Andréa Houara Lordello Lima

Why learner autonomy? Why not? A case study of an English student and her teacher seeking learning opportunities

DEPARTAMENTO DE LETRAS
Curso de Especialização em Língua Inglesa

Rio de Janeiro
Novembro de 2007

DEPARTAMENTO DE LETRAS
Curso de Especialização em Língua Inglesa

**Why learner autonomy? Why not? A case study of
an English student and her teacher seeking learning
opportunities**

Andréa Houara Lordello Lima

Prof^a. Maria Isabel A. Cunha
Orientadora
Departamento de Letras – PUC - Rio

Andréa Houara Lordello Lima

Why Learner Autonomy? Why not? A Case Study of an English Student and her Teacher Seeking Learning Opportunities

Monografia apresentada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Letras da PUC - Rio como requisito parcial para obtenção do título de Especialista em Língua Inglesa.

Prof^a. Maria Isabel A. Cunha
Orientadora
Departamento de Letras – PUC - Rio

Rio de Janeiro
Novembro de 2007

To Marta¹, without whom it would not have been possible for me to become a true practitioner/learner. I will always be grateful to her.

To my students who have taught me many things and showed me the true value of living and sharing.

To my daughters, Gabriela and Mariana, who have always inspired and believed in me.

To my parents and husband for their support, wise advice and immense patience

To my family, friends, fellow teachers and all the people who have contributed somehow to the accomplishment of this study.

¹ The actual name of this learner has been changed not to compromise and/or expose her.

Acknowledgements

- To Bebel (Maria Isabel) Cunha, my “puzzlement initiator” and “exploratory” advisor for her tremendous support and commitment and for always standing by me.
- To Inés Kayon de Miller, for sharing her experience and belief in Education with me.
- To my dearest friends Betina Garcia, Carmen Formenti, Jander Anjos and Juliana Cunha for not only being professional colleagues, but for always “being there”.
- To my classmates and the lecturers at PUC-Rio for sharing their knowledge and experiences with me.

Abstract

Lordello L., Andréa Houara; Cunha, Maria Isabel A. (Advisor). **Why learner autonomy? Why not? A case study of an English student and her teacher seeking learning opportunities.** Rio de Janeiro, 2007, 79p. Monograph – Departamento de Letras, Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro.

The aim of this monograph is to share some co-constructed understandings of a case study of an English student and her teacher, at a private course in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The investigative purpose of this study had two objectives: 1) to observe the learner's autonomous actions during a project on the target language inside and outside the classroom; and 2) to seek a better understanding, between the two practitioners, of the learning opportunities unveiled during the classes. All of the socio-pedagogic encounters were tape-recorded and then analysed using the principles of Exploratory Practice as the framework for the investigation, combined with an ethnographic, naturalistic and non-interventionist approach.

Keywords

Learner autonomy; puzzlement; Exploratory Practice; student/teacher understandings; complexity; learning opportunities.

Contents

1. Why autonomy ?	10
2. What autonomy is <i>not</i>	14
3. What autonomy <i>is</i>	18
4. A case study: the learner/teacher & the teacher/learner	24
4.1 A puzzled teacher searching for her puzzle	24
4.2 The dual-role participants: the teacher/enquirer & the enquirer/ student	26
5. Exploring the practice, pursuing understanding	28
6. Constructed & reconstructed learning opportunities: attempting to make sense of what took place in the lessons	31
6.1 First learning opportunity: breaking the default interactional pattern	31
6.2 Second learning opportunity: “Do you have a good English accent?”	39
6.3 Third learning opportunity: “Making decisions, deciding your life”	42
6.4 Fourth learning opportunity: “How do you feel inside yourself?”	44
6.5 Fifth learning opportunity: English or Japanese?	47
6.6 Sixth learning opportunity: “Even my mother thinks my English has improved”	49
6.7 Seventh learning opportunity: “I feel happy”	52
6.8 Eighth learning opportunity: “Teacher, do you like learning English?”	55
6.9 Ninth learning opportunity: critically reflecting upon the project	58

7. Concluding thoughts	61
8. Suggestions for further seeking of future understandings	64
9. References	65
10. Appendices	71
Appendix 1	71
Appendix 2	72
Appendix 3	73
Appendix 4	74
Appendix 5	75
Appendix 6	76
Appendix 7	77
Appendix 8	78
Appendix 9	79

*How shall I talk of the sea to the frog,
if it has never left his pond?
How shall I talk of the frost to the bird of the summerland,
if it has never left the land of its birth?
How shall I talk of life with the sage,
if he is prisoner of his doctrine?*

Chung Tsu, 4th Century B.C. *apud* Fantini, 2000a: 1

*And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people
permission to do the same*

Marianne Williamson, 1992

*Como definir algo que ainda estou descobrindo? Como definir algo que, por si, não busca mais uma definição, mais um rótulo, mais uma resposta? Como definir algo que encontra no próprio exercício, no próprio fazer, na própria prática, no próprio processo de ensino-aprendizagem o objetivo principal para compreender questões e problemas muitas vezes subestimados pelos próprios praticantes? Como definir algo que intuitivamente professores e alunos realizam, quando há um real compromisso e respeito entre os mesmos, levando-os ao seu crescimento interior? Parece-me um tanto difícil e limitador tentar definir Prática Exploratória, pois seria um esforço em vão em tentar encontrar **um** significado para algo significante e abrangente, assim como tentamos restringir o verdadeiro conceito de nossa existência. Para mim, então, Prática Exploratória é o fazer, o descobrir, o crescer, o evoluir, o refletir e o tentar, sempre. Explorar a Prática é o genuíno agir no mundo, é o **ser**.*

A. Houara Lordello, 2006.

1 Why autonomy?

Ah, a teacher is a teacher. They're made to make trouble for us! (307)

A citation and also part of the data in Safya Cherchalli's *Doctoral Dissertation*, Lancaster University.

There has never been so much concern and interest about **learner autonomy** in the educational area (Brookes and Grundy, 1988 *apud* Tudor, 1996: 17; Holec 1979 *apud* Tudor, 1996:17; Moita Lopes, 1996: 99, 105-6; Wenden, 1991 *apud* Tudor, 1996: 17; Wenden and Dickinson, 1995 *apud* Tudor, 1996: 17; Wenden and Rubin, 1987 *apud* Tudor, 1996: 17, *inter alia*) as one has witnessed in the last decades. Many educationalists, scholars, researchers, philosophers, teachers and even members from other areas have expressed their opinions and beliefs about this extremely important concept permeating the pedagogical scenario until the present moment. Amongst them, Crabbe's (1993: 443 *apud* Tudor,

1996:18) views encompass three different reasons for fostering **learner autonomy**, viz. the *ideological*, the *psychological* and the *economic* motives. The first Crabbean reason is related to *ideology* as learners are empowered by their own decision-making "...in learning as in other areas, and [thus they do] not become a victim (even an unwitting one) of choices made by social institutions" (*ibidem*). Taking a *psychological* argument, Crabbe advocates that

...we learn better when we are in charge of our own learning [and that the resultant learning] is more meaningful, more permanent, more focused on the processes and schemata ² of the individual when the individual is in charge (Crabbe, 1993: 443 *apud* Tudor, 1996: 19).

In other words, not only is the learner's motivation increased as the individual feels in control of choosing relevant and realistic activities *inter alia*, but they also share the co-authorship of their learning process and are not simply told what, how or when to do an exercise, for instance. The last reason supported by Crabbe is *economic*, once

...society does not have the resources to provide the level of personal instruction needed by all its members in every area of learning [so that] individuals must be able to provide for their own learning needs... (*ibidem*).

What Crabbe perhaps intended to say was that there is no way to satisfy everybody, especially due to the fact that individuals usually make use of varied learning strategies and the former have different goals to be achieved throughout their learning process. Therefore, one of the teacher's roles would be to stimulate their pupils to search for their own knowledge, define their learning objectives, amongst others.

Brumfit (1982: 11 *apud* Tudor, 1996:19), although not directly using the term **autonomy**, also recognizes the importance of fostering independency amongst one's pupils as "no sensible person should want to be anti-humanistic". Tudor (1996:19),

² "A **schema** (pl. *schemata*), in psychology and cognitive science, is a mental structure that represents some aspect of the world. People use schemata to organize current knowledge and provide a framework for future understanding. Examples of schemata include rubrics, stereotypes, social roles, scripts, worldviews, and archetypes. In Piaget's theory of development, children adopt a series of schemata to understand the world". Retrieved from "http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schema_%28psychology%29".

himself, interprets Brumfit's citation very appropriately when he claims that "...no sensible teacher should want to maintain or foster dependency in her students".

In his article, *The philosophy and politics of learner autonomy*, Phil Benson (1997:19 *apud* Nicolaides, 2006, lecture) offers three arguments in favour of **autonomy**. The first one is *technical*, which draws back to the Positivism Movement, as people can be "trained" to be independent. When individuals become responsible for their own learning and become aware of their own beliefs, then they "construct" their learning – this is the *psychological* reason claimed by Benson. Finally, there is the *political* argument which rests on the idea that when individuals realise that they –and not only other people- are responsible for what happens to them, awareness of being part of a group/society is then acquired. This last reason is intrinsically linked to the notion of "critical pedagogy" introduced by Paulo Freire –one of the greatest educationalists who ever lived on this planet. As Freire (1987: 96) said

O esforço de propor aos indivíduos dimensões significativas de *sua realidade*, cuja *análise crítica* lhes possibilite reconhecer a interação de suas partes (my emphases).

In other words, individuals should be given the chance of pursuing their own interests and needs and of exerting their inborn critical thinking upon the ideas, subjects and/or concepts which are presented to them. The ultimate question then arises: how will people perceive the implied assumptions underneath the topics being discussed? As Freire (1970, 1973, 1998 *apud* Fantini, 2000a: 29) himself put it, the pivotal term is "critical consciousness" or "awareness" – or "conscientização" in Portuguese -, as it can lead individuals to their whole development

Awareness is in and of the 'self' and it is always about the self in relation to someone or something else. Hence, all awareness is 'self'-awareness, and to speak of [it] may be redundant. Awareness involves exploring, experimenting, and experiencing (the subtitle of Stevens' book) (1971 *apud* Fantini, 2000a: 29). It is reflective and introspective. In turn, it can be optionally expressed or manifested both to the self and to others. *Awareness is difficult to reverse; that is, once one becomes aware, it is difficult to return to a state of unawareness* (and even though one may try to deceive oneself, the self knows of the deception). Awareness leads to deeper cognition, skills, and attitudes just as it is also enhanced by their development... (Fantini, 2000a: 29) (my emphasis).

Fantini recognizes the relevance of critical thinking as he carries on citing Freire's other considerations of awareness

•'conscientização' is awareness of selfhood

- ‘conscientização’ is a critical look at the self in a social situation
- it can produce a transformation of the self and of one’s relation to others
- it can lead to dealing critically and creatively with reality (and fantasy)
- *it is the most important task of education* (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1998 *apud* Fantini, 2000a: 29) (my emphasis).

Bearing in mind that awareness/“conscientização” is the ultimate goal of education, one can not refrain from considering the learners’ own questionings in relation to their schooling or even to their role performed in the pedagogic institution where they have been enrolled – be it a regular school (where the formal study of certain *a priori* defined subjects, such as Math, History, Portuguese, in the case of Brazil, *inter alia*, takes place), or a language institute (whose aim is the formal teaching of a second or a foreign language). As Garcez (2006: 71) puts it,

... [students are] in doubt that the answer to [the question] ‘what are we doing here [at school]?’ is sufficiently positive and satisfying so that they can see the school as a site for development regarding critical and democratic participation beyond its walls (my translation³).

Garcez (ibid.) continues his arguments by claiming that the school, as an institution, only prepares pupils to act locally, in the boundaries of the school grounds themselves, and not globally, in the world. He (ibid., 71) quotes Goffman (2003) when the latter compares the school to

a place ...where a large number of individuals...separated from society...live a circumscribed and formally administered life (my translation).

What these authors have been questioning seems to be the scope (if so) of the contribution of mainstream education to the fostering of the learners’ independence and awareness in relation to their positioning in the social encounters in which they will find themselves henceforth. In other words, teachers, the school as an institution, educationalists amongst others have not put forth the idea of **autonomy** as the touchstone of the pedagogic practices in which they and their students are involved.

As could be seen in this section, many authors claim their reasons for the implementation of **autonomy** in the educational arena; however different those views may seem, they do emphasize the necessity of developing critical thinking and/or promoting awareness in pupils/individuals worldwide. The next section will deal with the notion of autonomy by stating what that term IS NOT.

³ The translation from the original texts. is my responsibility.

2

What autonomy is *not*

Having explained why to foster **learner autonomy** in the previous section, it is paramount that the concept of **autonomy** be not misunderstood and confused with other apparently similar ideas. In this sense, I refer to Bruner (*apud* Dickinson, 1994:3), when he claims that pupils' self-sufficiency or **autonomy** (my emphasis) should be the ultimate aim of teaching, otherwise students would always be dependent on teachers to learn. Nonetheless, Dickinson (*ibidem*), very wisely, makes it clear about the three misconceptions he sees as not **autonomy**. Firstly, being autonomous does not mean having a "license to behave in any way one wishes", as there are laws which rule the "framework of conventions [not only in life, but also] in education" (*ibid.*). The moment a pupil decides to attend a class, for instance, (s)he ought to follow the rules which have been created for that particular lesson. I would add that the student should always try to talk some issues over with the teacher and/or the other classmates, the institution's coordinator(s)/head teacher(s), amongst others in order to reach a sense of respect for other people's views; therefore, **autonomy** is not anarchy.

Secondly, **autonomy** must not be confused with the

physical setting of learning, [as] work[ing] in isolation...is not a necessary condition of autonomy ... [but an] attitude to learning (*ibidem*).

In other words, the mere placement of students in self-access centres does not mean that the former will acquire self-sufficiency, as they may still depend on the teachers' total guidance towards their learning.

Last, but not least, fostering **autonomy** does not jeopardize the teacher's position (*ibidem*, 4); rather it enables her/him to contribute to her/his pupils' awareness raising process, either acting as a language consultant or as a tutor. Although Dickinson claims that "the teacher's *primary* job of teaching the language remains" and "the teacher remains an *authority* in the language" (*ibidem*, 4) (my emphases), my view on this matter is rather different from his, due to some reasons. Firstly, (language) teachers do not simply teach a language when they are on duty, inasmuch as a complex myriad of issues is also at work during a lesson – being these issues pedagogical or not. This said, educators should not forget that they are dealing with human beings in the first

place, who seem to possess their own expectations towards their learning process as well as their idiosyncrasies and problems brought into the classroom from the world outside. Secondly, teachers must bear in mind that their learners may become even more proficient in the target language than their teachers, as the learning process must be seen as a continuum, happening alongside the students' lives timeline. Furthermore, globalization has also contributed not only to the spread of different languages, but also to the cultural features of a particular language/culture, through the Internet or any other technological devices. People and students alike can now have access to a wide range of diverse sources of information, which may allow individuals to master a language more quickly than in the past.

According to Holec (1981: 23), **autonomy** is not

a precondition of language learning...[nor is it possible] to learn autonomy when the learning of the language is finished.

On the contrary, self-sufficiency will take place *during* the learning process (my emphasis). The scholar makes a distinction between **autonomy** and autodidaxy, as he explains the latter as being "...the actual *behaviour* of an individual in [the] situation [of learning]", and thus describing autodidaxy as "a set of *behaviours*" (my emphases), and not the "potential capacity to act in a ...situation... [i.e.] learning, or **autonomy**" (*ibidem*, 3) (my emphasis).

Henceforth, having access to resource centres, where pedagogic materials can be used – without the educator's physical presence, wherever and whenever the pupils want to - does not necessarily mean the learners have acquired or are in the process of developing **autonomy** (Holec, 1988: 7). This idea of "independence...of the learner" (*ibidem*) seems to permeate many educationalists' views on self-sufficiency; however it should be made clear that the learners are not thoroughly active and/or involved, inasmuch as they simply are "advised" to select such and such materials, to make use of a certain type of method and/or to utilise one or a combination of "support media (cassette, written documentation, video, microcomputer)" (*ibidem*) available at those self-access centres. In other words, the students are still told what and/or how to learn, though not being completely puppeteered by their "almighty" masters, the teachers. Or, as one might borrow the metaphor of the Pinocchio wooden doll, the puppet who was granted the opportunity of experiencing a human life, without being really human and

”conducted” not by strings anymore (see Figure 1), but by a very subtle authoritative cricket symbolizing Pinocchio’s own consciousness.

Figure 1 – The puppet (the learner) being controlled by its puppeteer (the educator)(<http://office.microsoft.com/ptbr/clipart/results.aspx?qu=marionete&sc=20#0>).

The cricket is replaced by the key in Pinocchio's hand in Figure 2 below, which conveys the idea of an outsider (the puppeteer) "winding the doll". Or, in other words, the very almighty omniscient superior being (the teacher) in charge of one's mind filling up with information, yet lacking on creative and critical processing of that same piling up of facts.

Figure 2 – The wooden doll Pinocchio (the pupils) and its key (the teacher) ([http://office.microsoft.com/ptbr/clipart/results.aspx?qu=Pin%C3%B3quio&sc=20&AxI](http://office.microsoft.com/ptbr/clipart/results.aspx?qu=Pin%C3%B3quio&sc=20&AxInstalled=copy&DownloadAssetId=MCj04156160000&DownloadExtension=wmf&c=)
[nstalled=copy&DownloadAssetId=MCj04156160000&DownloadExtension=wmf&c=](http://office.microsoft.com/ptbr/clipart/results.aspx?qu=Pin%C3%B3quio&sc=20&AxInstalled=copy&DownloadAssetId=MCj04156160000&DownloadExtension=wmf&c=)).

As could be seen in this section, the concept of **autonomy** was differentiated from some already misconceived ideas, which might hinder the self-sufficiency and

awareness raising process. Yet, the ultimate question, “what is **autonomy**?”, still remains. The answer to this question is the main topic of the next section.

3 What autonomy is

*How shall I talk of the sea to the frog,
if it has never left his pond?
How shall I talk of the frost to the bird of the summerland,
if it has never left the land of its birth?
How shall I talk of life with the sage,
if he is prisoner of his doctrine?*

Chung Tsu, 4th Century B.C. *apud* Fantini, 2000a: 1

The principal aim of this section is an attempt to define and characterise **autonomy** taking into consideration the opinions and thoughts of some respected authors, researchers, educationalists, scholars, as well as my own views on this matter.

According to Holec (1988: 6), there has been a tendency – in the educational area - to stimulate students to be responsible in their learning process. As Trim (1980: 12 *apud* Holec, 1988: 6) puts it,

... [this trend is] anti-authoritarian, encouraging initiative and *responsibility* in the exercise of choice of objectives and methods, and self-assessment in the monitoring of progress and performance (my emphasis).

As a result, the “...learner [will be] ... increasingly aware, self-reliant, better able to learn directly from experience, and gradually outgrowing the need for a teacher” (Trim, 1980: 14 *apud* Holec, 1988: 6). Not only will the pupil be benefited, but also the educator will be enabled to enhance this same **autonomy**, so that

the teacher should himself become an autonomous ‘learner-teacher’, so as to be able to impart learning autonomy to his own pupils” (Krumm, 1986 *apud* Holec, 1988: 6).

In other words, all the parties involved in the teaching/learning process are given the chances of developing self-reliance, featuring an unbiased and democratic relationship, one which is founded on respect, reciprocal responsibility and trust.

The term “responsibility” seems to be the core concept used to describe and define **learner autonomy** according to the standpoints which are adhered to by Huttenen (1986: 232 *apud* Tudor, 1996: 19). As this author puts it, “[autonomy is] the willingness and ability of the learner to take responsibility for his own learning”, as well as by Wenden (1991: 163 *apud* Tudor, 1996: 19),

[the autonomous learner] has acquired the strategies and knowledge to take some (if not yet all) responsibility for her language learning and is willing and self-confident enough to do so.

In no way should the term “responsibility” be mistaken by **autonomy**, as some educators believe it to be. This assertion is not a denial of the importance of the learners’ sense of responsibility, let alone the invalidation of the students’ capacity of taking over their own learning process. In fact, the “active exercise of learner responsibility” prompting “not ... the independence of the *consumer* but ... of the producer, or rather the *producer-partner*, ... the user of his/her own products” (Holec, 1988: 8) (my emphases) will eventually bring about the so desired **learner autonomy**. Thus, being a responsible pupil is one of the *means* to have the sense of achievement of being an autonomous learner : the ultimate *end* of the educational process.

In this sense, one may claim that in order to be considered autonomous, a student must possess “the ability to learn”, and not only “[know] ... how to take charge of [their] own programme of learning (where and when to learn)” (*ibidem*). Only when one knows and understands WHAT and HOW to learn, and HOW to evaluate the outcome of her/his learning (*ibidem*), are the pupils’ empowerment and awareness completed and ready to trigger the “learning to learn” process. However, I do not align with the idea of teaching “learning to learn” as some might have been thinking; quite the contrary, I am reflectively being aware of that concept as a *dynamic process*.

Moreover, I would claim that besides the what and how, the WHY to learn a certain subject/topic is as important as or even more relevant than the former reasons previously given. Rarely do students seem aware of this last argument, as they tend to confuse the setting up of the goals (the why) of learning a target language (for instance) with the sorting out of the materials, method(s) and techniques (the what and the how) to be used (Holec, 1987). Indeed “learning a language does not mean learning material but using material to learn”, as Holec (1988: 11) quite wittily puts it; i.e., it is absolutely a must to aid learners in the enhancement of their critical thinking, contributing to the

conceptualization of “learning not being a simple process of *absorbing information* but requiring [constant] research and logical processing of information “ (*ibidem*) (my emphasis). Never ought this help to be imposed upon the pupils; on the contrary, they will decide whether they will want to become an autonomous learner (or not) (*ibidem*, 8).

Nevertheless, some explanation regarding **autonomy** must be given to avoid misconceptions. According to Allwright⁴, even when one depends on the other, the former is exercising her/his autonomy, inasmuch as one is *choosing* to resource to the latter (my emphasis). Or, as Cunha⁵ asserted, one can reflect upon whether or not (s)he will *need/want* to make certain directional adjustments [in the course of her/his learning process] (my emphasis).

This said, the consideration of the students’ background knowledge - or schemata, as previously defined - plays a major role in any attempt of implementing /fostering **learner autonomy** in the educational arena, and in the language learning scenario as well. It is absolutely true that individuals make use of all the knowledge they possess during any cognitive process. Therefore, why do teachers disregard this fact and act as if their pupils were an “empty vessel ... [to be filled] with new knowledge or behaviour” (Holliday, 1994)? In one of the experiments – Experiment 8 (Eurocentres), London Eurocentre – reported by Holec (1988, 15-16), there is the major concern to use the contributions the learners bring into the classroom from the outside. In other words, the adults of various ages and levels, who are the English-as-a foreign-language students at the London Eurocentre, are encouraged to make connections between what they have been learning at the centre and whatever has happened in their lives, out of the school grounds as well. This way, the target language learning process becomes more meaningful and realistic, as the pupils are able to perceive the intricate shapes and hues of the links between schooling and life.

Besides the students’ schemata, one ought not to refrain from mentioning the relevance of the conceptualization of what being a good learner means in mainstream education. Until now, it has been claimed (and believed) that in order to be a good learner, one must solely be a good studier, thus interconnecting the very act of learning to that of studying (Holec, 1987: 146). Nonetheless, one may encounter several “good studiers” who are not “good learners” in the sense that they lack initiative, decision-

⁴ Oral communication.

⁵ Email communication on 12 April, 2007.

making skill and creativity when faced with an unexpected situation; all that these pupils can do is rely on what they have been passively "taught", even though it may not mean (or aid) much in a real-life social encounter. A "good learner", therefore, is the one who is

...capable of assuming the role of *manager* of their learning...[it is someone who knows] how to make all the decisions involved...[who knows] *how to learn* (ibid., 147) (my emphases).

According to this view, pupils become managers of their learning, inasmuch as they develop an active involvement by making (all) the decisions to plan and bring about a learning program⁶ (ibid., 146). It makes sense, thus, to think of learning as a *process*, considering the students' engagement and dynamic participation – as opposed to the mere "...[language] program, i.e., a collection of language drills, exercises or problem-solving activities" (ibid., 147), which has prevailed in the language learning pedagogy so far. Once again, as it has been claimed before, in spite of the educationalists' actual wish to promote **learner autonomy**, the pupils themselves will decide whether "... [they will take] full responsibility for the [learning] process or [they will] simply [keep] submitting to it" (ibid.), one might add, endlessly.

Not only do the learners engage in a more mature and active role, but also the teachers are concomitantly urged to change "from an omniscient 'causer' of learning...to facilitate the learning process" (ibid., 153) (emphasis in original).

Dickinson 's conceptualisation of **learner autonomy** also calls for the necessity – mainly on the part of the educator - of stimulating the

independence in learning... - allowing the student to pursue his own learning objectives in ways and at times which most suit him... (Dickinson, 1994: 2)

or, "...to *teach* the student how to learn" (ibid.) (my emphasis).

⁶ Holec lists five major decisions in the planning and carrying out of a language learning program:

- 1) the choice of objectives;
- 2) the choice of content or materials;
- 3) the choice of methods and techniques;
- 4) the implementation of a learning program based on the above cited decisions;
- 5) the constant (re)assessment of the results.

It is not the aim of this paper to elaborate on how those decisions would be made by the students, in accordance with their teachers or not, as another study would be called for to do so. For additional information, please refer to HOLEC, Henry : *The Learner as Manager: Managing Learning or Managing to Learn?*, in: WENDEN, A. / RUBIN, J.: *Learner Strategies in Language Learning*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Notwithstanding the use of the argument by Dickinson to claim the “teaching” of **learner autonomy** – as seen in the last part of his quote above – that does not suffice, as he fails to acknowledge the reciprocity of the educational process, i.e., to *help* the pupils “learn to learn” (Holec, 1981: 23). However, Dickinson’s redemption is ingeniously accomplished when he too addresses the issue of defining a good (language) learner⁷,

...good learners have an *active* involvement with language learning, ... they have clear ideas about the best ways for them to go about language learning, and ... they set up their own learning objectives in addition to the teacher’s objectives (Rubin, 1975 *apud* Dickinson 1994: 7; Stern, 1974 *apud* Dickinson, 1994: 7; Naimon et al, 1978 *apud* Dickinson, 1994: 7) (my emphasis).

As the autonomous student is then seen as being “active” and “independent” (Dickinson, 1994: 6) in the learning process, “learning autonomy...is a *goal* of education rather than a procedure or method” (*ibid.*, 7) (my emphasis) and that should be pursued by educationalists, teachers, pupils, and many others.

Likewise, the Freirean contribution to one’s understanding of the contrast between the constructivist paradigm and the received view⁸ in pedagogical terms can be inferred accordingly

Enquanto na prática ‘bancária’ da educação, antidialógica por essência, por isto, não comunicativa, o educador *deposita* no educando o conteúdo programático da educação, que ele

⁷ Dickinson claims that autonomous learners possess five skills:

1. awareness of the teacher’s objectives;
2. formulation of their own learning objectives;
3. selection and implementation of suitable learning strategies;
4. monitoring and assessment of their own use of learning strategies;
5. assessment of their own learning.

The above author also suggests four ways through which the teacher could encourage independence on her/his pupils:

1. approval and fostering of learner independence;
2. demonstration of successful experiences to convince the learners of their independence capacity;
3. devising of opportunities for learner autonomy;
4. assistance in the development of learning techniques/strategies for learner independence.

Once again, this monograph is not intended to elaborate on these ideas, rather to accredit those authors who have, somehow, spoken their minds on and, thus, contributed to widen the **learner autonomy** understanding. To cast more light on the above cited ideas, the reader is invited to refer back to DICKINSON, L. Learner autonomy: what, why and how? In: LEFFA, V.(Ed.). *Autonomy in Language Learning*. Porto Alegre: UFRS, 1994, p. 2-12

⁸ The “received view” is that supported both by the positivist and postpositivist paradigms. See GUBA, E. G. and LINCOLN, Y. S. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In: *Handbook of qualitative research*, eds. N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, 105-117. Thousand Oaks: SAGE publications, 1994, for a thorough comprehension of all the paradigms presented.

mesmo elabora ou elaboram para ele, na prática problematizadora, dialógica por excelência, este conteúdo, que jamais é ‘depositado’, se organiza e se constitui na visão do mundo dos educandos, em que se encontram seus temas geradores (Freire, 1970: 102) (quotations in original, my emphasis).

In fact, Freire foresaw and sustained the reciprocity of the learning process and recognised the different roles played both by the educators and the students if one wishes to adhere to a truly pedagogical standpoint, as he put it

Para o educador-educando, dialógico, problematizador, o conteúdo programático da educação não é uma doação ou uma imposição – um conjunto de informes a ser depositado nos educandos... A educação autêntica... não se faz de A para B ou de A sobre B, mas de A *com* B, mediatizados pelo mundo (ibid., 83-4) (emphasis in original).

For all the arguments presented above, it then becomes a major and crucial issue to promote **learner autonomy** if one is to fulfill her/his truly educational aims. May the reader, however, have apprehended the stance adopted herein concerning **autonomy**, i.e., that it is (it is worth quoting the below authors again) “... a *goal* of education rather than a procedure or method” (Dickinson, 1994: 7) (my emphasis), which is accomplished when the pupils “*learn to learn*” (Holec, 1981: 23) (my emphasis).

Having outlined the supportive and defining arguments in favour of **learner autonomy** in this section, the following one will be presenting the case study through which one of my EFL⁹ students and I, as teacher-researcher, sought the interpersonal understandings.

⁹ English as a Foreign Language.

4

A case study: the learner-teacher & the teacher-learner

4.1

A puzzled teacher searching for her puzzle

Before the completion of my Lato Sensus Post-graduate Course in English Language Studies, at PUC-RIO, Brazil, 2006, the topic of **learner autonomy** had already raised the curiosity and the investigative mood for this study. Nonetheless, as the array of feasible ideas entailing **autonomy** was still very broad, it was only in February of the same year that the research project – or monograph, as it is known after the conclusion of most Lato Sensus post-graduate courses in the Humanities, here in Brazil - was finally narrowed down after a suggestion given by the author's supervisor Maria Isabel (Bebel) Cunha, who has given official permission to make use of her name herein. Bebel had suggested writing diary entries concerning my feelings/perceptions on **autonomy** after doing the selected readings for the present work, which was agreed. Indeed, the very first draft (Appendix 1) had been already produced when another idea was formulated during a class with the private student who is part of the case study in this joint investigation. While in class, after listening to Marta's ¹⁰explanation about her likes and dislikes, I presented a project to the pupil, who promptly agreed on it and felt very excited as well. Taking into consideration the fact that Marta liked watching films, I proposed that she tried to watch a DVD movie in English per week, at best, English-subtitled, and only resorting to subtitles in Portuguese when she felt it would/might compromise her understanding of the film. Furthermore, I suggested that Marta wrote a short diary entry, for about 15 minutes, expressing how that experience of watching the film the way I had previously suggested had meant to her; in other words,

(1) *what she had done* - her decision-making process – throughout the movie watching process,

(2) *how/what she had felt* – her subjective understanding of the situation and

(3) *why she had decided* to do certain things instead of others – her choices – whilst seeing the film.

¹⁰ The actual name of this learner has been changed not to compromise and/or expose her.

Marta's choice of speaking about the film or about the experience of watching it while in a regular class was also taken into account by me, together with the fact that Marta would be encouraged to write the entry in English – as far as that would be possible and would not jeopardise the communicative aim of making herself understood in the interaction, be it written or oral. Hence, Marta would be using English anyway, only then doing something meaningful to her – i.e., using the language to express her own perceptions, feelings, opinions and beliefs about her life. Moreover, she would be negotiating different meanings while claiming a myriad of stances throughout the discursive practices she would be involved with me, her (private) English teacher.

In this way, the current research project was envisaged to progress while both the teacher and her student were having an ordinary class. Actually, the main intention was to look into Marta's possible autonomous actions not only during her film watching, but mainly throughout the whole project, the private classes included (although the learner might not have understood it that way necessarily). This said, the opportunity of doing classroom research was created, which was expected to comprise rich moments of self-observation of the actual classroom language and behaviour of both the teacher and the learner (Stubbs, 1992: 97). However, that observation was rooted on the idea of looking at

classrooms as intense and complex social settings ... [displaying] different types of *social organization* and ... different kinds of social control and personal relationships which the language between teachers and pupils can sustain (Walker and Adelman, 1975a and b, 1976 *apud* Stubbs, 1992: 111) (emphasis in original).

and also regarding

classroom talk ... not merely [as] a linguistic system, but a sociolinguistic system (ibid.).

Marta and I also decided that she would bring her diary entries to class so that they could be discussed during the lessons. Moreover, a deadline for the project was jointly (teacher and student) set up for the end of the term, that being the beginning of July of the same year.

After being told by email what had been decided, Bebel suggested recording the sessions with Marta so that the encounters could be listened to and analysed later, besides constituting part of the research data. Bebel also advised me to guide the student to reflect upon what the suggested project would do /was doing *to* and *with* Marta, i.e.,

she would think over what she had been doing and (re) think the proposal – that way, Marta’s **autonomy**, it was believed, would be enhanced, once she would be reflecting upon (Freire, 1970, 1973, 1988 *apud* Fantini, 2000a) her activities and the learning strategies adopted.

In order to cast more light on the understandings generated in this investigation, it is then paramount to depict its participants (teacher and private student).

4.2

The dual-role participants: the teacher-enquirer & the enquirer-student

As escolas deveriam ensinar a você a se realizar, mas não o fazem. Elas te ensinam a ser um livro. É fácil tornar-se um livro, mas para tornar-se você mesmo é preciso que você tenha várias opções e seja ajudado a avaliar estas opções. Você tem que aprender isso, do contrário não estará preparado para o mundo lá fora.

A citation by a high-school student in R. White & D. Brockington, *Tales out of School*, 1983, p. 21 *apud* H. Giroux, *Pedagogia Crítica, Política Cultural e o Discurso da Experiência* (Chap. 7), 1997, p. 125.

At the beginning of February of 2007, the possibility of teaching Marta on a one-to-one basis was offered by the then coordinator of one of the private English schools where I have been working, in Rio de Janeiro. According to that coordinator, Marta would not be able to continue in her group due to her tight school schedule. As the private institution is a small one, and there was not another group to “fit” Marta in, it was so decided to accommodate her availability. It was also said that Marta had a “lousy” English, impoverished by her “awful” pronunciation. Besides that, she had a scholarship whilst in the group, which would be somehow affected when she became a private student. Thus, the teacher’s wages were not expected to be much either, something close to low-paid volunteer work. The student’s level of the English language production and comprehension had been categorised as similar to upper-beginner¹¹. Therefore, Marta, aged 15 then, would be doing the first intermediate-level year of English – seen as a foreign language in this context. It was also agreed that the private lessons would last 60 minutes on a weekly basis, to be arranged together with the pupil, at the most convenient time for both parties (teacher & learner).

¹¹In the teaching of EFL (English as a Foreign Language), it means that Marta’s oral production was correspondent to the end of the basic level in a regular programme, and that she was able to communicate in English in a limited way, by using basic linguistic structures.

Nevertheless, some biodata of the learner is here presented for a better understanding of this study. Marta is the only child of a live-in domestic worker who works for a high medium-class family in a wealthy suburb in Rio de Janeiro. Actually, her mother - since her arrival in Rio from the northeast of Brazil - has brought up the fifteen-year-old daughter without the assistance of Marta's father. As far as it was eventually known, the student does keep in touch with her father and his family, even though not very often. Marta, as well as the researcher/teacher, speaks Portuguese as her mother tongue.

5 Exploring the practice, pursuing understanding

The idea for the case study discussed in this investigation is supported by some principles which will be explained henceforth. At first, seen as opportunities for studying a broad scope of “contextual factors” (Hatch, 1974 *apud* Allwright, 2000:6), case studies have been considered excellent opportunities to look into “classroom language learning” (Allwright, 2000:6) and the “quality of life” embedded in the lessons themselves (Allwright, 2003:113, 119-20). That “quality of life” (*ibid.*) entails the shared participation between the practitioners, understood as being both the students and the educators (Allwright, 2003) in the teaching-learning process. Furthermore, as the researcher is also the teacher involved in this investigation – and, it should also be said, the learner became, many times, the inquirer herself – the lessons themselves were the *loci* of the social encounters. Seen this way, both the educator and the pupil perform “social roles ... [which] do not exist in the abstract... [but] have to be acted out, performed and continuously constructed in the course of social interaction” (Stubbs, 1992: 99).

Therefore, it became crucial for the understanding pursued in this study that an ethnographic approach be adopted; one that called for the researcher and (why not say) the researched participations, due to the communicative details embedded in the social classroom interaction (Hymes, 1972 *apud* Stubbs, 1992: 97). Or, according to Guba and Lincoln (1994), the investigator being an “emic inquirer” as opposed to the outsider “etic” researcher. In other words, “*understanding* the action” (Stubbs, 1992: 100) (emphasis in original), trying to account for what is happening in class (*ibid.*, 115) instead of merely “moving closer to *where* the action is” (*ibid.*, 100) (emphasis in original), was the principal motivation herein, together with the observation of Marta’s decision-making attitudes and her reasons and feelings underlining her choices, which were disclosed in the course of the classes themselves.

In order to shed light on that comprehension, the “normal school lessons” were tape recorded (Barnes, 1969 *apud* Stubbs, 1992: 103) and then meticulously listened to and later analysed. This choice of collecting data was made bearing in mind Moita Lopes’s (1996: 95) words, namely

... que só a análise dos processos que caracterizam a relação interacional entre o aluno e o professor na sala-de-aula pode apontar direções para a compreensão destes processos.

Yet the observance and the analysis of the learner's attitudes during the project and the recorded lessons were based on the idea that

... não existe nenhuma janela transparente de acesso à vida íntima de um indivíduo... *não existem observações objetivas*, apenas observações que se situam socialmente nos mundos do observador e do observado – e entre esses mundos (Denzin & Lincoln, [2003] 2006: 33) (my emphasis).

Moreover, the procedural practices adopted before, during and after the conclusion of this enquiry were founded on the claim that "... nenhum método é capaz de compreender todas as variações sutis na experiência humana contínua" (ibid., 33).

It ought to be said, however, that the impressions held by the teacher/researcher were also discussed with her supervisor teacher, through email and/or face-to-face meetings. Furthermore, the student was asked for her views upon some of the understandings of the study, during certain regular lessons. That way, Marta was granted the opportunity of actually having an *active* role in the enquiry by validating her participation (Silverman, 1993 *apud* Gimenez, 2006: 158).

By pursuing understanding in the socially constructed interactions between the two practitioners, by observing Marta's autonomous attitudes and by disposing of participant observation, the teacher/enquirer was able to

... criar espaços para que quem seja estudado (o outro) fale. O avaliador [assim transformou]-se no canal através do qual essas vozes [puderam] ser escutadas (Denzin & Lincoln, 2006: 37).

Therefore, by facilitating the process of empowerment, by creating the necessary conditions for the voices of not only the researched, but also my own (the researcher's) to be heard, this investigation was epistemologically grounded on a socio-constructivist philosophical view. In other words, the

constructions [or 'results'] [were] not more or less 'true' in any absolute sense... [they were] alterable, as [were] their associated 'realities'... The investigator and the object of investigation [were] assumed to be *interactively linked* so that the 'findings' [were] *literally created* as the investigation [proceeded] (Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 111) (quotations in original, the first emphasis is mine).

The assumption of the co-construction of varied and at times "conflicting social realities" (ibid.) was what enabled "multiple 'knowledges' [to] coexist" (ibid., 113) in

this study, whose most salient goal (as it had been previously explained) was the “understanding and reconstruction of the constructions that people (including the inquirer) initially [held]” (*ibid.*). As both interactants were actively engaged in the attempt of trying to make sense of the world, it then became essential for the existence of this investigation that “the inquirer’s voice [be] that of the ‘passionate participant’ (Lincoln, 1991 apud Guba & Lincoln, 1994: 115)” in the sense of contributing for the **autonomy** and self-reliance of all the parties involved in the investigative learning and sharing process.

Moreover, as there was no attempt to test any hypotheses which would yield cause and effect experiments, or to try to come up with a solution for any given/likely problem, this case study could also be addressed as a non-interventionist enquiry. In fact, “[the] regularly scheduled classes [were the] likely sites in which ... [this] naturalistic enquiry approach” (Allwright & Bailey, 1991: 42) was adopted, as the “desire to understand what [went] on in naturally occurring classes” (*ibid.*) led to the complex and multiple interpretations of the naturally occurring processes which were already part of the lessons themselves. Therefore, the researcher/teacher did not allocate extra time to proceed with the investigation, inasmuch as it was the class itself.

It ought to be said that this study was not merely a way of conducting research *per se* as a way of designing a project with previously defined aims to be achieved; neither was it a new methodology to be blindly followed and implemented. It was instead a way to try to come to terms with the fact that both practitioners (pupil and teacher) were historical and social actors, who displayed their own idiosyncrasies and stances of making sense of the world, were they in the classroom or out of it.

Finally, some excerpts depicting the socially constructed encounters between the teacher/researcher and Marta were transcribed taking into consideration the concept of “tone unit” (Kreidler 1989: 156), which encompasses the idea of people’s utterances being made up of “chunks” or words jointly uttered/spoken in single breaths (see Appendix 2). Furthermore, some speech transcription conventions adapted from Tannen (1984) were also used, as can be seen in the same appendix.

6

Constructed & reconstructed learning opportunities: attempting to make sense of what took place in the lessons and in the proposed project

As it has been said in the previous sections, Marta's **autonomy** was expected to surface through her own awareness process not only during her film watching and her decision-making attitudes (and consequently her diary composing process), but also through her reporting in class of what had taken place (*what/how she had felt* and *why she had made certain choices* in detriment of others). In order to do that, during a regular lesson, a project was proposed to Marta, who agreed with the idea at once besides committing herself tremendously. Although the suggestion for the project was given by me (teacher/researcher), I was careful enough to not interfere on Marta's future ideas which might appear henceforward. Otherwise, that would compromise the learner's initiative and her stances throughout the project and the classes as well.

For didactic purposes, this section has been subdivided into nine parts, each one corresponding to a recorded lesson which took place throughout the accomplishment of this study. However salient all the classes may have been, it became imperative to include a circumscribed number of observed lessons in this paper due to space and time constraints¹².

6.1

First learning opportunity: breaking the default interactional pattern

At the beginning of the first lesson that was recorded on 11 April of 2007 – despite not being the first class chronologically speaking – Marta spontaneously started to sum up some of the topics talked over and activities carried out during the previous lesson. A short excerpt of this interaction is shown below:

Micro interaction 1 – First recorded lesson – 11 April 2007

¹² Upon the completion of this monograph, this investigation and the tape-recording of the classes were still being carried out, as Marta had agreed on continuing with the project – even though the previous deadline had been set up for July, 2007.

T= speaker`s turn

L= line of talk

S=speaker

I=interactions

M=Marta

A=Andréa

T	L	S	I
1	1	M	um I don` t *hemember very well but/we talked about/Australia [and
2	2	A	[uh-huh
3	3	M	Canada South Africa um
4	4	A	Great Britain
5	5	M	Great Britain um
6	6	A	the Uni the Uni the US
7	7	M	the US the United Kingdom
8	8	A	it`s it`s Great Britain yeah
9	9	M	um
10	10	A	there were six remember?
11	11	M	yes ()
12	12	A	uh uh

After some time, both Marta and I finish what we had been talking about:

T	L	S	I
13	13	M	yes [wrapping up her summary]
14	14	A	very good excellent/ok but you wanted to tell me something

By spontaneously initiating the talk (line 1, micro interaction 1 above, this subsection), Marta was able to break free from the default exchange of I-R-E (Initiation-Response-Evaluation)¹³ which has prevailed in classroom interactional practices so far.

¹³Initiation-Response-Evaluation (I-R-E) corresponds to the sequence of verbal exchanges commonly encountered in mainstream classroom interactions – not only in language education but also in other areas of study. It is usually composed of a) a question posed by the teacher (who already knows the answer) or the Initiation, b) a Response given by the learner(s) and c) the Evaluation – or feedback – accomplished by the educator, who once again has the power to either decline/criticise the pupil`s/pupils` response or ratify it. Below the reader will find an instance of such sequence, in which T is the language teacher and S is the language student:

As a result, her *decision* of starting a conversation with the teacher can also be interpreted as an autonomous act of not waiting for the other commonly believed more powerful party to speak. This idea is in accordance with what both Allwright (oral communication) and Cunha (personal email communication, 2007) believe about **autonomy** (see the section *What is Autonomy?*) that people are not machines, at disposal of other individuals to be programmed or spoonfed with information. Moreover, Marta's **autonomy** was also enhanced by exchanging roles with her teacher by making use of the concept of "*intertextuality*" (Gieve & Miller, 2006: 32) (emphasis in original) to review what both practitioners had talked about in the previous lesson.

As the lesson advanced, there was a time when I (the teacher/author of this monograph) asked Marta whether she would like to write the answers to an exercise on the board; her answer, however, seems to echo the traditional stance of the educator being in charge of almost all of the decisions made in class as can be seen below in bold (line 2, micro interaction 2, this sub-section):

Micro interaction 2 – 11 April, 2007

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	would you would you like to write them on the board?
2	2	M	você é quem sabe
3	3	A	no I'm asking <u>you</u>
4	4	M	pode ser
5	5	A	it can be?

Notwithstanding what had just taken place in the previous micro interaction, Marta was next asked to decide upon starting an oral pair work exercise of asking questions, to which she replied that she would begin the activity. Therefore, in the course of just one lesson, the learner assumed complex and varied identity roles – either acting as an active participant and initiator of an interaction (micro interaction 1 above,

T: [pointing to a clock on the wall] What time is it? {Initiation}

S: Nine o'clock. {Response}

T: Excellent! {Evaluation}

For additional information, refer to HALL, J. K. & WALSH, M. Teacher-student interaction and language learning. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 22, 186-203. CUP, 2002.

this sub-section), or as a dependent student on her teacher (micro interaction 2 above, this sub-section), or finally as a not so dependent pupil anymore.

Before the end of the same class, Marta was invited to talk about her first diary entry (Appendix 3). Surprisingly as it may seem, she seemed more preoccupied with the type of recipient of her writing because she enquired whether the “composition” should be written into her notebook or on a loose piece of paper. Yet this time it was I, as the teacher, who answered “I don’t know/ you decide”, which was followed by Marta’s reporting of having watched two films. The first, *Dirty Dancing* (“*Ritmo Quente*”, in Portuguese) had been seen previously – although she could not remember it very well because it had already been some time she had seen that, in contrast with the second one, *A Walk to Remember* (“*Um Amor para Recordar*”, in Portuguese) which had been a novelty to her. After doing that, Marta handed in her diary entry, as it follows:

Micro interaction 3 – *Idem*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	what would you like me to do with this? [stretching hand up to pick up the diary entry]
2	2	M	I don’t know
3	3	A	would you like to read?/would you like to give it to me?/would you like to talk about it?

Above, the pupil had to be prompted (line 1, micro interaction 3, this sub-section) in order to make a decision upon what to do next, culminating with her not making up her mind (line 2, in bold, *ibid.*) even when the educator offered Marta some ideas (line 3, *ibid.*). What follows then are the interactions between Marta and me - as her English teacher - about her watching the two films and the possible “understandings” resulting from the co-constructed dialogue:

Micro interaction 4 – *Ibidem*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	I don’t understand [asking her to clarify her previous speech]
2	2	M	I understood well what the people say but um/when I/um
3	3	A	you can mix with Portuguese
4	4	M	como eu já tinha visto o filme/eu já sabia o que eles iam falar/que eu entendi bem
5	5	A	did you watch the first film without any subtitles?

6	6	M	any no/the subtitles in English
7	7	A	ah ok/uh-huh
8	8	M	ah and the second film=
9	9	A	=I'm sorry so when you said "but"
10	10	M	ah eu falei em português
11	11	A	I'm sorry but I didn't remember/I don't remember
12	12	M	eu vi o filme todo em inglês
13	13	A	can you tell me that in English?
14	14	M	I saw the fil movie all in English and I understood the diálogos
15	15	A	ok
16	16	M	but eu já sabia o que eles iam falar/já tinha visto o filme
17	17	A	ok uh-huh
18	18	M	só isso
19	19	A	ok/uh-huh
20	20	M	and the second/I started saw that só in English then uh/I don't understand very well
21	21	A	understood

I seemed to try not to loose track of my institutional role when I used discursive elements to exert control upon Marta (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994), as I did both in lines 13 and 21 above (micro interaction 4, this sub-section). In other words, by either reminding the student to make use of English to speak her mind (line 13, *ibid.*) or by trying to draw the former's attention to the use of the Simple Past form (line 21, *ibid.*) – although I used the affirmative form “understood”, I intended to signal to the learner the need for shifting the verb tense– it becomes rather suggestive that language was used as an instance of social control and distancing in that classroom (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994).

As the interaction advanced, Marta reported on her decision to change the subtitles of the second film into Portuguese and then to English again (lines 1 & 2 below, micro interaction 5, this sub-section). This attitude can be seen as an autonomous act of the student in the English language learning process, although she might not have been aware of that. As I was not present, Marta resorted to her mother tongue when the meaning of the story was compromised, and in an attempt of forcing herself to the use of the target language, resorted to English subtitles. Nonetheless, she was not able to grasp the meaning of the situation, which prompted me to enquire about the learner's feeling (turns 2 & 4 below, micro interaction 5, this sub-section) triggered by her earlier decision:

Micro interaction 5 – *Ibid.*

T	L	S	I
1	1	M	uh then I change the Portuguese/and when I understood the history/I change for English
	2		again/but I don't/I didn't unders understand the {conversations} very well
2	3	A	how did you feel when you didn't understand the conversations very well?/ah you
	4		didn't/I'm sorry/because the subtitles were in English?
3	5	M	yes
4	6	A	ok/how did you feel?
5	7	M	uh/I don't know
6	8	A	you can express how you felt in Portuguese?
7	9	M	ok/[in an angry tone of voice] como assim o que eu senti?/eu num senti nada!
8	10	A	really?
9	11	M	yes!

At first, Marta did not know to express her sentiment in words (line 7 above, micro interaction 5, this sub-section), but as she was invited to say it in Portuguese (line 8, *ibid.*), the pupil displayed anger - her actual feeling - demonstrated in the intonation of her voice (“a paralinguistic contextualisation cue”, Gumperz, 1992) in her question (line 9, *ibid.*) in the reply given to me. Taking that reaction into account, it would seem appropriate to say that the student did feel angry – either with her decision making or with my posing of the question or, perhaps, with none of them – albeit claiming the opposite (“Eu num senti nada”, line 9, *ibid.*).

Notwithstanding the fact that Marta had just stated she had not felt anything above, the learner literally expressed what she feels when trying to speak English (line 2 below, micro interaction 6, this sub-section: “sinto que eu tenho...”), in response to my enquiry of what she had decided to do (line 1) after realizing she could not comprehend the characters’ dialogues quite well – as the subtitles were in English again:

Micro interaction 6 – *Ibid.*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	and what did you decide to do?
2	2	M	um I think/I/eu sinto que eu tenho uma grande dificuldade em falar em inglês/eu sei as
	3		regras e tal/mas na hora de falar/eu sei que eu tenho uma dificuldade/eu esqueço/eu quero

	4		falar como eu falo em Português/{às vezes não dá} e sai tudo errado mas assim eu num
	5		sinto nada
3	6	A	<u>tudo</u> errado?
4	7	M	é a maioria sim/sei lá/porque=
5	8	A	=a maioria?
6	9	M	a maioria das coisas que eu falo tá errado sim/que eu sinto

As the excerpt above seems to show, Marta desires to speak the target language the same way she speaks her mother tongue (lines 3 & 4, micro interaction 6, this sub-section: “quero falar como eu falo em Português”), which is not always possible (line 4, *ibid.*: “{às vezes não dá}”) making her display a very low and not-possible-to-change concept of her English production (line 4, *ibid.*: “ sai **tudo** errado”; my emphasis). Moreover, the student revealed a huge concern with accuracy, or in the Kramschian view, about using “language as a tool” (Kramsch, 2000: 138) as opposed to language being used to express one’s experiences, opinions, amongst others (“language as a sign”, *ibid.*). Once again, the pupil did not seem to realise that she was also demonstrating her emotions - in her whole discourse in turn 2, *ibid.* – even though she stated she did not feel anything (lines 4 & 5, *ibid.*: “mas assim eu num sinto nada”). Throughout the observed lessons, Marta reinforced this idea of wanting to speak the English language as a native – as it has been shown ahead in micro interactions 1 & 3 in the recorded class of 18 April, sub-section 6.2.

After that, Marta was urged to elaborate on the reason she thought “she spoke everything in English wrongly”, to which she replied by using the linguistic sign “empaco” (line 3 below, micro interaction 7, this sub-section) - in English, “balk” - a term usually associated with some animals used to pull carts, carriages such as mules and donkeys. By observing her linguistic choice, one could come up with the suggestion that the pupil’s action – and, perhaps, her view on herself - is similar to that of those animals: they work quite hard until they tire and “balk”; in her case, Marta could be signaling that there is a moment (speaking) when she “balks” because she wants to speak like a native (see the previous micro interaction), so she stutters (line 4, *ibid.*: “começo a gaguejar”) and finds it “weird” (line 4, *ibid.*: “estranho”). Her perception of the whole episode seems to be mirrored in the choice of the adjective “weird” (*ibid.*), possibly indicating her lack of control/knowledge of the situation:

Micro interaction 7 – *Ibid.*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	why do you have this perception?
2	2	M	ah eu sei lá por que/porque quando chega na hora deu falar/escrever eu até assim/eu
	3		con/sei/quando chega a hora de falar/eu empaco/eu não sei o que acontece/eu quero falar
	4		uma coisa e eu começo a gaguejar aí eu repito a frase várias vezes/sei lá/é estranho

Next, Marta reinforced her thorough lack of comprehension (line 6, micro interaction 8, this sub-section: “eu não entendi nada”) concerning the verbal exchanges displayed in the second film she had watched, after deciding to use English subtitles:

Micro interaction 8 – *Ibid.*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	ok but we were talking about the film with the subtitles in English
2	2	M	yes
3	3	A	and now you’re telling me that when you speak you find it difficult to speak () [what
4	4	M	[porque é
	5		assim/porque eu () muito/o que eu vou falar assim/vê assim é uma coisa em inglês e não
	6		entender/eu não entendi nada
5	7	A	não?
6	8	M	no!
7	9	A	really?
8	10	M	yes

Bearing in mind that Marta had already been consulted upon what she wanted me to do with her first diary entry (see micro interaction 3 above) before, the learner was again made the same request – as can be seen below – only this time her **autonomy** surfaced more easily in her reply “I [would] like [to] give [it] for [*sic*] you” (line 5, micro interaction 9, this sub-section):

Micro interaction 9 – *Ibid.*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	ok uh we have to stop now because our class has finished/but I’d like to ask you this last
	2		question/I have your uh diary here/what would you like to do with this entry?/this part of

	3		your diary?/would you like/to read it to me? would you like/to give it to me? you
	4		wouldn't like to give it to me or read it to me?
2	5	M	I like give for you
3	6	A	now?
4	7	M	yes
5	8	A	yes? Marta I'm also writing a diary about something else that I'm doing/but I've
	9		forgotten to bring my diary today to class/I'm going to bring it next class and then I/I
	10		<u>want</u> to show it to you/I want/this is what I <u>want</u> to do ok?
6	11	M	ok
7	12	A	uh so next class I'll bring it to you/and we can read my diary together all right?/ok I'll get
	13		your diary/is that what you want?/to give it to me?
8	14	M	[nodding her head]
9	15	A	ok/uh/I'll take it with me and then we'll see on Monday next week ok?

Finally, I tried to involve Marta in the diary construction process by telling her about my own diary entry (line 8, micro interaction 9, this sub-section); by putting myself in the student's shoes, I also conveyed the idea that I was sympathetic to Marta's learning process as I was undergoing a similar process in my investigation. Furthermore, the stress given to the two occurrences of the verb "want" (line 10, *ibid.*) gives support to my desire that Marta would see my diary entry and give her opinion about that. Therefore, the use of prosodic elements – the two emphatic instances of "want" above – once again functioned as "paralinguistic cues" (Gumperz, 1992) to help express the decision making process of the other "learner": myself.

6.2

Second learning opportunity: "Do you have a good English accent?"

The second recorded lesson took place on 18 April of the same year. Whilst checking homework, I asked Marta one of the questions that were part of the exercise, that being whether the learner thought she had "a good English accent":

Micro interaction 1 – Second recorded lesson – 18 April, 2007

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	do you have a good English accent?
2	2	M	what's accent?

3	3	A	um that`s how we speak/um the carioca accent the mineiro accent[
4	4	M	[ah!
5	5	A	um the English accent
6	6	M	ok/no I don`t
7	7	A	no?/() are you sure?
8	8	M	yes!
9	9	A	ok because I don`t really agree

Marta`s opinion about her own English accent (line 6, micro interaction 1, this sub-section) above seems to ratify the student`s desire of speaking English like a native (as shown in micro interaction 6, first recorded lesson, sub-section *First learning opportunity*). It also suggests a low self-esteem on Marta`s part (*how* she feels about speaking the target language). Although initially Marta`s feelings about her production in English were not the focus of this study, her discourse should not be overlooked, as it unveils the complexity and unpredictability of the (language) classroom life and the attempts of trying to come to terms with the possible “understandings” resulting from them.

Moving towards the end of the class, the student decided to talk about the experience of having watched the third film, *The Da Vinci Code* (“*O Código Da Vinci*”, in Portuguese), as part of the project. The interaction which follows depicts both practitioners discussing Marta`s decisions and reflective thoughts about that experience:

Micro interaction 2 – *Idem*

T	L	S	I
1	1 2	A	when you were watching/uh/the film with the subtitles when you were watching it/how did you feel?/I remember that you told me that you had difficulty with=
2	3 4	M	=ah because some words I don`t/knew I didn`t knew know/but I understood the sentences but the words I don`t understood
3	5 6	A	and: do you think that/these words that you didn`t understand/did they uh/were they very important for you understand the whole situation?
4	7	M	yes I think uh if I didn`t read the book/I don`t understand
5	8 9	A	ah! when you were doing it/did you/did you change the subtitles to Portuguese/did you decide to do that?
6	10	M	no/because uh/when I saw/I imagined what were/é sabendo o que era
7	11	A	uh-huh/ok/ ()

8	12	M	mais ou menos
9	13 14	A	ok/and do you think that when you imagine the word in Portuguese/do you think that that word was that in Portuguese?
10	15	M	() is
11	16 17	A	you imagined the word/you tried to remember/the/the situation when you read the book right?/ok/for example/uh/you saw a word/uh/in the subtitle
12	18	M	ah ()
13	19	A	and then/you tried to imagine/is that what you said?
14	20	M	yes
15	21 22	A	in in Portuguese? Ok/when you tried to imagine that word in Portuguese/when the film finished/did you check?
16	23	M	no
17	24	A	ok/why not?
18	25	M	()
19	26	A	ok

In line 7 above (micro interaction 2, this sub-section) Marta acknowledged having difficulty comprehending the plot of the film, despite having read the book before. After being asked whether or not she had opted for swapping the subtitles (turn 5, *ibid.*), the learner's **autonomy** could be noticed as she further explained her decision-making (the *why* she had done what she did): she did not resort to Portuguese subtitles because she had imagined what the word(s) was/were (line 10, *ibid.*). Moreover, the pupil's schemata – having read the book prior to watching the movie – seemed to have functioned as an autonomous learning strategy employed by her to grasp the meaning of the story. Finally, when enquired (turn 15, *ibid.*) whether she had looked up the word(s), the student stated she had not (line 23, *ibid.*); and as the reason she gave (line 25, *ibid.*) to justify her decision could not be transcribed, there were no feasible understandings deriving from her answer (same line) at that moment and in the present analysis.

In micro interaction 3, below, I tried to make Marta aware of the autonomous decisions in her (language) learning process (turns 1 & 6, micro interaction 3, this sub-section), which were not necessarily perceived as such by the learner:

Micro interaction 3 – *Ibidem*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	what do you think that is happening in relation to this exercise
	2		()/watching () subtitles/what do you think is happening
2	3	M	ai/eu acho que com o tempo eu vou me acostumando com o jeito que eles falam
3	4	M	I think/I/é/tô aumentando meu vocabulário/é/e tô aprendendo umas expressões também
4	5	A	() that?/()
5	6	M	I think () ok
6	7	A	Marta/what do you think/this exercise and the diary is doing to <u>you</u> and um/ <u>for</u> you?
7	8	M	acho que/com o passar do tempo/pode melhorar/meu inglês
8	9	A	why?
9	10	M	because I have a difficulty for/to speak and to *ear too/when I read I/eu tenho menos
	11		dificuldade/mas se a gente tá lendo a legenda/eu também tô ouvindo
10	12	A	uh-huh

As it had been noticed before (micro interaction 6, first recorded lesson, 11 April, 2007, sub-section *First learning opportunity*, and micro interaction 1, this sub-section), Marta seems to look up to a native pronunciation and oral production of the English language. The learner's belief and her view on the target language mainly as a "tool" (Kramsch, 2000: 138) may also aid in the interpretation of her replies both in turns 2 and 7 above (micro interaction 3, this sub-section); however, the delicacy and complexity of the situation call for a better explanation to the reader: the idea that students may want to improve their language production is extremely valid – and it would be dishonest on my part to pretend the contrary. Nevertheless, if that constitutes the SOLE GOAL of the pedagogic encounters, one will probably not be given the chance of thinking over her/his educational process as a learner to become aware of what is taking place in such social situations; one will not be able to use "language as a sign" (Kramsch, 2000: 138) to speak her/his minds.

At the end of the class, Marta's second diary entry (Appendix 4) was handed in to me. This composition was about the third film she had seen – *The Da Vinci Code*, her decisions whilst watching it and her opinion about the movie as well.

6.3

Third learning opportunity: "Making decisions, deciding your life"

The third recorded class took place on 26 April of the same year. Marta and I were discussing about being an immigrant in the USA, when she contended that

Americans seemed to be independent people. Taking advantage of this recently brought up issue, I decided to look into her opinion on independence - in spite of that not having been one of my original questions. In fact, my expectation was to check whether Marta would make a connection between her own decision-making process and the conscious exercise of her **autonomy**:

Micro interaction 1 – Third recorded lesson – 26 April, 2007

T	L	S	I
1	1	M	I think/they ¹⁴ are independent
2	2	A	ok/that`s a good observa/do you think that we should be in control of our lives?
3	3	M	yeah () because when you are ◀stressing the second syllable▶ independent/you can make your deci/é/decisions[
4	5	A	[uh-huh
5	6	M	and/and do what/what you want
6	7	A	ok/so do you think that/uh making decisions is important?
7	8	M	yes/because when you have your decisions you/sabe decidir your life
8	9	A	uh-huh

Marta seemed to have accepted my suggestion in line 2 above (micro interaction 1, this sub-section), by drawing some parallels amongst being in control of one's life, being independent and making decisions (turn 3, *ibid.*) and “do[ing] what you want” (line 6, *ibid.*). The multiple associations made by the student echo the complexity of the term **autonomy**, as it could be used as “independen[ce]” and “do[ing] what [one] want[s]”¹⁵. When enquired about the relevance of being able to make choices, Marta acknowledged this idea by linking it to being able to decide upon one's life (line 8, *ibid.*). However, Marta did not seem to have met my expectation of relating her view on making decisions in the macro context to her choices in the micro context of her (language) learning process – the project included or not.

¹⁴ They = the American people.

¹⁵ A broader discussion of the difference between **autonomy** and independence in the pedagogic scenario would call for another investigation besides the current one. The reader is invited to refer to Benson and Voller (1997: 2) for additional information upon the matter.

6.4

Fourth learning opportunity: “How do you feel inside yourself?”

Heading towards the end of the seventh recorded lesson, which was held on 21 May, 2007, Marta was telling me that she had seen *The Lord of the Rings, Episode 1* (“*O Senhor dos Anéis 1*”, in Portuguese), the week before:

Micro interaction 1 – Seventh recorded lesson – 21 May, 2007

T	L	S	I
1	1 2	M	so I/saw the number one last/week/but I/I tout ¹⁶ very difficult understand the movie in English/so I passed the/for/the=
2	3	A	=I’ve changed
3	4	M	I’ve/I ()/I’ve changed
4	5	A	into
5	6	M	into/I changed sub/the subtitles into/English
6	7	A	into English?
7	8	M	() oh
8	9	A	that’s Portuguese
9	10	M	oh/logo no início do filme
10	11	A	uh-huh
11	12 13	M	because/the/*istory of the ()/of the movie is very/ ◀stressing the second syllable▶ complex
12	14	A	◀stressing the first syllable▶ complex
13	15 16	M	complex/and the vocabulary is difficult because they use/uh/vocabulário/específico no filme
14	17	A	what do you mean with specific vocabulary?
15	18	M	assim/não é específico/é porque eles falam muitas coisas daquela época/e=
16	19	A	=which time?
17	20	M	ah ◀speaking Portuguese▶ medieval
18	21	A	ah ◀speaking English▶ medieval
19	22 23	M	yes but/é/é uma história mística/aí eles ficam explicando as coisas e aí a gente não consegue entender

In micro interaction 1 (this sub-section) above, right from the beginning, I performed my institutional role by using the target language to correct Marta - as a pupil - and/or maintain the control of the social encounter (lines 2, 7, 9, 14 & 21, micro

¹⁶ Possible interpretation of “tout”: thought.

interaction 1, this sub-section) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994). Although my original intention was to try to adopt an observer position, this type of alignment exemplifies the myriad social roles one constructs especially when involved in the investigative study. Thus, the simplistic view that it is possible to grant static identities to interactants prior to the social situation does not hold true.

As Marta's teacher, I then asked for a better understanding (line 7, *ibid.*) of my pupil's speech in line 6 (*ibid.*), which went against what Marta had previously uttered in turn 1 (*ibid.*). In the course of the transcription process, her reply in line 8 (*ibid.*) was impossible to comprehend and I "repaired" (line 9, *ibid.* "[changed the subtitles into] Portuguese") Marta's former speech (line 6, *ibid.* "changed... the subtitles into English"). The learner's autonomous choice (i.e., *what* she had done) of resorting to Portuguese subtitles was due to the complexity (turn 11, *ibid.*) and/or the historical specificity (turns 13, 15 & 19, *ibid.*) of the language employed in the film (i.e., *why* she had opted for that alternative). Therefore, the type of discursive and cinema genre did influence Marta's decision to make use of her mother tongue in the subtitles, which can also be seen in the student's third diary entry (Appendix 5).

After that, I tried to have the learner explain the feeling she had had when choosing the Portuguese-subtitled version of the movie (*how/what* she felt at making that decision):

Micro interaction 2 – *Idem*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	uh uh/ok/uh/when you change the subtitles when you/try to watch the subtitles in English/and you have to change/the moment you decide to do that/how do you feel?/because you've been telling me/this is not the first time/that you try but then you/there's a moment that you have to change the subtitles into Portuguese so/how do you feel at <u>that</u> moment/when you make <u>that</u> decision?
	2		
	3		
	4		
	5		
2	6	M	(3-second pause)
3	7	A	what do you feel?/how do you feel?
4	8	M	well/I/feel/difficult but
5	9	A	what/what do you mean with/with "I feel difficult"?
6	10	M	eu senti dificuldade/nesse filme mais dificuldade de entender do que nos outros
7	11	A	I'm talking about how you feel inside yourself
8	12	M	(4-second pause)

9	13	A	your feelings
10	14	M	um
11	15	A	not ()
12	16	M	ok
13	17	A	() in the mind
14	18	M	um
15	19 20 21 22	A	I mean not fear in the/your diffi/I/I understand that you have difficulty with vocabulary/because you`ve been telling me that/but what I`m asking you is that/what do you feel/or how do you feel when you/at the <u>moment</u> you make that decision/because you`ve tried before
16	23	M	yes
17	24	M	um/only difficult
18	25	A	nothing else?
19	26	M	no
20	27 28 29	A	would you like to/before you make the decision/if the words were not complex or difficult/do you think you would try to watch the whole film in English or not?
21	30	M	yes
22	31	A	why?
23	32	M	because/I/eu ia entender
24	33 34	A	uh-huh/so how do you feel when you make the decision?/what do you feel?/how do you feel?
25	35	M	(10-second pause)
26	36	A	no?/ok no problem/let`s stop here today right?

As noted before (Sub-sections *First learning opportunity*, first recorded class, micro interaction 5, and *Second learning opportunity*, second recorded class, micro interaction 2), Marta either did not seem to be able to express her feeling linguistically when she made her decisions or she might not have understood my question. In fact, in micro interaction 5, sub-section *First learning opportunity*, paralinguistic cues (turn 7) were observed which indexed the pupil's actual feeling of anger, whilst in micro interaction 2, sub-section *Second learning opportunity*, I may have influenced (turn 1) Marta's reply by suggesting a link between the learner's feeling and her difficulty with the lexi.

On the other hand, her silent¹⁷ reactions (lines 6, 12 & 35, micro interaction 2, this sub-section) to my questions (turns 1, 7, & 24, *ibid.*) above, seem to suggest that the

¹⁷ Marta's silence/pauses could be interpreted as a paralinguistic cue according to Gumperz (1992).

issue of expressing her sentiments could be embarrassing or disturbing to Marta. Additionally, the use of the discourse marker “well” (line 8, *ibid.*) could be corroborating the reluctance on her part to answer my question (line 7, *ibid.*). This idea could be reinforced by Marta’s insistence on “feel[ing] [*sic*] difficult” (lines 8, 10 & 24, *ibid.*), which may be interpreted as resistance to a subjective desire to expose oneself. Having sensed – perhaps a little late – the delicacy of the situation, I wrapped up the class and ended the conversation – thus, the traditional role of the educator being in charge of the IRE pattern of interaction (Hall & Walsh, 2002) was performed.

6.5

Fifth learning opportunity: English or Japanese?

The ninth recorded class happened on 6 June of the same year. Marta told me that she had seen some English-subtitled chapters of an Anime¹⁸, *Evangelion*, at a friend’s house. As those chapters had been downloaded from the computer, the other option for the subtitles was Japanese, which was discarded by the pupil (see Appendix 6). The autonomous attitude adopted by Marta (*what* she did) could then be interpreted as having accepted to watch the Anime with the target language subtitles, as the array of possible alternatives (*why* she did what she did) was circumscribed to one more foreign (and thoroughly unknown) language to the student – Japanese:

Micro interaction 1 – Ninth recorded lesson – 6 June, 2007

T	L	S	I
1	1	M	um so I saw/all/all Animi in English
2	2	A	uh-huh
3	3	M	but I/had some difficult to understand not because/the vocabulary/vocabulary
4	4	A	no?
5	5	M	but um/the way/like this vocabulary is/was used
6	6	A	uh-huh
7	7	M	I/couldn` t understand some expressions

What followed after that was an attempt on my part - as a teacher/enquirer - to create an opportunity for Marta to exert her **autonomy** concerning the non

¹⁸ According to what the learner explained, Animes are Japanese cartoons.

comprehension of those expressions in the Anime (line 7, micro interaction 1, this sub-section, above). In fact, some expectation already existed on my part - as an educator/researcher (turn 1, micro interaction 2, this sub-section, below) - that Marta would suggest learning those specific expressions that she had not understood in the film. An excerpt of what unfolded is shown below:

Micro interaction 2 – *Idem*

T	L	S	I
1	1 2	A	ok and/do you think that/um/do you think that those expressions/if you had learnt those expressions before/would that had happened had helped you understand the film?
2	3	M	yes yes
3	4	A	um/so what do you suggest?
4	5	M	um
5	6	A	() would you like to suggest/something?
6	7	M	no

Actually, Marta did not spontaneously make a suggestion concerning her target language learning process, which can be seen above (line 7, micro interaction 2, this sub-section). Only when I insisted on the issue further ahead did Marta come up with a learning strategy, as the excerpt below shows:

Micro interaction 3 – *Ibidem*

T	L	S	I
1	1 2 3	A	ok so my question is/um remember the the question I asked you?/if you had learnt those expressions before/do you think they they would have helped you understand the film the story better?
2	4	M	yes
3	5	A	ok so my question is what do you suggest?/would you like to suggest something?
4	6	M	um/learn these expressions
5	7 8	A	and how could you/help me/I mean how could you learn these ex/what could you do so I could help you learn these expressions?
6	9	M	um/I can/bring these expressions/and you/*touch ¹⁹ it for me
7	10	A	I teach them

¹⁹ Although Marta said “touch” she probably have meant to say “teach” instead.

8	11	M	() yes
---	----	---	---------

The student's suggestion above (line 6, micro interaction 3, this sub-section) to learn the unknown expressions in the film seems to have been overtly influenced by my incisive enquiries (turns 1, 3 & 5, *idem*) above. Had I not insisted so much, Marta's autonomous attitude could have been more truly depicted in the course of that interaction. Furthermore, by correcting (line 10, *ibid.*) the pupil's mispronunciation and the grammatical structure used ("touch it for me", line 9, *ibid.*), I - as a teacher/enquirer - once again made use of the linguistic system to control the social situation (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994). This attitude can illustrate the subtleness and complexity of the many roles socially constructed by a researcher when one is also a participant in an investigation – in my case, being an English teacher AND an investigator AND a participant.

6.6

Sixth learning opportunity: "Even my mother thinks my English has improved"

The thirteenth recorded class was held on 27 June of 2007. Marta had seen two films, *Narnia* and *The Sweetest Thing* ("*Tudo para ficar com ele*", in Portuguese) (see Appendix 7). The student decided to talk about the experience of having watched the movies immediately at the beginning of the lesson. The excerpt below refers to the first film, *Narnia*:

Micro interaction 1 – Thirteenth recorded lesson – 27 June, 2007

T	L	S	I
1	1	M	and I have/um some difficult in some parts in the movie [and I
2	2	A	[uh-huh
3	3	M	changed the subtitle
4	4	A	what kind of difficulties did you have?
5	5	M	um/tipo [coughing]/I don't understand the *istory/um not because the/the vocabulary
	6		*butch ²⁰ um/ () I can't explain/é
6	7	A	you can try to mix with Portuguese
7	8	M	nem em português/ [()

²⁰ Marta probably meant to say "but".

8	9	A	[() ok
9	10	M	I/eu num/num entendia muito bem aquilo que eles falavam/um mas eu entendia o
	11		vocabulário/mas também não era por causa das expressões/é porque era por causa da
	12		história mesmo
10	13	A	ah ok so/the plot the story/the plot o enredo/the plot was difficult
11	14	M	yes
12	15	A	why?/do you think it wasn't/why do you think it was difficult?
13	16	M	um because/é/they/speak/oh because the *istory is/is/complicada

Marta's reason, above, for swapping the subtitles into her mother tongue (her autonomous action) was due to the fact that the plot was difficult (line 14, micro interaction 1, this sub-section) and complicated (line 16, *ibid.*). As one can see, the issue concerning either the choice of words used or the plot of some of the other films was again offered as an explanation for the learner's decision (the *why* of her autonomous attitude). Furthermore, Marta's struggle to try to explain all that she had done in English - notwithstanding the fact she did use some Portuguese – seems to exemplify the tremendous effort she made to speak her mind.

Next Marta contrasted the second movie, *The Sweetest Thing*, to the first one:

Micro interaction 2 – *Idem*

T	L	S	I
1	1	M	um/in this/yesterday/in the movie I saw yesterday/was more easy [
2	2	A	[ok
3	3	M	but in the/beginning of the=
4	4	A	=why?/I'm sorry to interrupt you/why was it easier?
5	5	M	because I/have to change é/in Portuguese ah/few times
6	6	A	ok
7	7	M	I only change it in the/beginning of the movie [/ the movie yesterday
8	8	A	[ah

According to the student, because she just used Portuguese subtitles “few times” (line 5, micro interaction 2, this sub-section, above) at the “beginning of the movie” (line 7, *idem*), the second film (*The Sweetest Thing*) was easier (line 1, *ibid.*). A salient issue which could have been further discussed by both practitioners (Marta and I) was

the conceptualization of “easier”, once it might have disclosed certain beliefs mainly on Marta’s part.

On the other hand, I tried to have the student express *what/how* she felt during the film-watching process:

Micro interaction 3 – *Ibidem*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	ok um/would you like to say anything else?/about the two films about/the/how/the/about
	2		whi <u>while</u> /you were watching the film/ <u>while</u> you were doing that?
2	3	M	yes
3	4	A	during the/the process/would you like to comment/to say anything else or that’s it?
4	5	M	that’s it
5	6	A	ok/all right
6	7	M	[handing in her fifth diary entry ²¹]

The two emphatic utterances of “while” (line 2, micro interaction 3, this sub-section, above) were contextualisation cues (Gumperz, 1992) employed by me - as an educator/ researcher - to signal to Marta - as a pupil - the ongoingness of her experience. However, this time I did not ask a direct question regarding the learner’s feeling whilst choosing what to do (line 4, *ibid.*). Quite the contrary, I truly allowed Marta’s **autonomy** to bloom (line 5, *ibid.*) – and perhaps my own, as an autonomous practitioner and a reflective observer.

Last, but not least, the student’s fifth diary entry (Appendix 7) disclosed an extremely salient issue regarding Marta’s target language learning process. The fact that Marta herself – as a pupil - reflected upon the advancement in her cognitive process (fourth paragraph in the same appendix) constituted itself an autonomous act on her part. Yet the fact that Marta’s mother also seemed to have noticed progress in her child’s English (fifth paragraph) has called for a better understanding. According to what was said before (sub-section 4.2) about the learner’s mother, her observations on Marta’s progress seem to be typical of a parent. Moreover, the pupil further explained²² that, despite not being able to speak English, her mother was able to understand some

²¹ See Appendix 7.

²² This interaction took place during the 16th recorded class which was not included in this paper due to space and time constraints.

phrases and /or words and make limited use of the Internet. Therefore how could Marta's mother have perceived advancement in the student's pedagogic process? This seemingly unresolved paradox was included ahead, in the section which presents suggestions for seeking of further understandings.

6.7

Seventh learning opportunity: "I feel happy"

The fifteenth recorded class took place on 6 July of the same year. The student had expressed her wish to talk about the film *She's the Man* ("Ela é o Cara", in Portuguese), which she had seen the previous day (see Appendix 8). The excerpt which follows shows Marta reporting on *what* she had done and the results originating from her actions:

Micro interaction 1 – Fifteenth recorded lesson – 6 July, 2007

T	L	S	I
1	1	M	um and I saw/all movie/in English
2	2	A	oh good!
3	3	M	I could/and I could understand/better
4	4	A	you could?
5	5	M	yes
6	6	A	oh that's wonderful
7	7	M	sometimes I lost some speakers
8	8	A	some what?
9	9	M	algumas falas
10	10	A	some lines
11	11	M	some lines because they/talk very fast
12	12	A	uh-huh
13	13	M	so I returned the=
14	14	A	=rewinded
15	15	M	re/ [rewinded
16	16	A	[rewinded/I rewinded
17	17	M	I rewinded
18	18	A	I rewinded
19	19	M	re/winded

20	20	A	uh-huh
21	21	M	and/é/saw the/line
22	22	A	saw ah[
23	23	M	[watched
24	24	A	ah wa and heard[
25	25	M	[oh
26	26	A	and heard/the line again
27	27	M	the line again
28	28	A	ok/that's cool!]
29	29	M	[()

Having decided to see “ all [the] movie in English” above (line 1, micro interaction 1, this sub-section), Marta seemed to have accepted the challenge of a major task which entailed a positive cognitive feedback, “I could understand [it] better” (line 3, *idem*). The climax of her **autonomy** during that particular situation could be interpreted as her rewinding the film (lines 13, 15, 17, 19, 21, 23 & 27, *ibid.*) when the comprehension of the events (line 11, *ibid.*) was bound to be floundered (*why* she did *what* she did). In terms of her language learning process, it may be claimed that Marta advanced quite considerably besides having made use of a varied strategy (rewinding the movie and watching/ listening to the lines again). My replies to her narrative played a crucial role as well, once I used multiple positive responses (lines 2, 6 & 28, *ibid.*) not only to urge Marta to keep on, but also to fairly praise and compliment her – as a pupil - on her achievement.

The conversation/class between the two practitioners carried on as can be seen below:

Micro interaction 2 – *Idem*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	ok [either Andréa or Marta sniffs]/so you didn't use <u>any</u> subtitles in Portuguese
2	2	M	no
3	3	A	but you used some sub/the subtitles in English
4	4	M	yes
5	5	A	ok uh-huh/and how do you feel?
6	6	M	um[
7	7	A	[now/now how did you feel at that moment first?/my/question number one how did

	8		you feel at that moment?
8	9	M	ok
9	10	A	when you were watching the film
10	11	M	uh I feel
11	12	A	I felt
12	13	M	I felt *halp happy/because um/desde desde que/eu tinha visto
13	14	A	I don't even understand in Portuguese
14	15	M	um/I { want } said say desde que eu tinha visto Miami *Vicy ²³ /um/todo em inglês
15	16	A	ok
16	17	M	eu nunca mais tinha conseguido ver nenhum/outro filme todo em inglês

When enquired about *how* she had felt at choosing to use just a few subtitles in English above (turn 7, micro interaction 2, this sub-section), Marta utilised a linguistic sign, “happy” (line 13, *idem*) to overtly express her emotion²⁴. Her happiness may have been even more relevant at that moment, as the student had already been able to see a film all English-subtitled (lines 15 & 17, *ibid.*) prior to the one she was reporting to me. On the other hand, I took the opportunity to assess Marta’s linguistic choice (line 11, *ibid.*) by explicitly repairing the verb tense used (line 12, *ibid.*). Regardless of what may have driven me - as a teacher/researcher - to have acted that way towards Marta, language was used, once again, to keep the social distance between the two practitioners (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994). Nonetheless, that distance was not a pre-arranged scheme, consciously designed by me so as to maintain the hierarchical roles which mainstream Education has imparted on the two parties involved in the (language) classroom scenario so far; quite the contrary, I corrected Marta on the use of the verb tense because we were having an EFL lesson and I *felt* that would be the right thing to do at that particular moment.

²³Marta mispronounced the second part of the name of the film *Miami Vice* (see Appendix 8).

²⁴ Due to space and time constraints, the other prior instances when the learner openly talked about her sentiments whilst doing the project were not included in this monograph. The first one took place at the eighth recorded lesson, when Marta acknowledged having felt happy at resorting only to English subtitles while watching *Miami Vice*. The second situation happened during the eleventh class, when the pupil declared having felt a little disappointed for not having grasped the meaning of some words or phrases in some English-subtitled chapters of the Animes she had seen.

6.8

Eighth learning opportunity: “Do you like learning English?”

The proposed project had been previously agreed between Marta and me to finish at the end of the first term of classes – that being the beginning of July of 2007. Nevertheless, the student herself had decided to keep on with the project, as it had been helping her learn English more.

The class of 8 August, 2007, was the eighteenth recorded lesson and it was also part of the second term of the school yearly timetable. Being an allergy-laden person, Marta had had a crisis the day before and had not been able to watch a film. Nonetheless, a peculiar event unfolded in the course of both practitioners’ interaction, which will be shown in due course. Meanwhile, the reader is offered some explanation regarding what the two participants were doing prior to the unique situation constitutive of that social encounter. Being a private student, Marta, many times, had to solely count on me (and *vice versa*) whilst asking and answering questions. Seeing an opportunity to seek a possible understanding, I then decided to ask Marta a question concerning *learning English*, which itself was part of an exercise in the pedagogic material:

Micro interaction 1 – Eighteenth recorded class – 8 August, 2007

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	do you like learning English?/I would like you to be honest
2	2	M	well I like English/very much but I don’t like lear/é learning English
3	3	A	why not?
4	4	M	because I/I think/uh boring
5	5	A	really?
6	6	M	yes
7	7	A	ah!/what is boring?/the class is boring/be honest [()
8	8	M	[um not the class/uh/uh/the/the
	9		subject/subjects [is boring
9	10	A	[ah! the subject/in the book/or/everything?
10	11	M	everything
11	12	A	really?
12	13	M	yes
13	14	A	what would you like uh/what would you suggest/as/the subjects?
14	15	M	well um/English/for me is like/Portuguese/uh/I like English uh musics in English uh

	16		movies/but/uh learn the rules/I don't like
15	17	A	uh-huh
16	18 19	M	is it/só é/I think there's no way é/change it é/is not the book/or the class or the teacher/um
17	20	M	(4-second pause)
18	21 22	A	ok/I think that you have raised a very interesting point/um/because I agree with you mostly/um/but I'd like to say something um
19	23	A	(5-second pause)
20	24 25 26	A	uh when you said that there's no way/I think you said/did you didn't you say "there's no way to change the book/it's not the book/it's not the teacher/it's not the su the class"/wha I don't remember
21	27	M	uh/I don't remember too
22	28 29 30	A	I don't remember/◀American pronunciation▶either or ◀British pronunciation▶either/ok? because you're using negatives so we say/I don't remember ◀American pronunciation▶either I [don't remember
23	31	M	[ah ok
24	32 33	A	◀British pronunciation▶either/ok? we cannot say I don't remember too because I'm using negative
25	34	M	ok

Immediately from the beginning, Marta stated, above, she did not enjoy learning English, even though she liked it quite a lot (line 2, micro interaction 1, this subsection). However, perhaps due to the way I posed her the question ("I would like you to be honest", line 1, *idem*), Marta was quite reluctant in answering, as the use of the discourse marker "well" (line 2, *ibid.*) seems to convey that idea. Indeed, both practitioners were experiencing the tensions which constituted such complex and singular social encounter. On the one hand, there I was - as a researcher/participant - attempting to co-construct some meaning out of the intricate relationship with the enquired - Marta. On the other hand, I – as an educator – was trying to preserve my face (Goffman, 1967) against whatever might be considered a threat, at that moment. Only that those alignments were happening concomitantly, reinforcing the idea of the impossibility one has to demarcate such complex identities. When questioned about the reason of her dislike of the target language learning (line 3, *ibid.*), Marta claimed it was "boring" (line 4, *ibid.*). Sensing the discomfort of the situation, I demanded further elucidation (line 7, *ibid.*) on Marta's part, who, in turn, may have offered a plausible solution: "the subjects is [*sic*] boring" (turn 8, *ibid.*). The relief revealed by me - as Marta's teacher - was mainly indexed by the exclamation "ah!" (line 10, *ibid.*), followed

by my decision to genuinely allow some space for Marta to exert her **autonomy** (line 14, *ibid.*). Nonetheless, my enquiry may have triggered Marta's caution, as the discourse markers "well" and "um" (turn 14, *ibid.*) seem to suggest. What followed was an issue which seemed quite puzzling: "English for me is like Portuguese uh I like English uh musics [*sic*] in English uh movies but uh learn the rules I don't like" (turn 14, *ibid.*). Albeit Marta might have meant she liked learning English in a natural way – as she learnt her mother tongue – she does not seem to be aware of the formal Portuguese instruction she has undergone hitherto at school. Thus, this apparently unresolved paradox was suggested as another future opportunity for understanding in Section 8.

As the interaction/lesson went on, Marta seemed to have acknowledged the fact that there is an almighty educational system which constrains learners and educators to conform to its rules : "I think there's no way... [to] change it... is not the book or the class or the teacher" (turn 16, *ibid.*) (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994; Giroux, 1997). This delicate subject could have disturbed both practitioners as the two pauses above (lines 20 & 23, *ibid.*) suggest. When I tried to have Marta further elaborate on her view, I eventually got confused (turn 20, *ibid.*) and I probably may have confused her as well. In fact, my original intention was to create space for additional understandings besides facilitating Marta's critical thinking upon the discussed matter. Marta responded accordingly ("I don't remember too", line 27, *ibid.*) to a rather blurred previous rephrasing. Due perhaps to the fact that my conventional role as a teacher could be at stake at that moment, I controlled the interactional encounter by imposing the formal register of the target language ("I don't remember either", turn 22, *ibid.*) upon Marta - as a student - who seemed to have accepted a traditional passive role (lines 31 & 34, *ibid.*). Thus, the asymmetrical roles displayed by both participants - Marta and I - were once again ratified by our discursive practices (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994).

Marta and I kept on talking/ co-constructing a lesson when I tried to wrap up the discussion and proceed with the "material":

Micro interaction 2 – *Idem*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	all right so I'd like to discuss this with you/in at another moment/because unfortunately/I
	2		have to continue [/giving you the subjects in the book

2	3	M	[◀laughing▶ [I know
3	4	A	[right?/so/but I agree with you/right?/ok
4	5	M	and you do you like learning English?

Both participants - Marta and I - seemed to be aware of the constraints imposed by mainstream Education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1994; Giroux, 1997) as our discourses (turns 1 & 2, micro interaction 2, this sub-section) implied. May the reader be reminded of the peculiar event which has been asserted above, at the beginning of this sub-section. This unique situation was analysed in Marta's question, "... do you like learning English?" (in bold, line 5, *ibid.*). In spite of all my (probably unconscious) strategies to control the interactional encounter, Marta's **autonomy** seemed to have reached the climax when she swapped roles with me - as her teacher; this idea could also be reinforced by her choice of the linguistic element "learning" (line 5, *ibid.*) instead of the more traditional verb "teach". As Giroux (1997) claimed, teachers and students should act together to transform the obsolete institutional practices and implement change. What Marta's enquiry (line 5, *ibid.*) seems to imply is that, although the prevailing educational forces have exerted their power to maintain the *status quo*, resistance to that has also been created and has acted to revert to the original situation.

6.9

Ninth learning opportunity: critically reflecting upon the project

The nineteenth recorded lesson was held on 15 August, 2007. Marta had chosen to start the class by narrating her experience of having seen the film *White Chicks* ("As *Branquelas*", in Portuguese) the day before:

Micro interaction 1 – Nineteenth recorded class – 15 August, 2007

T	L	S	I
1	1	M	ah yesterday I saw/As Branquelas
2	2	A	ah: yeah I know/I remember this movie but I haven't seen it yet/ok
3	3 4	M	and/in the beginning of the movie/I felt a lit ²⁵ of difficult/because uh have time I don't see/any movies/with subtitle in English but/so I/a little/slow
4	5	A	uh-huh

²⁵ Marta could have meant "...I felt [*sic*] a little difficulty".

5	6	M	but then I could/uh/me acostumar/and/yes this is
---	---	---	--

As Marta acknowledged above (micro interaction 1, this sub-section), she had difficulty watching a new English-subtitled movie because some time had elapsed since she had done that (turn 3, *idem*). This idea was also expressed in her diary entry (Appendix 9). As a result, I sensed an opportunity for a co-constructed understanding and asked Marta the following question (turn 1, micro interaction 2, this sub-section):

Micro interaction 2 – *Idem*

T	L	S	I
1	1	A	how was it?/during/the time that you were watching the film did you:/did you feel
	2		anything?/did you decide to do anything? [sniffing]
2	3	M	no uh [
3	4	A	[what happened? [sniffing]
4	5	M	well/{only} that I said uh/in the beginning I feel difficult/but then I could
	6		uh/uh/understand the movie very well/and I/é/I felt/uh/é/not I felt I I tol/I think/uh saw
	7		these movies in/see these movies in English/é help me very much
5	8	A	uh-huh
6	9	M	and I:/I:/when I was/watching the movie I:
7	10	M	(6-second pause)
8	11	M	eu percebi/uh that/when I don't see [the movie I:/have [more/I have
9	12	A	[[sniffing] [[sniffing]
10	13	M	more difficult/é so [/see the movies [/is very good for me
11	14	A	[[sniffing] [[dry coughing]

The learner's autonomous action had been accepting to see the film all English-subtitled (micro interaction 2, this sub-section, above). *What* and *how* she had felt had to do with the recurrent difficulty Marta – and perhaps other non-native English speakers too - featured in relation to the target language oral register. One should bear in mind, however, that she was struggling to use the foreign language to speak her mind (turns 4 & 8, *idem*), which already revealed a tremendous effort on Marta's part. Furthermore, the analysis of the referred micro interaction has showed that Marta led the conversation, whilst I spoke less and just responded. Marta's final conclusion that stopping watching the movies makes her difficulty increase (lines 11 & 13, *ibid.*) should be understood as an autonomous act of reflection upon her learning process – and not as

a mere “pedagogic formula” to be implemented. Even if Marta had come to the conclusion that not seeing films made (very/a) little difference in her acquisition of the target language, she would have been critically exercising her **autonomy**, as was the main goal of the whole project.

7 Concluding thoughts

Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world

Nelson Mandela

Learner autonomy, regarded as “learn[ing] to learn” (Holec, 1981:23), was the triggering issue which motivated the accomplishment of this case study of Marta, an EFL student (who, at times, constructed an educationalist identity) and me, her English teacher (who was also the researcher). Hence, a pedagogic project was designed for Marta in an ordinary class, with which she concurred. That project encompassed the weekly watching of any given English-spoken film and the attempt of resorting to the Portuguese-subtitled version the least. Furthermore, Marta also agreed upon writing a diary entry trying to express *what* she had done, *why* she had done that and *how/what* she had felt whilst the film-watching process. This said, Marta’s autonomous actions, in the target language learning process (during and between lessons), were observed and sought to be jointly understood. In order to carry the investigation out, the regular classes were tape-recorded, listened to and the most salient parts were analysed. Besides the ethnographic, naturalistic and non-interventionist approaches adopted, Exploratory Practice (EP) constituted the major framework underpinning this study. In other words, EP fostered the necessary conditions for both participants to construct multiple understandings in the varied and complex learning opportunities derived from outside the classroom (doing the project) or from inside it (having a lesson/discussing about the project).

Bearing in mind that I was the enquirer and the educator as well, the simplistic demarcation of the two (Marta and I) practitioners’ identities did not hold true throughout the investigation and the classes. In fact, the fuzziness of those social encounters seemed to reinforce the idea of two human beings searching for understandings out of some expectations which both practitioners might have probably anticipated. Hence, every single situation offered a myriad of possible interpretations as vast and complex as their interpreters could have foreseen. There were times when the role of the educator prevailed over that of the researcher (when using the conventional classroom discourse (I-R-E) to correct Marta’s use of the target language). Yet there were times when the learner herself became the teacher (when she asked me whether I

liked *learning* English). As can be seen, Marta's **autonomy** was not circumscribed solely to her decisions, the justifications for them and her feelings whilst watching the films. It entailed a much greater (re)definition for me of one's **autonomy** in terms of reflecting critically upon one's own choices and what they have meant to that person. **Learner autonomy** goes far beyond in the sense that even if Marta had concluded that the project had not quite helped her or had helped her little in her language acquisition process, she would have thought over her actions and would have been an active learner.

The understandings which were co-constructed between Marta and me seemed to have afforded both practitioners with learning opportunities to be used henceforth. They may have also aided the former in "learn[ing] to learn" (Holec, 1981:23) through research by seeking other opportunities (cognitive or other), once that

... o aluno que aprende a pesquisar, aprende a aprender, e pode ter peso na sociedade futuramente; os outros ficarão à deriva, esperando oportunidade que eles mesmos não saberiam criar (Demo, 2001: 89).

If learning is as a human right as the right to live (*ibid.*) and if "growing up is about learning" (Tapscott, 1998: 127 *apud* Demo, 2001: 89), students should take advantage of the intertwined opportunities of sharing experiences and knowledge to weave their own tapestries, their own lives. Otherwise, learners will keep on being mere "bricks in the wall", as the song by Pink Floyd (1979) below claims:

*We don't need no education
We don't need no thought control
No dark sarcasm in the classroom
Teachers, leave the kids alone
Hey, teacher, leave us kids alone!
All in all it's just another brick in the wall
All in all you're just another brick in the wall*

(Song: *Another Brick in the Wall*, by Pink Floyd, 1979)

Will one want her/his students ONLY to learn English – "language as a tool" (Kramsch, 2000: 138) or to "learn to learn" (Holec, 1981: 23) not only English, but whatever else; to be autonomous and aware of that; to have the choice to resort to the educator when the student so wishes or needs; to be able to think critically and speak one's minds, be it in her/his mother tongue or in any given target language. Being autonomous means being aware of performing a social role in the world, be it as a

learner, a teacher, a social worker, a customer, amongst others. Being autonomous means being aware that one does not have total freedom as (s)he wishes, since one lives in society and depends on others to construct possible meanings in the manifold social encounters in life.

It is about time we, as educationalists, stopped acting as if we were the only omniscient beings, who hold the ultimate truth and discard the learners' enormous inventory of lived experiences and schemata. Yet for a pupil to be able to make use of her/his **autonomy** – being in charge and aware of the decisions – (s)he must be regarded and respected as such by the teacher and the educational system. The crucible question then arises: is the educator herself/himself an autonomous “learner”? Are the pedagogic institutions seeking to foster **autonomy** in both practitioners (students and teachers)? The answers to these enquiries seem to depend on what will be done henceforth to promote the desired “change” – understood as the reflective act of attempting to understand the present situations – in mainstream Education. Some suggestions have been given in the next section in order to exemplify and encourage the use of EP principles in order to help promote the above change.

I, as a teacher, have already started trying to comprehend my own stances and also my pupils', even though that means adopting a humble – but not subservient – position as a true “autonomous learner”, who will empower the students with one concluding “finding”, i.e., that the learning process ought to be reciprocal, authentic, dynamic, infinite and based on mutual respect. Thus, the type of class pupils should co-construct with the other practitioner (the educator) should be an “investigative class”, not one which would have been wholly planned *a priori*. Being endless, learning does not occur only inside the classroom or at school; quite the contrary, it IS life, it IS the true being in the world. Learning is being autonomous and being able to make use of **autonomy** is existing as a real citizen and a holistic human being.

8

Suggestions for further seeking of future understandings

According to what was discussed before, some topics were here included as suggestions for additional research to seek possible understandings. For didactic purposes, the reader is presented with the ones with regard to the major puzzling issues unfolded in the course of the observed lessons. It should also be said that these opportunities would be best taken if both practitioners could together investigate them preferably during the classes, as part of the English language learning process as well.

- 1) Issue: to speak English like Portuguese. Marta expressed this desire before (Sub-section 6.1, First learning opportunity, class of 11 April, 2007, micro interaction 6 and Sub-section 2, Second learning opportunity, class of 18 April, 2007, micro interactions 1 & 3, amongst others not included here due to space and time constraints), which seem to reflect the learner's excessive preoccupation with the native-like myth of a language speaker. Moreover, she also implied preferring to learn English in a similar way to Portuguese (Sub-section 6.8, Eighth learning opportunity, class of 8 August, 2007, micro interaction 1), which seemed a paradox – taking into consideration the current formal schooling of her mother tongue. Further “exploratory” research could unveil some taken-for-granted beliefs besides contributing to better understandings on these matters.
- 2) Issue: Marta's mother noticed improvement on her daughter's English. The student asserted that not only in her diary entry (Appendix 7), but also orally ahead²⁶. As Marta's mother's education is rather little – and the parent does not seem to understand the target language – additional investigation and perhaps an interview with this parent would cast some light on the issue.
- 3) Last, but not least the author would like to suggest the implementation of the “investigative” class combined with principles of EP in (language learning) Education as one of the affordable, ecological ways practitioners (teachers AND students) may make use of in order to “weave” their own tapestries, their lives and to fully exert their **learner autonomy**.

²⁶ According to what had been said before, Marta verbally communicated her mother's remark during the 16th recorded class.

9

References

ALLWRIGHT, D. The notion of progress. In: **Research on language teaching and learning**. Unpublished manuscript. Lancaster University, 1-10, 2000.

_____. Exploratory Practice: re-thinking practitioner research in language teaching. In: **Language Teaching Research** 7, 2: 113-141, 2003.

ALLWRIGHT, D.; BAILEY, K. Classroom research: principles and procedures. In: **Focus on the Language Classroom: An Introduction to Classroom Research for Language Teachers**, 34-81. Cambridge: CUP, 1991.

BARNES, D. Language in the secondary classroom. In Barnes, D., Britton, J. and Dosen, H. (1969, revised ed. 1971) **Language, the Learner and the School**. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1969. In: STUBBS, M. Why is Language Important in Education? The need for Classroom Studies. *Studies of Classroom Language*. In: **Language, Schools and Classrooms: Contemporary Sociology of the School**, 15-23, 88-98, 99-117. Suffolk, UK: Routledge, 1992.

BENSON, P. The philosophy and politics of learner autonomy. In: P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), **Autonomy and independence in language learning** (18-34). London: Longman, 1997. In: NICOLAIDES, C. Oral communication (lecture) at the Lato Sensu Post-graduate English Language Studies Course, PUC-RIO, Brazil, 2006.

BENSON, P.; VOLLER, P. **Autonomy and independence in language learning**. New York: Longman, 1997.

BOURDIEU, P.; PASSERON, J-C. Language and Relationship to Language in the Teaching Situation. In: P. Bourdieu, J-C. Passeron, and M. Saint Martin, **Academic Discourse**, 1-34. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994.

BROOKES, A.; GRUNDY, P. (Eds.). **Individualisation and Autonomy in Language Learning**. London: Modern English Publications, 1988. In: TUDOR, I. **Learner-centredness as Language Education**. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

BRUMFIT, C. Some humanistic doubts about humanistic language teaching. In : **Humanistic Approaches: An empirical View**. *ELT Documents* 113: 11-19. London: British Council, 1982. In: TUDOR, I. **Learner-centredness as Language Education**. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

CHERCHALLI, S. **Learners' Reactions to their Textbook (With Special Reference to the Relation between Differential Perceptions and Differential Achievement): A Case Study of Algerian Secondary School Learners**. Unpublished doctoral dissertation, Department of Linguistics, Lancaster University, 1988. Available on: <http://www.jalt-publications.org/tlt/articles/1999/06/allwright>. Accessed on 19 December, 2006.

CRABBE, D. Fostering autonomy from within the classroom: the teacher's responsibility. *SYSTEM* 21: 443-52, 1993. In: TUDOR, I. **Learner-centredness as Language Education**. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

CUNHA, M. I. A. **Electronic publication** [personal email communication] Electronic message received by andreahlima@terra.com.br on 12 April, 2007.

DEMO, P. Aprender (Cap. 1, Segunda Parte). In: **Saber Pensar**, 85-91. São Paulo: Editora Cortez, 2001.

DENZIN, N. K.; LINCOLN, Y. S. e colaboradores. 2ª ed. **O planejamento da pesquisa qualitativa: teorias e abordagens**. Porto Alegre: Artmed, [2003] 2006.

DICKINSON, L. Learner autonomy: what, why and how? In: LEFFA, V. (Ed.). **Autonomy in. Language Learning**. Porto Alegre: UFRS, 1994. p.2-12.

FANTINI, A. E. A central concern: Developing intercultural competence. In: SIT Occasional Papers Series, Inaugural Issue (About Our Institution), 2000a.

FREIRE, P. **Pedagogia do oprimido**. 17ª ed., Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1987.

_____. **Pedagogy of the Oppressed**. New York: Continuum, 1970. In: FANTINI, A. E. A central concern: Developing intercultural competence. In: SIT Occasional Papers Series, Inaugural Issue (About Our Institution), 2000a.

_____. **Education for Critical Consciousness**. New York: Continuum, 1973. In: FANTINI, A. E. A central concern: Developing intercultural competence. In: SIT Occasional Papers Series, Inaugural Issue (About Our Institution), 2000a.

_____. **Teachers As Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare Teach**. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1998. In: FANTINI, A. E. A central concern: Developing intercultural competence. In: SIT Occasional Papers Series, Inaugural Issue (About Our Institution), 2000a.

GARCEZ, P. M. A organização da fala-em-interação na sala-de-aula: controle social, reprodução de conhecimento, construção conjunta de conhecimento. *Calidoscópio*, São Leopoldo, RS, Vol. 4, n.1, p. 66-80, jan./abr. 2006.

GIEVE, S.; MILLER, I. K. What do we mean by quality of classroom life? In: Gieve, S. and I. K. Miller (Eds.), **Understanding the language classroom**, 18-46. Hampshire, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

GIROUX, H. Pedagogia Crítica, Política Cultural e o Discurso da Experiência (Cap. 7). In: **Os Professores como Intelectuais**, 123-144. Porto Alegre: Artmed Editora, 1997.

GOFFMAN, E. On facework: an analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. In: Jaworski, A. and Coupland, N. (Eds.), **The Discourse Reader**, London, Roterledge, pp. 306-321, 1967.

_____. **Manicômios, prisões e conventos**. São Paulo: Perspectiva, 312 p., 2003. In: GARCEZ, P. M. The organization of classroom talk-in-interaction: social control, reproduction, co-construction. *Calidoscópico*, Vol. 4, n.1, p. 66-80, jan/abr 2006.

GUBA, E. G.; LINCOLN, Y. S. Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In: N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), **Handbook of qualitative research**, 105-117. Thousand Oaks: SAGE publications, 1994.

GUMPERZ, J. J. Contextualization and understanding. In: A. Duranti and C. Goodwin (Eds.), **Rethinking context**, 229-52. Cambridge: CUP, 1992.

HALL, J. K.; WALSH, M. Teacher-student interaction and language learning. *Annual review of applied linguistics*, 22, 186-203. CUP, 2002.

HATCH, E. Second Language Learning – Universals? In: Working Papers on Bilingualism, 3, 1-17, 1974. In: ALLWRIGHT, D. The notion of Progress In: **Research on language teaching and learning**. Unpublished manuscript, Lancaster University, 1-10, 2000.

HOLEC, H. Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1979. In: TUDOR, I. **Learner-centredness as Language Education**. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

_____. **Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning**. Oxford: Pergamon. (First published 1979, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.), 1981.

_____. The Learner as Manager: Managing Learning or Managing to Learn? In: WENDEN, A.; RUBIN, J. **Learner Strategies in Language Learning**, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. x-x., 1987.

_____. Autonomy and self-directed learning: present fields of application. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1988.

HOLLIDAY, A. **Appropriate Methodology and Social Context**. Cambridge: CUP, 1994.

HUTTENEN, I. Towards Learner Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning in Senior Secondary Schools. Oulu: Acta Universitatis Ouluensis, 1986. In: TUDOR, I. **Learner-centredness as Language Education**. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

HYMES, D. On communicative competence. In: J. B. Pride and J. Holmes: 269-93, 1972. In: STUBBS, M. Why is Language Important in Education? The need for Classroom Studies. *Studies of Classroom Language*. In: **Language, Schools and Classrooms: Contemporary Sociology of the School**, 15-23, 88-98, 99-117. Suffolk, UK: Routledge, 1992.

KRAMSCH, C. Social discursive constructions of self in L2 learning. In: J. P. Lantolf (Ed.), **Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning**, 133-153. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

KREIDLER, C. **The Pronunciation of English: a Course Book in Phonology.** Blackwell, 1989.

KRUMM, H. J. Recueil de programmes de formation continue des enseignants répondant aux principes du Projet "Langues Vivantes" du Conseil de la Coopération Culturelle, Conseil de l'Europe, Strasbourg, 1986, p. 4. In: HOLEC, H. *Autonomy and self-directed learning: present fields of application.* Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1988.

LINCOLN, Y. S. The detached observer and the passionate participant: Discourses in inquiry and science. **Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association**, Chicago, 1991. In: GUBA, E. G.; LINCOLN, Y. S. *Competing paradigms in qualitative research.* In: N. K. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), **Handbook of qualitative research**, 105-117. Thousand Oaks: SAGE publications, 1994.

MANDELA, N. (Quotes). Available on http://en.thinkexist.com/quotation/education_is_the_most_powerful_weapon_which_you/144638.html and http://en.thinkexist.com/quotes/nelson_mandela/. Accessed on 10 June, 2007.

MOITA LOPES, L. P. *Interação em Sala de Aula de Língua Estrangeira.* In: **Oficina de Linguística Aplicada**, 95-107. Campinas, São Paulo: Mercado das Letras, 1996.

NAIMON, N. et al. *The Good Language Learner.* Toronto: Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1978. In: DICKINSON, L. *Learner autonomy: what, why and how?* In: LEFFA, V. (Ed.). **Autonomy in. Language Learning.** Porto Alegre: UFRS, 1994. P.2-12.

PINK FLOYD. Song: Another Brick in the Wall, 1979. Available on http://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Wall and <http://whiplash.net/materias/traducoes/004644-pinkfloyd.html>. Accessed on 18 November, 2007.

PINOCCHIO. Image. Available on <http://office.microsoft.com/ptbr/clipart/results.aspx?qu=Pin%C3%B3quio&sc=20&AxIInstalled=copy&DpwnloadAssetId=MCj04156160000&DownloadExtension=wmf&c=0>. Accessed on 11 April, 2007.

PUPPET. Image. Available on <http://office.microsoft.com/pt-br/clipart/results.aspx?qu=marionete&sc=20#0>. Accessed on 11 April, 2007.

RUBIN, J. What the 'good language learner' can teach us. *TESOL Quarterly* 9: 41-51, 1975. In: DICKINSON, L. *Learner autonomy: what, why and how?* In: LEFFA, V. (Ed.). **Autonomy in. Language Learning.** Porto Alegre: UFRS, 1994. P.2-12.

SILVERMAN, D. **Interpreting qualitative data:** Methods for analyzing talk, text, and interaction. London: Sage, 1993. In: GIMENEZ, J. *Embedded business emails: Meeting new demands in international business communication.* English for Specific Purposes, 25: 154-172, 2006.

STERN, H. H. What can we learn from the good language learner? **Unpublished paper presented at the Ontario Modern Language Teacher's Association**, Canada, 1974. In: DICKINSON, L. Learner autonomy: what, why and how? In: LEFFA, V. (Ed). **Autonomy in. Language Learning**. Porto Alegre: UFRS, 1994. P.2-12.

STEVENS, J. O. **Awareness: Exploring, Experimenting, and Experiencing**. Moah, Utah: Real People Press, 1971. In: FANTINI, A. E. A central concern: Developing intercultural competence. In: SIT Occasional Papers Series, Inaugural Issue (About Our Institution), 2000a.

STUBBS, M. Why is Language Important in Education? The need for Classroom Studies. Studies of Classroom Language. In: **Language, Schools and Classrooms: Contemporary Sociology of the School**, 15-23, 88-98, 99-117. Suffolk, UK: Routledge, 1992.

TANNEN, D. **Conversational Style: analyzing talk among friends**. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1984.

TAPSCOTT, D. **Growing up digital – The rise of the next generation**. New York, McGraw-Hill, p.127, 1998. In: DEMO, P. Aprender (Cap. 1, Segunda Parte). In: **Saber Pensar**, 85-91. São Paulo: Editora Cortez, 2001.

TRIM, J. L. M. **Developing a unit/credit scheme of adult language learning**. Oxford: Pergamon, 1980. In: HOLEC, H. Autonomy and self-directed learning: present fields of application. Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1988.

TUDOR, I. **Learner-centredness as Language Education**. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

WALKER, R.; ADELMAN, C. **A Guide to Classroom Observation**. London: Methuen, 111-13, 143, 1975a. In: STUBBS, M. Why is Language Important in Education? The need for Classroom Studies. Studies of Classroom Language. In: **Language, Schools and Classrooms: Contemporary Sociology of the School**, 15-23, 88-98, 99-117. Suffolk, UK: Routledge, 1992.

_____. Interaction analysis in informal classrooms: a critical comment on the Flanders system. British Journal of Educational Psychology 45, 1.92, 111, 1975b. In: STUBBS, M. Why is Language Important in Education? The need for Classroom Studies. Studies of Classroom Language. In: **Language, Schools and Classrooms: Contemporary Sociology of the School**, 15-23, 88-98, 99-117. Suffolk, UK: Routledge, 1992.

WENDEN, A. **Learner Strategies for Learner Autonomy**. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall, 1991b. In: TUDOR, I. **Learner-centredness as Language Education**. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

WENDEN, A.; RUBIN, J. (Eds.). **Learner Strategies in Language Learning**. Hemel Hempstead: Prentice Hall, 1987. In: TUDOR, I. **Learner-centredness as Language Education**. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

WENDEN, A.; DICKINSON, L. (Eds.). Autonomy, Self Direction and Self Access in Language Teaching and Learning: The History of an Idea. Special Issue of SYSTEM

(23, 2), 1995. In: TUDOR, I. **Learner-centredness as Language Education**. Cambridge: CUP, 1996.

WHITE, R.; BROCKINGTON, D. **Tales out of School**. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983, p. 21. In: GIROUX, H. *Pedagogia Crítica. Política Cultural e o Discurso da Experiência* (Cap. 7). In: **Os Professores como Intelectuais**, 123-144. Porto Alegre: Artmed Editora, 1997.

WIDMAYER, S. A. Schemata. Schema theory: An Introduction. Available on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schema_%28psychology%29. Accessed on 26 May, 2007.

WILLIAMSON, M. [A Return To Love: Reflections on the Principles of “A Course in Miracles”](#). Chapter 7, Section 3 (Pg. 190-191). New York: Harper Collins, 1992. Available on http://skdesigns.com/internet/articles/quotes/williamson/our_deepest_fear/. Accessed on 18 November, 2007.

Appendix 1 – My diary entry

“31 March, 2007.

I've just finished summarising the third chapter of *Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning*, by Henri Holec. While I was doing it, I was thinking about my own present situation, i.e., my reading and studying guided by my supervisor, Bebel Cunha. So, I was thinking, 'Wow, this is what Bebel has been doing to me. She's been practicing all these concepts with me - well, practicing is not the best word here'. What I'm trying to say is that when we write a monograph, a dissertation or a thesis, we should be helped to 'learn to learn (acc. To Holec) and not only to learn (acc. to mainstream education). Thus, how can I help my students to 'learn to learn' if I don't undergo the same process? I reckon this is what I've been trying to do now; in other words, I've been EXPERIENCING this situation so I can define my own objectives and needs in the future.

For instance, when I summarized the third chapter, I tried to select the issues that would be relevant for my monograph. I guess I was being autonomous in a way in which I needed to make instantaneous unguided decisions. However, at other moments, I'll probably need more guidance and then I'll resource to Bebel. It's interesting to observe, though, that the idea of writing this diary wasn't mine, but my supervisor's. And I think I ought to register that here because it makes part of the whole 'learning to learn' how to collect data and eventually write a monograph is. Based on her idea, I came up with an idea too; I've suggested a similar exercise to one of my private students, which she's agreed on. Once again, we can see how 'autonomy' is still needed to be acquired, as both my student and I need guidance in the 'learning to learn' process.

Despite all the possible still dependent procedures, I feel that I'm progressing towards a less blurred idea of what a monograph is and finding myself very happy for being able to help my student(to) become autonomous while, at the same time, be helped as well.”

Appendix 2 - Speech Transcription Conventions – adapted from Tannen, 1984 and Kreidler, 1989.

(1.5)	pauses in talk over one second
:	lengthened sound
<u>Underline</u>	emphatic stress
()	transcription impossible
=	latching
[	overlapping
[non verbal]	description of non verbal behaviour
*	mispronounced word or unit
/	separation between tone units
{xxx}	word or phrase assumed to be uttered
!	exclamation
◀ ▶	description of verbal behaviour in relation to the following word or unit
“talk”	reported speech

Appendix 3 – Marta’s first diary entry ²⁷ : class of 11 April, 2007

“Well, I saw two movies: Dirty Dancing (Ritmo Quente) and Um amor pra recordar.

I’ve been seen Dirty Dancing, but have been more time I haven’t seen it. I understood the conversations very much, but I’ve been knew what they talking

In the second movie I starded see it in English but I don’t understood very much, so I changed for Portuguese, when I understood the history I changed for English again, I didn’t undertood the conversations very much, only a little”

²⁷ It ought to be said that the language structures, lexical choices, lay-out (use or lack of indentation amongst others), choice of language used (English/Portuguese or vice-versa) and style were preserved in all of Marta’s diary entries. In other words, what and how she originally wrote have been depicted and maintained in Appendices 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 & 9 in the present monograph.

Appendix 4 – Marta's second diary entry: class of 18 April, 2007

“I watch Codigo da Vinci. I've been know the history because I've been read the book. I didn't watch all movie because I thought it very boring. But the part what I saw, was in English, and I could understood the conversations well, but I felt some difficulty in the vocabulary, por causa do tema q. é apordado no filme.”

Appendix 5 – Marta's third diary entry: class of 21 May, 2007.

“Esse fim de semana eu vi o Senhor dos anéis 1.

Eu já tinha visto o 2 e o 3, mais nunca o 1. Eu comecei a ver com o audio e o subtitle em inglês. Mais a história é muito complexa e o vocabulário também. Como eu não entendia quase nada eu passei a legenda para o Português quase no início do filme e fiquei assim até o final”

Appendix 6 – Marta's fourth diary entry: class of 6 June, 2007.

“This weekend I saw some caps. of an anime: Evangelion. I watched it with subtitle in English all time. Because there wasn't subtitle in Portuguese, it was English or Japanese.

Well I thought it was more easy I understood the story por I had knew the start of the story. But I had some difficulty to understand the story. It wasn't the vocabulary but the way like it was used. I didn't knew the expressions that they used.”

Appendix 7 – Marta’s fifth diary entry: class of 27 June, 2007

“Marta

Last weekend I saw two movies: Narnia an ‘Tudo para ficar com ele’.

At the first one I feel some difficult to understand some parts. But I tried the max could the subtitle in English. But in sometimes I had to change it in Portuguese.

²⁸ In the second movie I only change the subtitle in the beginning of the film, but then I see all movie in English

‘Mesmo’ I had to change the subtitle sometimes, I think that I had a good development ‘em comparação’ with anothers films I saw. ... feel that ‘cada vez’ more I can see all movies ‘sem’ change the subtitle in English.

And ‘até’ my mother think I ‘melhorei’, and that I’m using more English in my ‘dia-a-dia’ ”

²⁸ Marta scribbled over the letter “A”.

Appendix 8 – Marta’s sixth diary entry: class of 6 July, 2007

“Nome: Marta

Yesterday I watched ‘Ela é o cara’ (She is the man?) Well I thought easy to understand the story. I could watch all movie in English. Sometimes I lost some speakers, because they were talking very fast, but ‘mesmo assim’ I could understand. And when I lost I return the DVD and saw the speaker

I was happy because ‘desde’ Miami Vice I couldn’t see the others movies all in English, I always had to change the subtitle in Portuguese in some time of the movie, but this I could see all in English²⁹D”

²⁹ Marta made two circles after the word “English” and before the letter “D”.

Appendix 9 – Marta's seventh diary entry: class of 15 August, 2007

“Yesterday I watched As Branquelas³⁰. Had time that I don't watch any movie. So I felt a little difficult in the beginning of movie. But after 'eu me acostumei'.

The movie was very funny. I though good come back to see the movies because it help me very much and I 'percebi' that this days that I didn't watch the movies 'me fizeram falta'.

On Monday I too watched Piratas of Caribbean 2 but this movie 'não conta' because I know 'de trás pra frente'.”

³⁰ Marta wrote the name of the film in block letters.