked learners to get ready and do some research on them for the following session. Then, once back to school, they will select one of these topics and organize a debate during which they will split into two groups sitting face to face; find themselves a moderator and someone else playing the role of a journalist raising societal issues on the chosen topic. The following is the list of the topics suggested by the teacher on the board:

- Road Safety and accidents in Senegal
- Social networking and impact on society
- Neglected Tropical Diseases (NTDs)
- Early and forced marriages

For the sake of enhancing learner autonomy and students' awareness, the teacher provides tools to them so as they make a self realization of their abilities and improve by themselves: In this regard, both a scoring sheet and self assessment one are with the learners who will take their own decision about their learning.

The following tables illustrate this strategy of enhancing learner autonomy today:

Scoring rubric

Mate's name : _____ *Score : / 25*

		Poor	Fair	Good	Very Good	Excellent
Comprehension	0	1	2	3	4	5
Fluency	0	1	2	3	4	5
Grammar	0	1	2	3	4	5
Vocabulary	0	1	2	3	4	5
Pronunciation	0	1	2	3	4	5

General comments :

Suggestions for improvement :
