

**“CHANGING ROLES AND CHANGING MINDS”:
THE IMPLEMENTATION AND IMPLICATIONS OF
AUTONOMOUS LEARNING PROGRAMMES**

Leena Karlsson, Felicity Kjisik and Joan Nordlund
University of Helsinki

ABSTRACT

A great deal has been written in recent years on the theoretical aspects of autonomous language learning. There have also been various research studies and text books written on closely related topics such as language awareness and language learning strategies. However, relatively few accounts have appeared describing the implementation of larger scale autonomous language learning projects or the implications such projects have had for teachers and learners. This paper describes an experiment which is now in its fifth year at the Language Centre of the University of Helsinki, Finland. Well over one thousand university students have completed autonomous language learning modules (ALMS) as part of their normal degree programme, and a large body of data has been collected on the process.

We will here describe the context and organisation of the ALMS modules and, in particular, the nature and function of counselling, which we see as an essential part of the support system provided for learners on their road to autonomy. We will then go on to analyse some of the attitudinal changes experienced and freely expressed by learners as a direct result of their participation in the programme.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of *autonomy* is frequently used by language teachers today. However, autonomy is not always without problems as any changes in terms of respon-

sibility in the classroom inevitably involve a new state of power relationships: the what, how, when and why of learning are not out of the hands of the students any more. The core elements of autonomy —*reflection* and *self-awareness*— are necessary prerequisites for teachers involved in setting up a learning environment where learner autonomy is to be enhanced. It is one thing to encourage the students to become reflective learners; the teachers have to go through the process of accepting teacher autonomy as a new skill/capacity to be learnt. This paper describes an autonomous language learning project in English that a group of teachers are developing at the Language Centre, working within the constraints of Helsinki University academic requirements but also within the constraints of their own development as teachers. The changing role of the teacher has been the very starting point of our project and still is under careful scrutiny as we develop our modules. (A fuller account of this project can be found in our book *From Here to Autonomy* (Karlsson et al, 1996)).

2. THE AUTONOMOUS LEARNING PROJECT AT HELSINKI UNIVERSITY LANGUAGE CENTRE (ALMS)

All Helsinki University students are required to study one or two foreign languages as part of their degree programme. The vast majority of students choose to study English as this is a continuation of their first foreign language at school. The Faculties set the minimum requirements (in terms of credits or study weeks) and the Language Centre provides a variety of courses to fulfil them. We are therefore not teaching students who are majoring in English but, in fact, everybody else, so we are mainly involved with English for Special Purposes (ESP).

The first Autonomous Learning Modules (ALMS) at Helsinki University Language Centre were offered in Autumn 1994. These modules are alternatives to more traditional teacher-led courses. There is no set syllabus as such, although some things are laid down.

Our reasons for developing these modules included our own beliefs that a learner is an individual who should take responsibility for his/her learning. This responsibility should be based on an awareness of personal learning strategies, styles and experience. We had had the feeling for many years that the teacher needs to give students more space, more independence.

We have had more concrete motivations too. Helsinki University is faced with demands for more effective, flexible and economical teaching programmes. The Language Centre is under pressure to integrate language studies more closely with students' main degree studies, and to produce more credits for fewer contact hours. Our aim was to develop a system which would satisfy these demands and, above all, give the students the capacity for language learning for life. Language Centre courses are inevitably short, and it seems sensible to provide students with the motivation and skills to continue learning.

So far, students in the Faculties of Humanities, Social Sciences, Maths and Science, Theology, Education, the University of Art and Design and the Sibelius Academy are able to take an ALMS module in English. Each student is with us for

one term and, at any one time, we have about 150 students taking part in the programme.

The ALMS programme has the following main features:

- 2.1 Learner awareness
- 2.2 Contracts/projects
- 2.3 Support groups/workshops
- 2.4 Record-keeping and evaluation
- 2.5 Counselling

2.1 LEARNER AWARENESS

This is one of the few compulsory requirements of the module. We feel the student should understand what we are trying to achieve, what is meant by autonomy, how to operate within the ALMS system and, finally, how to plan, organise and evaluate his/her own programme. If we accept that autonomy is not necessarily innate, then we need some kind of system for helping learners to learn.

Various learner-training systems have been established round the world. Some include, for example, explicit strategy training. We have the feeling that this might be slightly dangerous: we agree with McDonough (1995) who has said that it is not clear that the choice of strategy differentiates between good and poor learners. It may simply be the amount of strategy use and the personality of the learner. However, we do believe that we should try to understand the learning process and this can involve a knowledge or awareness of learner strategies, as well as reflection on one's own learning.

The principle awareness, or orientation, session in our programme takes place in a compulsory 6-hour meeting covering the following areas:

1. Reflections about language learning
2. Consciousness-raising of language learning strategies
3. Analysis of students' own strategies
4. Analysis of language needs, present and future
5. The students' own objectives
6. Making preliminary plans and thinking about areas of interest.

2.2 CONTRACTS/PROJECTS

The following week, the students go on to make firm plans. Practical issues concerning finding materials, using the Language Centre Self-Access Studio and teacher/counsellor contact arrangements are also dealt with.

They write "contracts" where they may sign up for various support groups. They form their own groups/partnerships and describe individual projects they plan to do. They try to set their own objectives and make a plan for their achievement. The teacher/counsellor makes sure that all the students feel comfortable with the system and are aware of the minimum requirements in terms of work, counselling sessions and record-keeping, including the self-evaluation of their language work and progress.

2.3 SUPPORT GROUPS

The support groups are not the main focus of the programme but they do provide a framework with guidance and support to those who want or need it. For some students, the support groups give structure and security and they might join several groups. However, students are not obliged to join any groups.

The teacher's role in the support groups varies according to the teacher, the group and the students. In principle, we believe that teacher contact hours should be kept to a minimum, particularly in groups in which students are encouraged to set up their own communication networks. The amount of support from the teacher is a question of negotiation between the group members and the teacher.

The number and nature of the support groups varies each term as they are arranged according to the wishes of the students. However, the groups usually cover the three skills areas of oral, writing and reading skills. Support groups are not usually set up for listening skills although students sometimes form small groups and plan their listening together. We are fully aware that separating the "four language skills" is a tricky question but the classification has proved to be a useful way for the learners to assess their needs and plan their programmes. In most of the support groups and student projects the skills are inevitably integrated as the students' needs usually incorporate the whole range of skills.

In the learner awareness sessions students do their own needs and skills assessment and write down their course objectives in the four skills areas. According to our years of experience, subject-related reading and discussion and more casual conversation are fairly high priorities. In terms of objectives, students write things like "to learn more vocabulary", "to get more confidence", "to read my exam books" and "to improve my conversation skills."

Each individual experience inside the autonomous groups is different. So are the support groups since the students have the absolute right to run their groups in the way that suits them. The teacher's role is very often to call the first meeting and to help in the setting of objectives, making plans and organising meetings. Our teachers and counsellors do not adopt the role of "an absent friend" though. It is very much a question of finding a balance between being too available and supportive and not being available or supportive enough.

There is not space here to describe all the support groups in detail but some examples and some broad lines could be mentioned.

Presentation skills

These groups usually have a teacher-led first session on presentation skills. Students may then prepare, rehearse and deliver their own presentations on topics of their choice. Workshop days incorporating video-taping may be organised.

Conversation groups

A teacher is usually present at the first session to give guidance on how to operate and participate in a conversation group. Students then meet regularly on their own and complete Conversation Group Reports which encourage them to reflect on their own performance and on the group dynamics. Many independent groups are set up.

Writing groups

A variety of formats is used depending on student demand and teacher availability, including practical, academic and creative writing groups, newsletter groups and groups which focus on reading, writing and discussion. Some groups concentrate on the writing process, while others focus on the product.

Reading groups

Students can take part in reading workshops where reading skills and strategies are introduced. Students then plan their own reading projects or they can form a reading group with other students or organize their reading in a way they feel is relevant to their studies.

Drama group

Students interested in dramatic performance meet with a teacher to agree outcomes. This usually culminates in a dramatic performance, with roles learned, before an audience of ALMS students and some teachers.

Amnesty group

This was a student-initiated idea. The Amnesty organisation provides case materials and guidance on how to write protest letters to governments, prisons and so on. This is an integrated and authentic project

2.4 RECORD KEEPING AND EVALUATION

The basis of the students' record-keeping is the ALMS LOG which has to be kept fully up-to-date with everything they do to achieve their objectives. There are other forms of record keeping too —the conversation group report for example, and some students keep their own diaries. These are all elements in the process of self-evaluation by the student. We feel that it is a process where students gain insight into the learning process as a whole and where motivation and commitment are enhanced as they are active participants in that part of the learning process traditionally seen as the teacher's domain.

Individual student records are also kept by the teachers involved. These are really for back-up purposes; information usually comes freely from the student. There is also a final group session where language learning strategies are reassessed and students also complete a course evaluation form.

2.5 COUNSELLING

Counselling is provided as a support to the students and a check on their progress. There is a minimum of three counselling sessions per module. The initial one is to check on contracts, plans and objectives. The second, mid-term meeting is to monitor progress. The third and final one is where the student explains what has been achieved and whether their objectives have been met.

The role of counsellor was new for most of the teachers involved and as such has been a focus of interest and development. The following section will describe our counselling context and system.

3. COUNSELLING

3.1 THE CONTEXT

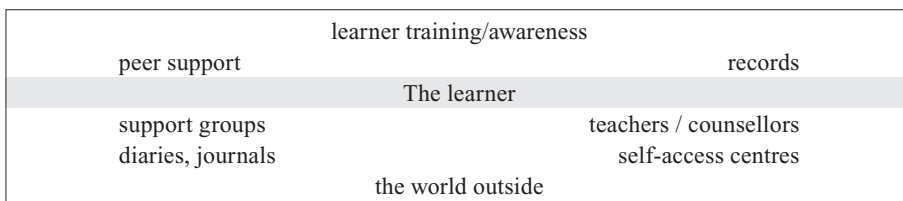


Figure 1. Helping the independent learner

It is basic to our beliefs that learner independence does not mean that the learner is alone and without support. Support systems include the training or awareness raising that is done, the organisation of (teacher-guided) groups of people working towards common goals, the provision of self-access study facilities and materials, the encouragement of peer support and, of course, counselling (See Figure 1). Metacognitive support can be given in terms of record keeping requirements or suggestions, and students supplement this with their own learning diaries and portfolios. Neither should we forget the world around —TV and radio, films, clubs and associations.

3.2 BACKGROUND

The counselling model we have developed in Helsinki was influenced very much by what has been going on in CRAPEL, at the Université de Nancy II, France, for many years, even if the circumstances are very different. We, too, have addressed the problem of terminology. There are a number of words which could describe the person who is working with learners, helping them to take their own decisions about what, when, where, how and if they learn, and none of them is ideal. In English at least, counsellor has psychotherapy connotations, knower, mentor and adviser imply a position of superiority, consultant has business or medical connotations, and there are problems with helper and facilitator. In short, we lack a discourse of counselling, and in particular one which distinguishes it from teaching —if it can or should be distinguished. Just as teacher/learner roles overlap, so do those of teacher and counsellor: there are elements of advising, suggesting, and supporting in much of the “teaching” that goes on.

It is not only the terminology that poses problems. The very nature of counselling, advising, helping, somehow contradicts the principles of independence and autonomy. Helping learners is not just a matter of pointing them in the right direction —it is also to do with motivation and behaviour, with practical and emotional support. It is therefore invasive.

We have continuous discussion about these issues. We are still in the process of developing the counselling we do, and are hoping to come up with a model that is relevant and flexible. Whatever our doubts, however, we remain convinced that our students benefit from counselling.

In our context, the *aims* of the counselling sessions include giving information, offering diagnosis, encouraging evaluation and reflection, giving or offering practi-

cal help, negotiating and offering consultation and monitoring progress. Counselling may also be used as a way of helping the “teacher” in her changing role —giving her a purpose, contact with the learner and the chance to give some pedagogical input.

The counselling *role* involves helping the learner to learn (implying raising awareness about representations, beliefs and attitudes), helping the learner to learn X and helping the learner to learn X independently.

Whereas teaching is said to involve matters of decision, counselling involves suggestion and negotiation. It has also been said that advising, or counselling, involves the ability to *orientate* rather than *prescribe*, to give neutral advice, and to listen, elicit and interpret (Mozzon-McPherson, 1997). This is not to say that teaching excludes these things.

Some people claim that the roles in teaching and counselling are distinct and different. We find, however, that the two overlap, and that two functions of counselling seem to emerge: these are to do with the *process* —helping the learner to learn, and the *product*— helping the learner to learn X. You could almost call these psychological and technical levels.

3.3 COUNSELLING IN ALMS

The type of counselling we do falls roughly into process and product categories. Most students see two counsellors —the ALMS Counsellor and their Faculty Counsellor, although the roles often overlap. The sessions are one-on-one, as private as possible, although space constraints do not allow complete privacy. English is normally used.

The set-up is summarised in Figure 2.

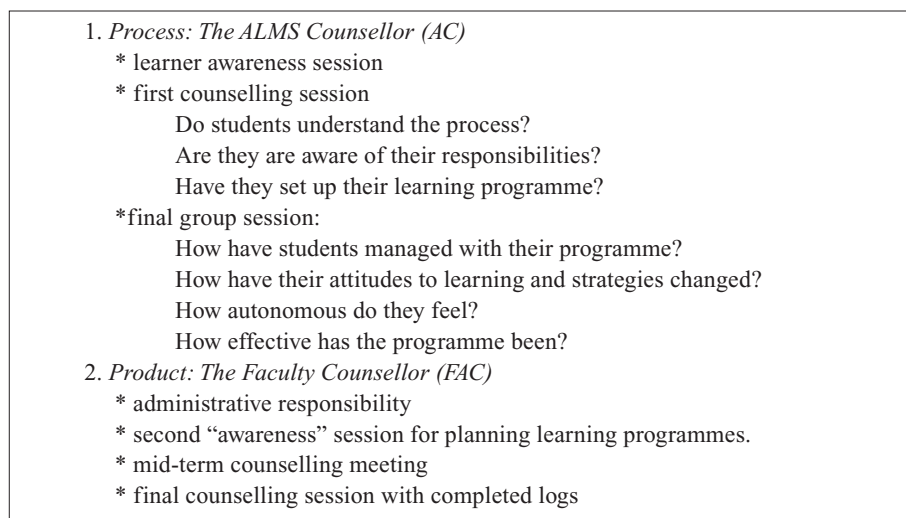


Figure 2. Counselling – process and product

The ALMS Counsellor (AC) - Process

Normally, the AC runs the first, six-hour learner awareness session, where the focus is very much on the independent learning process. Then students have a one-

on-one meeting with him or her early in the term. The main purpose of this meeting is to make sure that students understand this process, that they are aware of their responsibilities including how they can evaluate their progress, and that they have set up their learning programme. Finally, the AC runs the final group session where, once again, the focus is on the process. How have the students managed with their programme? How have their attitudes to learning and strategies changed? How autonomous do they feel? How effective has the programme been?

The Faculty Counsellor (FAC) —Product

The FAC is more responsible for the product. He or she has administrative responsibility for the students in the particular faculty, which includes awarding the appropriate number of credits and maintaining the records. So the FAC runs the second (compulsory) “awareness” session, during which students get down to the business of planning their learning programmes. They are also given practical information about materials sources, and about the support groups that have been set up. There are two counselling meetings during the term, and the first of these may be conducted by e-mail. The purpose is to check that students are on track. The counsellor is there to help and to guide, but not to prescribe.

To summarise, students have three one-on-one counselling sessions during the module. The first one is with the ALMS counsellor and focuses on the process of autonomy; the other two are with the Faculty counsellor and concentrate more on the work the student is doing as an autonomous learner. The possibility of e-mail counselling was introduced to help students who found it difficult to come to the Language Centre for the first 15-minute meeting with the FAC. We devised a framework for this, based on what the counsellors would be covering in the session. This framework is given in Figure 3 below.

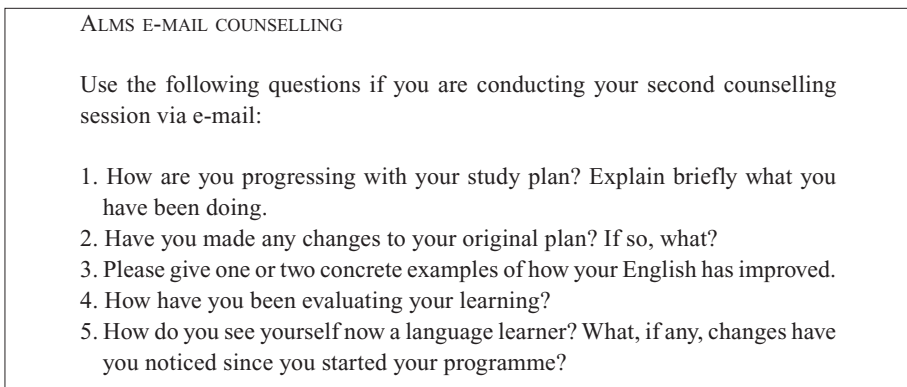


Figure 3. ALMS e-mail counselling framework

The next section describes one of our small action research projects in the area of counselling. Our aim is to identify and promote effective counselling from the perspectives of counsellor and counsellee. We intend to use the results of our research for teacher training.

4. RESEARCH ON COUNSELLING

4.1 THE CONTEXT

The Why

Our counselling framework has remained more or less the same since we started the ALMS project. We now feel we have the experience to reflect on what an "ideal" counsellor might be. According to Gremmo (1995), she should know about the language and the learning process, about teaching/counselling methodology and about the subject in question. The process and the product.

Our annual ALMS summer seminar in 1997 focused on counselling, and our guest speaker was Sophie Bailley from CRAPEL. Current research there aims to define the ideal counsellor, from the point of view of how much learners benefit from the counselling. Their data, gathered in videoed sessions, is used in three areas of research: the way counsellors

- 1) present material: how is the counselling done? What language is used?
- 2) discuss concepts: gender and pronunciation mistakes and their effect on communication;
- 3) give methodological advice.

After this seminar, we decided to take a deeper look at our counselling process. We did this for theoretical reasons, involving our own beliefs about our roles as counsellors and our commitment to motivating and supporting the students in their learning, and for empirical reasons: student evaluations are largely positive about the counselling and its value, but a handful of learners feel that the sessions could be more effective.

The What

We decided to analyse a selection of counselling sessions, namely the first sessions conducted by the Faculty Counsellor. The counselling was done in English. Specifically, we wanted to look at the counsellor's role, at the content of the sessions and at learner representations. We planned to supplement the data later to look more thoroughly at counselling discourse, speech acts and turn taking.

The How

We video-taped some mid-term counselling sessions, focusing on the counsellor. The counsellors loosely followed the e-mail counselling framework for these sessions.

4.2 THE FINDINGS

The Counsellor's Role

Data was collected from about 15 counselling sessions involving four counsellors. Not all of the recordings have been transcribed. The preliminary analysis looked at the content of the sessions, the counsellor's role in terms of how he or she elicited information (the types of question used, the use of metalanguage), encouraged the learner and made suggestions (guiding or prescribing), and the learners' contribution in how they saw themselves as independent learners.

The preliminary findings indicated three broad categories of interaction. These involved the counsellor eliciting information and encouraging the learner, and the learner talking about learning (see Figure 4).

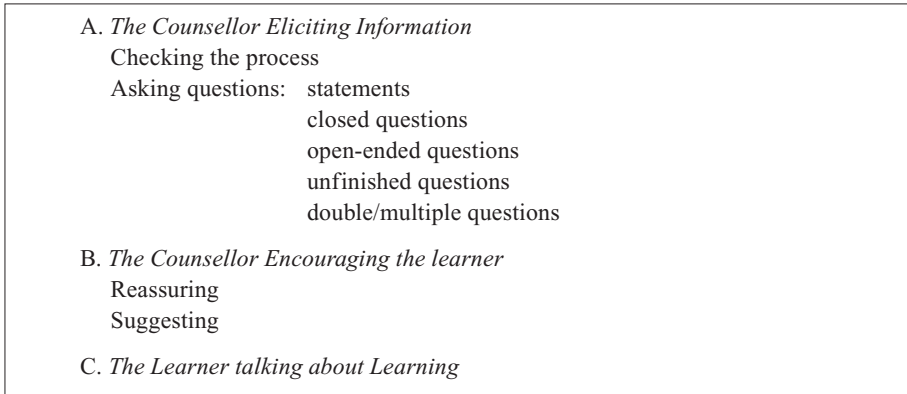


Figure 4. Counselling interaction

The counsellors checked the process (usually at the beginning). The usual array of question types appeared: questions disguised as statements, open and closed questions and unfinished questions. The counsellors encouraged the learners by reassuring them and making suggestions. Most learners talked about their learning in a very positive way.

Differences/trends were apparent in the kinds of question, the amount of encouragement, the amount of counsellor vs. learner talk, and the amount of checking and suggestion. There was also variation in the ratio of counsellor/learner talk, in the extent and ways of offering support and encouragement, and in how much the learner volunteered information and took part in the interaction.

So, to summarise, we found that, apart from the “process/product” distinction, there seem to be three main areas that the counsellor is coping with. These relate to practical and psychological aspects, and to aspects to do with autonomy.

We will be able to analyse these and other differences in more detail when we have more data. Our current research focuses on counsellor/counselee interactions, and on how learners verbalise their thoughts and feelings about what they have learned on the road to autonomy.

5. CHANGING ATTITUDES IN AUTONOMY

In the final section of this paper we would like to further discuss the process of becoming an autonomous language learner. We have stressed that learners need greater or lesser degrees of support in this process and we have indicated the various support systems that can be offered, including counselling. Students in the ALMS programme have frequently declared that they are aware of a change in themselves as language learners. What, then, is the nature of this change and how do learners express it?

5.1 AUTONOMY AS A CAPACITY

If we go back to some seminal definitions of autonomy we find that they refer to specific capacities in the learner. For example, according to Henri Holec (1981), “Learner autonomy is when the learner is willing and capable of taking charge of his/her own learning”. In other words, the learner should be capable of “determining the objectives; defining the contents and the progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedure of acquisition...; evaluating what has been acquired”.

Ten years later, David Little (1991) writes, “Autonomy is a capacity —for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning.”

The *capacity* both these writers refer to here is not like the capacity to drive a car or ride a bicycle but it refers to *thinking*, i.e., it assumes that the autonomous learner is a *reflective* person. In this paper we have already looked at the various ways that we have adopted for helping learners to become reflective or more effectively reflective. We have described the initial “learner awareness” day which sets the whole process underway. Learners are invited to reflect on their previous experience of language learning and to analyse their personal language learning strategies. They are given help and support in analysing their needs and forming their learning contracts. As they proceed with their programme they are encouraged to keep a record of their work which entails self-evaluation and reflection. Finally, during the programme they attend the counselling sessions, which have been briefly analysed above.

5.2 STUDENT EXPRESSION OF CHANGE

In the ALMS programme there are three sources of data which offer examples of learners’ expression of change. Firstly, in the middle of the programme some students opt to carry out their counselling by e-mail. If they do this, they are given a series of questions which they are expected to answer. Some samples of student responses to these questions can be seen in Figure 5, below. They already show evidence of improvement in students’ self-esteem, of self-evaluation, and of changes in beliefs about themselves as learners.

Please give one or two concrete examples of how your English has improved.

- Maybe I haven’t learnt that much new words, but it has become easier for me to find the words I knew from the beginning...I mean that I am not that nervous anymore
- My reading has become more fluent —I need a dictionary less than before thanks to my own vocabulary list

How have you been evaluating your learning?

- I haven’t done any systematic evaluating if that’s what you mean. But being able to use words that I haven’t known before has given hints to me that something has happened
- Self-evaluation is becoming a natural part of learning, and it increases my motivation to learn more. I mean —when you think afterwards what you have done that makes you learning task-oriented!

How do you see yourself now, as a language learner? What, if any, changes have you noticed since you started the programme?

- Before this programme I didn't see myself as a language learner at all. I was just a simple user of one of the foreign language known to me. Now - consciously or unconsciously —I try to get into situations where I have a possibility to use my language and maybe to improve it in some way.
- I see myself as a language learner who has got going. I have got self-confidence and feel myself no more as a hopeless case.
- The most important thing for me is, that it suddenly has become fun to learn new things. You don't have to know that much from the beginning. It's acceptable to tell the others that you don't know a word for example.

Figure 5 . Examples of student responses in e-mail counselling

A second source of data of student comments during counselling sessions are the transcripts made of some of these mid-term meetings. This was done as part of the on-going research project into the counselling process. Figure 6 gives three short extracts from these counselling sessions. They show students becoming more conscious of themselves as language learners, taking on a more active role and, as a result, experiencing a growth in their self-esteem.

1. *Counsellor:* How do you see yourself now as a language learner? Or have any beliefs about yourself changed? Did you come, or, when you say that you haven't had any experience earlier in speaking English, did you have any problems or beliefs about yourself that have changed now...?

Student: Yes. Erm, I was very surprised that I can speak. I have always, er, thought that I couldn't do it, and we had Mary Reid from London, who wanted to see our kindergarten, and my colleagues said no, no, no, not any Marys here, but I promised to, to introduce our kindergarten to her and we have a long discussion of our Finnish day care, yes.

Counsellor: Marvellous! Very good, you can be proud of yourself.

2. *Counsellor:* Well, is there something that you feel that you have learnt as a learner in a different way than for example before, that you thought, not just language but maybe in some other way during this Autumn?

Student: Well more, probably more active: I mean, I notice everywhere I hear or read or ...something in English language, then I notice it more, or try to get more use of it...

3. *Counsellor:* What about, if you think of yourself as a language learner, have your beliefs, your ideas about yourself changed at all during, during this programme?

Student: Yes, I have begun to trust more and more. In our day care centre we have one daddy, papa, he's from Greek, and he is speaking English and he was coming one morning and er, he tried to speak Finnish to me, and I said you can speak English to me, and I was very, er, ama <amazed>, amazing, too, I said so, and after that I started to believe in myself.

Figure 6. Extracts from counselling sessions

A final source of data on change in the learner comes from a small pilot study we did in Spring 1998. We asked about 120 students, at the end of the ALMS module, the following question:

Do you feel that your attitudes and beliefs towards learning languages have changed? If so, how?

The question was also given in Finnish and the students could answer in Finnish if they wished. We gave this option to be sure that language would not hinder them expressing rather difficult abstract thoughts about themselves (Translations are marked in the figure). Some examples of student responses are given in Figure 7 below. There is ample evidence that the students experience change during the autonomous programme. In particular they talk of *increased motivation* (e.g. comments 6, 9) and *self-confidence* (e.g. comments 1, 8, 11). This bears direct relevance to our earlier discussion of "self-esteem" and the importance of its role in learning. Students also show awareness of the difference in this kind of programme - i.e. what is *the cause of their change* (e.g. comments 1, 9, 10, 11). In particular they now see themselves as *aware and active learners*, able to take advantage of the whole learning environment (e.g. comments 4, 5, 6, 11). There are references to the adoption of *new strategies* such as careful planning, changing the emotional component, stressing communication (comments e.g. 6, 8, 10, 12). They also frequently say that they will *continue to learn in a different way* (e.g. comments 3, 4, 10). This is important, since it is no use if they only behave in this way during this programme. They often express surprise that autonomous learning can work. On the other hand, quite a few students indicate that they have previously felt something was wrong with the more "traditional" approach (e.g. comments 7,8).

Do you feel that your attitudes and beliefs towards learning languages have changed? If so, how?

1. I have perhaps become more sure that I can learn languages by myself. (trans.)
2. My attitude hasn't changed because I didn't have any.(trans)
3. Learning is an on-going process which is not limited to the classroom or textbooks. (trans.)
4. Yes - it's easier to have a positive attitude towards English. Studying has become more careful, more observant. Language development becomes part of life. (trans.)
5. Yes - I became aware of all that English around me. This course waked me up.
6. My attitudes at least towards English have changed. At the beginning I was quite confident and didn't see my weaknesses. However this course motivated me to do things, I did many hours of English "homework." Keeping the log was important and motivating.(trans.)
7. No. I knew already before the ALMS module, that the "traditional school-way" of learning languages isn't the best possible. I found even more support for my view from the program.
8. I have had a negative attitude particularly towards learning English, mainly because of failing at school (long ago) where grammar was the whole world.

Now I made the discovery (which I knew in theory) that you can learn grammar by reading and listening. And in speech, the main thing is to be understood. (trans.)

9. Yes, they have. Language study needn't be dull and boring but can be liberating and voluntary. And based on one's own interests. University study is adult education which should give more responsibility to the students. The opportunity for this kind of study proves its worth. In this way, language study can be more rewarding, more individual and will meet each person's needs. (trans.)
10. The greatest change after the ALMS course is in attitudes. Before, I was uselessly worried about grammar rules. Now I have learnt to value the fact that I can generally get things across. You don't have to be so stubbornly careful about mistakes and hard on yourself. Of course, changing your attitudes in one term is difficult but I'm well on the way already! (trans.)
11. This course gave some tools to evaluate how I am learning and how to learn better. Also I should require more from myself when learning other languages.
12. I didn't have any negative concepts about language learning before. But it was strange to find that you can learn in this way. I was used to the fact that you sit on a school bench and cram in grammar and words. (trans.)

Figure 7. Samples of student expression of change

6. CONCLUSION

We have tried to show that the capacity to take control of one's own learning is a skill that can be nurtured and developed. It is possible to change existing attitudes and beliefs. This is critical if we intend to set up more autonomous language learning programmes. We have set out to refute the oft-quoted claim that "it doesn't work". We believe that "failure" is often because the teachers and/or the students are not aware of the basic change in principles. Furthermore, even if they are aware of the new situation, they lack the necessary tools and support.

It remains clear that students need varying degrees of support to take on their new autonomous role. We hope we have shown a few of the ways in which this support can be offered. Counselling, which is also a new and unfamiliar role for teachers, plays an important part in this process. Teachers certainly need help in the adoption of this new role. As we have said, more research into the nature and discourse of counselling is essential.

In this paper we have described the way that we have tried to implement autonomous learning in Helsinki. Finally, however, we do emphasise that this is organised for our own particular context and we are not proposing that others should follow precisely the same route. As with any pedagogical approach, it needs to be adapted to suit the local circumstances.

Works Cited

- Gremmo, Marie-José. "Conseiller n'est pas enseigner: Le rôle du conseiller dans l'entretien de conseil." *Mélanges Pédagogiques*, Nancy: C.R.A.P.E.L., 1995. 33-61.
- Holec, Henri. *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*. 1979. Oxford: Pergamon, 1981.
- Karlsson, Leena, Felicity Kjisik and Joan Nordlund. *From Here to Autonomy*. Helsinki: Helsinki UP, 1997.
- Little, David. *Autonomy: Definitions, Issues and Problems*. Dublin: Authentik, 1991.
- McDonough, Steven. *Strategy and Skill in Learning a Foreign Language*. London: Edward Arnold, 1995.
- Mozzon-McPherson, Marina. *The Language Advisor: A New Type of Teacher*. Paper delivered at The Language Institute, U of Hull, July 1997.