

Language Learner Autonomy: Theory, Practice, and Research.

David, L., Leni, D., and Lienhard, L. *Multilingual Matters*, 2017. ix + 280 pp.

Hiroyuki Iida

Have you ever stopped to think what learning English in lower secondary school should be like? If you have, *Language Learner Autonomy: Theory, Practice, and Research* will help you to reshape your beliefs about English language learning in that setting.

This book is one of the latest volumes of the *Multilingual Matters Series on bilingualism, bilingual education, immersion education, second language learning, language policy, and multiculturalism*. What distinguishes this book from other English teaching methodology books is that this book is based on more than 25 years' of second language acquisition research and practices in autonomous language learning in the classroom, and presents detailed descriptions of successful autonomy-oriented classroom management techniques which are obtained through research and practice. This book consists of three parts that include: the autonomy-oriented classroom in practice, two case studies in successful autonomy-oriented classrooms, and the challenges that autonomy-oriented classrooms will meet in the future. There are eight chapters in this book that cover: the practical settings of autonomy-oriented classrooms, the evidence of its success in lower secondary education, the importance of using the target language, the way to construct knowledge through collaborative conversations, the arguments about how much control over the activities in a lesson the students should hold, and the statistical analyses of the effects of the autonomy-oriented classroom on acquisition of the target language vocabulary, grammar, and pragmatic competence. The discussion about the reliability of learners' self-assessment seems quite fascinating to language education policy makers as well as language teachers.

The Japanese Ministry of Education has announced that the English language will be a compulsory subject for the Japanese 5th and 6th graders from the academic year of 2020, and those students will be expected to become competent English users. However, "It is unlikely that starting foreign language instruction early will confer any real benefit" (Ellis, 2015, p34) and introducing L2 instruction at the elementary-school level "At best...might assist the development of a more native-like pronunciation" (Ellis, 2015, p35).

As Ellis (2015) has pointed out, instruction alone of a foreign language in early education may not have a positive impact on student language learning. However, teaching English while developing students' skills in autonomous learning may help them improve their English and motivate them to continue to study English more. "Having choices allows even young children to learn ways to take

control or ownership over their own learning. This, in turn, helps students develop a sense of responsibility and self-motivation.” (McCombs, 2018, introduction section, para. 3). This book may be a key to the door which leads English language learning in lower secondary level to a great success.

Reference

Ellis, R. (2015). *Understanding second language acquisition*. UK: Oxford University Press.

McCombs, B. (2018). *Developing responsible and autonomous learners: A key to motivating students*.

Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/education/k12/learners.aspx>