

Maud Ciekanski, Maria Giovanna Tassinari

# Emotions and feelings in language advising

## *1. Introduction*

The issue of affect is of growing interest in the field of self-access language learning (SALL), in accordance with a shift from (socio)cognitive to socio-cultural theory in the conception of autonomy in applied linguistics research (Benson/Cooker 2013; Mynard/Carson 2012). This shift sounds like an invitation to renew the bases of SALL and especially those of language advising models. Parallel to this, new insights on identity in autonomous learning throughout the issue of the “self” (Everhard 2012), the learners’ voices (Chick 2007) and learners’ biographies (Dornyei/Ushioda 2009) put the stress on the challenges learners in SALL have to face and on the impact of the affective dimension on the capacity to direct one’s learning.

Our investigation sheds light on the role of emotions and feelings in those particular learning situations which are language advising sessions. According to the distinction between emotions and feelings (Damasio 2002), we focus both on changes in body state in response to a given situation (emotions) and on perceptions of these changes (feelings) from learners’ discourses in advising sessions in Germany and France.

We will start by briefly defining learner autonomy and self-directed language learning (Section 2); afterwards, we will address some notional and methodological issues of investigating affect in language learning (Section 3). Next, we will define our understanding of language advising (Section 4) and present the aims and the scope of the investigation as well as our methodological approach (Section 5). We will then present some preliminary findings (Section 6) and finally, based on our initial conclusions, we will make recommendations for a new research and training agenda to improve advising practices (Section 7).

## *2. Learner autonomy and self-directed learning*

Although we cannot give an account here of the complex debate in the literature on the definition of learner autonomy and self-directed learning (see, among others, Benson 2011, Tassinari 2010, Schmenk 2008 for critical overviews), nevertheless, it is worth defining learner autonomy and self-directed learning briefly.

Whereas learner autonomy is the capacity of the learner to take control – to different extents and in different situations (even classroom situations) – of his/her own learning, self-directed learning is a mode of learning in which the learner himself/herself makes all decisions concerning his/her learning: setting goals, choosing materials and methods, defining learning pace and rhythm, monitoring and evaluating his/her learning. Both learner autonomy as a capacity and self-directed learning as a mode of learning are not intended to be learning alone. On the contrary, they may and should include interaction with peers, teachers, advisors or other actors during the learning process.

In this article, we will use the terms “autonomous learning” and “self-directed learning” synonymously to indicate the learning processes which are to different degrees self-directed.

## *3. Affect and autonomy in language learning: notional and methodological issues*

As mentioned by Finch (2001), affect in language learning is mostly studied in terms of affective factors or in the perspective of the language learner, whether as an individual (experiencing anxiety, beliefs, extroversion/introversion, inhibitions, learner styles, motivation/self-esteem issues, etc.), or as a participant in a socio-cultural situation (empathy, classroom transactions, cross-cultural processes).

In SALL, affect is strongly related to the issue of (self-)motivation (e.g. Brewer 2013). For Dickinson (1987: 35), raising awareness of the importance of affect, especially in students, enhances the development of personal autonomy and the improvement of learning efficiency, producing mutually supportive self-motivators who are “able to participate fully in society, both freely and responsibly: students ready for change” (Reid 1999: 306).

Other authors highlight the impact of affect on cognition and metacognition: Kohonen (1999) looks into implications of incorporating affect into assessment procedures; Bown/White (2010) investigate the role of affect on

Thus it becomes clear from the investigation of affect and self-regulation in SALL that the expression of emotions and subjectivity in language advising are areas that should be integrated into the research agenda and into the training of language advisors in order to identify ways of supporting the “self”, both in self-access and in self-directed learning in general.

Discourse analysis (DA) offers illuminating insights into the learners’ verbalization of learning experiences. For the researcher, it provides precious first-hand information which should be triangulated with other data, such as data from interviews with learners and advisors, following the advising or learning sessions, learner biographies and learner logs within a process-oriented research approach.

Finally, no national cultural influences occurred in the way advisor and learner deal with emotions and feelings in advising sessions. However, gender differences as well as advising professional style (Ciekanski 2007) would be of utmost interest for further research.

### References

- Abé, D. / Gremmo, M.-J. / Régent, O. (1981): Quand les apprenants ont la parole, in: *Etudes de Linguistique Appliquée*, 41, 64-85.
- André, V. / Benzitoun, C. / Canut, E. / Debaisieux, J.-M. / Gaiffe, B. / Jacquy, E. (2000): *Conventions de transcription en vue d’un alignement texte-son avec transcriber*, ATLIF, Nancy.  
<http://www.cnrtl.fr/corpus/tcof/TCOFConventions.pdf>.
- Aoki, N. (1999): Affect and the role of teacher in the development of learner autonomy, in: Arnold J. (ed.): *Affect in Foreign Language Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 142-154.
- Benson, P. (2011): *Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning*, Harlow: Pearson Education Limited (second edition).
- Benson, P. / Cooker, L. (eds) (2013): *The Applied Linguistics Individual. Sociocultural Approaches to Identity, Agency and Autonomy*, London: Equinox.
- Bown, J. / White, C. (2010): Affect in a self-regulatory framework for language learning, in: *System*, 38(3), 432-443.
- Brewer, S. (2013): Entre émotions et contrôle de soi: un enjeu essentiel pour l’autonomie dans l’apprentissage des langues, in: *Lidil*, 48, 189-208.
- Candas, P. / Eneau, J. (2010): Autonomie de l’apprenant et dimensions affectives, in: Albero, B. / Poteau, N. (eds): *Enjeux et dilemmes de l’autonomie*.

- Une expérience d'autoformation à l'université*, Paris: Éditions de la maison des sciences de l'homme, 141-167.
- Carette, E. / Castillo, D. (2004): Devenir conseiller: Quels changements pour l'enseignant?, in: *Mélanges CRAPEL*, 27, 71-97.
- Carette, E. / Melendez Quero, C. / Thiébaud, E. (2013): Expressions vocales et traces verbales de l'émotion dans l'entretien de conseil en apprentissage des langues, in: *Lidil*, 48, 171-187.
- Chik, A. (2007): From learner identity to learner autonomy: A biographical study of two Hong Kong learners of English, in: Benson, P. (ed.): *Learner autonomy, 8: Teacher and learner perspectives*, Dublin, Ireland: Authentik, 41-60.
- Cicourel, A. (1978): *Cognitive sociology*, Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Ciekanski, M. (2007): Fostering learner autonomy: Power and reciprocity in the relationship between language learner and language learning adviser, in: *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 37(1), 111-127.
- Damasio, A.R. (2002): A second chance for emotion, in: Nadel, L. / Lane, R.D. (eds): *Cognitive Neurosciences of Emotions*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 12-23.
- Dickinson, L. (1987): *Self-instruction in Language Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dörnyei, Z. / Ushioda, E. (eds) (2009): *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self*, Bristol: Multilingual Matters.
- Everhard, C. (2012): Re-placing the jewel in the crown of autonomy: A revisiting of the 'self' or 'selves' in self-access, in: *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 3(4), 377-391. <http://sisaljournal.org/archives/dec12/>.
- Finch, A. (2001): *Learner autonomy: Where are we? Where are we going?* <http://www.finchpark.com/arts/Autonomy.pdf>.
- Gremmo, M.-J. (1995): Conseiller n'est pas enseigner: Le rôle du conseiller dans l'entretien de conseil, in: *Mélanges CRAPEL*, 22, 33-62.
- Kehrein, R. (2002): *Prosodie und Emotionen*, Tübingen: Niemeyer.
- Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C. (2009): *L'énunciation. De la subjectivité dans le langage* (second edition), Paris: Armand Colin.
- Kohonen, V. (1999): Authentic assessment in affective language learning, in: Arnold, J. (ed.): *Affect in Language Learning*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 43-57.
- Mynard, J. / Carson, L. (eds) (2012): *Advising in Language Learning: Dialogue, Tools and Context*, Harlow: Pearson Education.

- Plutchik, R. (1980): A general psychoevolutionary theory of emotion, in: Plutchik, R. / Kellerman, H. (eds): *Emotion: Theory, research, and experience: Vol. 1. Theories of emotion*, New York: Academic Press, 3-33.
- Reid, J. (1999): Affect in the classroom: problems, politics and pragmatics, in: Arnold, J. (ed.): *Affect in Language Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 297-306.
- Selting, M. et al (2009): Gesprächsanalytisches Transkriptionssystem 2 (GAT 2), in: *Gesprächsforschung – Online-Zeitschrift zur verbalen Interaktion*, 10 (2009), 353-402. <http://www.gespraechsforschung-ozs.de/heft2009/px-gat2.pdf>.
- Schmenk, B. (2008): *Lernerautonomie. Karriere und Sloganisierung des Autonomiebegriffs*, Tübingen: Narr.
- Tassinari, M.G. (2010): *Autonomes Fremdsprachenlernen: Komponenten, Kompetenzen, Strategien*, Frankfurt am Main: Lang.
- Transcriber: <http://trans.sourceforge.net/en/presentation.php>
- Valdivia, S. / McLoughlin, D / Mynard, J. (2011): The importance of affective factors in self-access language learning courses, in: *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, 2(2), 91-96. <http://sisaljournal.org/archives/jun11/>

Maud Ciekanski, Université de Lorraine, laboratoire Atilf, 44 avenue de la Libération, BP 30687, 54063 Nancy Cedex, France, [maud.ciekanski@univ-lorraine.fr](mailto:maud.ciekanski@univ-lorraine.fr).

Maria Giovanna Tassinari, Freie Universität Berlin, Zentraleinrichtung Sprachenzentrum, Habelschwerdter Allee 45 , 14195 Berlin, [tassinar@zedat.fu-berlin.de](mailto:tassinar@zedat.fu-berlin.de).

## Appendix

| Emotions                        | Examples   |
|---------------------------------|--|
| embarrassment                   | A 75: j'ai fait un petit peu j'ai regardé un petit peu hier j'ai mis des moins des plus en fait euh ce qui m'a euh ce qui m'a euh enfin ce qui m'a comment dire euh ce que je suis bien actuellement c'est <i>Task Listening</i> (oui) donc euh<br>A 109: excusez moi mais il faut que j'enlève mon pull il fait chaud |
| disappointment, frustration     | A 73: oui je pense que je pense qu'effectivement il a un débit assez assez lent mais parfois dans des dans des explications là je je suivais plus  |
| apprehension, fear, frustration | A 167: et puis là j'ai un manque de vocabulaire et puis après c'est un problème de prononciation   |
| fear, expectation               | A 55: ben disons que je craignais de pas de pas le comprendre  |