

Evaluation of Learner Autonomy in the Algerian Third Year Secondary School Textbook 'New Prospects'

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Abstract

This paper evaluates the Algerian third year secondary school textbook 'New Prospects' to discover to what extent its content promotes learner autonomy. New Prospects was designed in compliance with the principles of the Competency Based Approach that aim at producing learners who are competent not only inside the classroom but also in their everyday lives outside of the school by promoting responsibility and autonomy in them. The hypothesis on which the paper is based is that if New Prospects complies to the principles of learner autonomy as stipulated in the CBA it will manage to produce autonomous learners. The methodology adopted in this paper consists of an evaluation checklist elaborated on the basis of the principles constituting autonomous learning identified in the literature review herein. The results obtained indicate that 'New Prospects' largely complies to these principles.

Keywords: evaluation, autonomy, the Competency Based Approach, secondary education, New Prospects.

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Résumé

Cet article évalue le manuel algérien de troisième année du secondaire New Prospects pour découvrir dans quelle mesure son contenu favorise l'autonomie de l'apprenant. New Prospects a été conçu conformément aux principes de l'Approche par Compétences qui visent à produire des apprenants compétents non seulement en classe mais aussi dans leur vie quotidienne en dehors de l'école en favorisant la responsabilité et l'autonomie en eux. L'hypothèse sur laquelle le document est basé est que si New Prospects respecte les principes d'autonomie de l'apprenant tels que stipulés dans l'Approche par Compétence, il parviendra à produire des apprenants autonomes. La méthodologie adoptée dans cet article consiste en une grille d'évaluation élaborée sur la base des principes constituant l'apprentissage autonome identifiés dans la revue de la littérature ici. Les résultats obtenus indiquent que «New Prospects» respecte largement ces principes.

Mots clés: autonomie, Approche par Compétences, enseignement secondaire, évaluation, New Prospects.

ملخص

يهدف هذا المقال الى تقييم كتاب اللغة الانجليزية للسنة الثالثة من التعليم الثانوي لمعرفة الى اي مدى يعزز محتواه استقلالية المتعلم . تم تصميم هذا الكتاب وفقا لمبادئ المقاربة بالكفاءات الرامية الى انتاج متعلمين داخل الفصل الدراسي وفي حياتهم اليومية خارج المدرسة من خلال تعزيز حس المسؤولية و الاستقلالية في التعلم لديهم. يستند المقال الى فرضية انه اذا امتثل الكتاب لمبادئ التعلم المستقل كما تنص عليه المقاربة بالكفاءات فسيتمكن من انتاج متعلمين مستقلين. تعتمد المنهجية المتبعة في هذا المقال على قائمة مراجعة للتقييم تم وضعها خصيصا بالاعتماد على المبادئ التي تشكل التعلم المستقل التي تم ابرازها من خلال مراجعة الادبيات حول هذا الموضوع. تشير النتائج التي تم الحصول عليها من خلال هذا التقييم الى ان الكتاب المعني في هذا المقال يفتح مجالاً لا بأس به للتعلم المستقل للمتعلمين .

الكلمات المفتاحية: تقييم ، تعلم مستقل ،تعليم ثانوي ،مقاربة بالكفاءات.

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I- Introduction

Successful learning is a complex process which requires learners to spend long hours working on their own progress not only inside the classroom but also outside of it, taking in charge what they learn and how they learn it without the intervention of the teacher. The principle by which learners assume responsibility for their own learning is referred to as learner autonomy. Through focus on learner reflection processes related to assuming responsibility for one's own learning, learner autonomy has become a major concern in the field of language teaching in recent years. Algeria is no exception to this concern since recent educational reforms in the form of the adoption of the Competency Based Approach (CBA) have given considerable position to the development of learner autonomy in the classes. However, it is necessary to verify the extent to which Algerian language textbooks comply to the principles of both CBA and learner autonomy which converge towards producing learners who are able to take in charge their own learning. In this respect, the hypothesis on which this article is based is if the third year secondary school textbook *New Prospects* which is designed along the lines of the CBA complies to the principles of autonomy in language learning as stipulated in the rationale of research in this field, it will manage to produce autonomous learners. The methodology adopted consists of an evaluation checklist designed by relying on a description of what constitutes autonomous learning drawn from the literature on that topic.

I.1. Language Learner Autonomy

The term 'learner autonomy' emerged in the field of second and foreign language learning as a consequence of the shift from teacher-centred instruction that was characteristic of non-communicative approaches to language teaching towards learner-centred instruction which is a central aspect of communicative language teaching (Fouroutan et.al. (2000) and Thanasoulas (2013). Research in the field of autonomy in language teaching begun as a result of the work of the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project in 1979. Subsequently, Holec (1981) published a major report in which he provided the most widely accepted definition and the most cited one in the field of learner autonomy research. He maintains that an autonomous learner is one who '...is capable of taking charge of his own learning' (p. 3). He explains that to take charge of one's learning is to hold the responsibility for all decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, namely determining the objectives defining the contents and the progression, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the procedure of acquisition and evaluating what has been acquired.). If students manage to do this successfully, they will be able to autonomously establish 'a personal agenda for learning' (Chan, 2003) by establishing directions in the planning, pacing, monitoring and evaluating the learning process.

Fenner and Newby (2000), support this viewpoint as they claim that in an environment characterised by autonomous learning, students must enjoy the freedom of choice of materials that they use in the classroom. By making this happen, students are encouraged 'to access and use resources in their contexts, to carry their learning and to develop strategies for taking greater responsibility for their learning' (White, 2003, p34). Following a similar line of thought, Little (1991:11) defines autonomy as 'a *capacity*-for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action'. This definition, clearly, presupposes a certain degree of awareness on the part of the learner. He also claims that learner autonomy is an ability to take control over the management of one's own learning. Ability to do so gives way to a number of actions, namely setting goals, defining content and creating ways for evaluating one's achievement and progress.

The concept of learner autonomy has been extended as a construct of attitudes and ability by which learners are empowered to assume more responsibility for their own learning (Vanijdee, 2003, cited in Lap 2005). When they study independently from the teacher following their own pace and employing their own learning strategies, learners are very likely to become more efficient and successful because in this case they are more involved in their learning. Littlejohn (1985) clearly supports this idea by

claiming that students who feel that they are part of decisions made in relation to their language competence “are likely to be more enthusiastic about learning” (p. 258), and this is an idea on which learner autonomy is based. An important concept underlying learner autonomy is that students are responsible for their own learning instead of merely depending on the teacher (Holec, 1981). Benson (2001) agrees with this when he claims that the autonomous learner relies on his direct experience to construct knowledge instead of simply responding to the instructions of someone else. Hence, it is necessary to promote learner autonomy inside the classroom as a first step before extending it beyond the walls of the classroom. Teachers, thus, play a major role in this respect because it is admitted that the ability to behave autonomously for students is dependent upon their teacher creating a classroom culture where autonomy is accepted’ (Barfield et al. 2001, p.3).

The concept of learner autonomy, which was on the onset, promoted by Holec then by many other researches, turned into an influential goal of education in many European contexts, (Ivanovska, 2015). Developing autonomy in language learners was promoted on many grounds such as the fact that this is a human right (Benson 2000), that it is more conducive to effective results than other approaches (Naiman et.al. 1978), and that learners cannot take good advantage of the necessary resources available to them especially outside of the classroom wall unless they take in charge their own learning process. In addition, many authors such as Oxford, 1991; Wenden, 1987; Wenden, 1991 have conferred to learner autonomy the possibility to promote the employment of learning strategies which constitute necessary tools for language learners. This implies that an explicit training in the use of learning strategies promotes learning autonomy (Graham and Harris, 2000). Wenden (1998: 90) also claimed that “without developing such strategies, students will remain trapped in their old patterns of beliefs and behaviours and never be fully autonomous’.

Proponents of autonomy, however, do not deny the significance of social construction which implies learners working together and depending on one another in achieving autonomy. To support this claim, Benson (2000) suggests that when each individual learner acts alone following their own preferences, control of the learning process, learning resources and language use will not take place. This implies that taking control over the learning process is not an individual act, but rather a decision made by the whole group. This view which is also supported by Little (1991), who claims that learner autonomy and active involvement in the learning process is enhanced by group work, typically applies to language learning classes. He maintains that ‘learner autonomy theory requires teachers to create an interactive dynamic that allows their learners access to full range discourse roles in the target language’ (p. 29). Indeed, communicative proficiency cannot develop unless there is a complete involvement in real learner-learner communicative behaviour. To further emphasise the social aspect of learning autonomy, Dam, (1994: 505, cited in Summer 2010: 8) suggests that ‘An autonomous learner is an active participant in the social processes of classroom learning’.

Nunan (1997) has identified five levels of autonomous learning which can be used by researchers who wish to assess a teaching content for autonomy. The first one is that of learner awareness in which learners’ awareness is raised about pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using. This is made possible by enabling them to identify the strategies implied in pedagogical tasks as well as their own preferred styles/strategies. The second level is that of involvement. They are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives offered to them. The third level is that of intervention where learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning programme and in the process of doing so they modify and adapt tasks. The fourth level is that of creation. Learners create their own goals and objectives and subsequently, their own learning tasks. The last level is that of transcendence. Learners go beyond the classroom and create links between the content learnt inside the classroom and the outside world, and in the process of doing so, learners become teachers and researchers. Later on, he proposed a procedure made of

nine steps 'for moving learners along the continuum from dependence to autonomy' (Nunan, 2003). These steps which synthesise the criteria that account for autonomous learning are basically a detailed version of the above five levels. They are: Make instruction goals clear to learners, allow learners to create their own goals, encourage learners to use their second language outside the classroom, raise awareness of learning processes, help learners identify their own preferred strategies, encourage learner choice, allow learners to generate their own tasks, encourage learners to become teachers and encourage learners to become researchers.

I. 2. *New Prospects*, a course book based on the Competency Based

The Competency Based Approach (CBA) was introduced in the Algerian educational system in 2002/2003 as a result of the Algerian educational reforms and of the need to comply with the requirements of globalisation for the sake of producing responsible and autonomous learners who are competent not only in the school context but also in their everyday life. The CBA can be regarded as an extension of communicative language teaching whose major goal is to develop the learners' communicative competence. However, communicative competence is not CBA's sole concern as it equally aims at developing different kinds of competences in the learners that enable them to acquire the necessary skills so as to transfer them to the different tasks they may encounter in their everyday life. In this respect, Richards and Schmidt (2002: 94) refer to the CBA as

'An approach to teaching that focuses on teaching the skills and behaviours needed to perform competences. Competencies refer to the students' ability to apply different kinds of basic skills in situations that are commonly encountered in everyday life'.

A competency is a capacity to successfully use a number of integrated skills and knowledge for the sake of accomplishing a task in a certain situation. Accordingly, Morowicki (1986, cited in Weddle, 2006) claims that 'competencies consist of a description of the essential skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours for effective performance of a real-world task or activity' (p.2). Accordingly, CBA attempts to make school acquisition viable and sustainable, develop the thinking processes of the learner, present learning contexts in relation to the needs of the learner, put an end to disciplinary barriers, choose a personalised pedagogy, assume responsibility and adopt an autonomous conduct and behaviour (Chelli 2010).

Nunan (1988: 13) maintains that its objectives consist of providing learners with efficient learning strategies, assisting them to identify their own preferred ways of learning, developing skills needed to negotiate the curriculum, encouraging learners to set their own objectives, encouraging them to adapt realistic goals and time frames and developing their skills in self-evaluation. It is clear then that the objectives of this approach are consistent with the principles of autonomous learning.

It is also described by Riche et. al. (2005), the designers of the Algerian first year secondary education textbook *At the Crossroads*, as being action-oriented, which suggests that it provides learners with the necessary know-how skills for being independently active. It is also seen as a cognitivist and social constructivist approach that views language learning as being not only an act of transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learner but rather as the active involvement of the learner in his own learning process and the creative use of his newly-built language competence through social interaction with other learners inside and outside the classroom (Riche, et al. 2005). That is, the principles of this approach are geared towards sustainable learning which learners can make effective use of not only inside the classroom but also outside of it. They also empower learners with problem solving skills, critical thinking and decision making. This new conception of learning has engendered a radical change in the roles performed by both teachers and learners. Therefore, the teacher is no more regarded as the sole possessor of knowledge and decision maker in

the classroom. He is rather a facilitator of learning. Learners on the other hand are no more regarded as passive recipients of knowledge, but rather as active participants in their own learning process. This clearly subsumes that learners should enjoy considerable amount of autonomy in learning. In this respect, Little's (1991) definition of learner autonomy (provided above) which presupposes that it depends on the development and exercise of a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action, stresses abilities that closely comply with the principles of the CBA.

New Prospects, which was designed in compliance with the English syllabus put forward by the National Curriculum Committee of the National Education in 2006 conforms to the principles of the CBA which are geared towards producing learners who are competent not only inside the classroom but also in their everyday lives outside of the school by promoting responsibility and autonomy in them. Throughout the six units that constitute it, the competencies of interaction, interpretation and production which cover syntax, morphology, vocabulary, pronunciation and spelling are developed in the learners. Each unit in the textbook introduces a new theme which provides a meaningful context for the incorporation of the presentation and practice of grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation/spelling with the four skills. These themes/units are Ancient civilizations; Ethics in business; Education in the world: comparing educational systems; Advertising, consumers and safety; Astronomy and the solar system and finally Feelings and emotions. At the end of each unit, there is an evaluation grid that permits students to review knowledge of the language items presented in the unit. It also requires them to test their ability to use the skills and strategies through reading passages/texts that appear at the end of the textbook.

At its end, the textbook includes: *listening scripts* for the different listening activities in all the units so that students can correct their work, *grammar reference* to which they are referred throughout the book and which they should use for revision and checking when they are not sure about a grammar point, and finally a *resources portfolio* which contains texts related to the themes presented in each unit and that can be used for skimming and scanning purposes.

II- Methods and Materials

For the sake of this study, a checklist for the evaluation of autonomy in *New Prospects* has been elaborated on the basis of the review of the literature provided in the present paper about what constitutes learner autonomy. Review of the literature on learner autonomy has highlighted a number of major principles that account for autonomy in language learning. So the checklist on which the present evaluation is based is a combination of principles drawn from the works of Holec (1981), Oxford (1991), Wenden (1987, 1991), Little (1991), Dam (1994), Benson (2000), Nunan (1997, 2003) and White (2003).

The textbook has constantly to be gone through in order to verify if:

- it makes instruction goals clear to learners,
- it allows them to create their own goals
- it enables them to decide on what to learn,
- it raises their awareness about learning content,
- it provides them with means of self-evaluation
- it provides with means to verify their knowledge about their own learning,
- it provides them with remedial activities that help them overcome their weaknesses after each point studied,
- it provides them with training in the use of learning strategies,
- it provides them with problem solving activities,

- it provides them with opportunities for interactive learning through peer work,
- it encourages them to use English outside the classroom,
- it encourages them to become teachers,
- it encourages them to become researchers.

II. 1. Evaluation of the textbook

II. 1. Does the textbook make instruction goals clear to learners?

The textbook provides a book map from page 10 to 13 that provides an explicit and detailed description of the learning objectives to be achieved by the learners at the end of each unit in terms of learner's outcomes and intercultural outcomes. This serves to raise their awareness about their learning goals and objectives.

II.2. Does the textbook allow learners to create their own goals?

By overviewing the textbook, it is possible to see that learners are neither involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives offered to them, nor in adapting and modifying them, nor in creating them. It may be claimed that their learning goals and objectives are imposed upon them by the textbook designers and the teacher.

II.3. Does the textbook enable learners to decide on what to learn?

By closely examining the textbook under study, it is possible to find that each unit contains a rubric entitled *Research and Report* which presents the learners with at least two assignments to choose from which one to do. In addition, all the project assignments at the end of each unit offer the learners between two and four alternative project topics to choose from. Except for these two sections, it is not possible to find any case where learners are given the possibility to choose what to learn nor to choose what to do among different activities.

II.4. Does the textbook raise the learners' awareness about learning content

The book map mentioned earlier explicitly informs the learners about the content of the different units so that learners know exactly and in detail what language learning points (in terms of functions, vocabulary, sound system and language skills and strategies) they are supposed to learn in each unit. Therefore, it serves to raise their awareness not only of the content to be learnt but also of the objectives to be achieved at the end of a learning activity. This is important as the learners know exactly not only what they are learning but also why they are learning it and where they are progressing.

II.5. Does the textbook provide the learners with means of self-evaluation?

Provision of means of self-evaluation to learners is a very important element in the transfer of responsibility from teachers to learners. In this respect, the textbook contains an evaluation sheet at the end of each unit whose aim is to check on the learners' progress. It requires learners to indicate what they think their level of proficiency is in the different language points studied in the unit. It also assesses their ability to successfully employ the skills and strategies learned in the unit by reading the texts that appear at the end of the textbook (*Resources Portfolio*).

In addition to this, the textbook contains a section entitled *Writing Development* that precedes the project outcome in each unit (pages 40, 70, 101, 130, 161 and 192). In this section, students are given specific guidelines to follow in order to produce a writing assignment about a different topic each time. When they finish writing their first draft, students are required to check whether their ideas are developed coherently, then to review their writing for grammar and spelling mistakes. Before they hand their final drafts to their teacher, they are asked to exchange them with their partners for error checking. In such activities, students assume responsibility not only

for their own learning but also for their partners' through peer correction. Peer correction, in fact, appears in a large number of activities throughout the textbook. Pupils are constantly required to compare their answers with their partners and this is likely to increase their sense of responsibility.

II.6. Does the textbook provide the learners with means to verify their knowledge about their own learning?

Learner awareness can also be raised if the students are able to verify their knowledge about their own learning. The number of activities that enable learners to do so is not sufficient (only four activities). In a pronunciation and spelling activity on page 28, pupils are asked to classify a list of words containing the letters "ch" in a box according to whether they are pronounced /tʃ/ or /k/, then to listen to their teacher reading these words aloud and check their answers. Later, in one of the listening activities on page 33, the pupils are asked to listen to a lecture about the civilisation represented on the map on page 32 and to check their answers to the questions on the same page. In a listening and speaking activity on page 93, the pupils are shown a picture and asked to guess the answers to the questions accompanying it. In the following page, they are asked to listen to the person on the picture's life story and check their answers. On page 125, after the pupils have summarised a conversation between two people, they are asked to listen again to it and check whether they have not omitted any important item in their summaries. Finally, it should be mentioned that at its end, the textbook includes listening scripts (from pages 196 to 210) for the different listening activities in all the units so that students can correct their work, as the teacher's book suggests. However, the textbook itself does not include any instructions that require the students to refer to them to correct their work.

II.7. Does the textbook provide learners with remedial activities that help them overcome their weaknesses after each point studied?

Awareness about learning can be promoted through remedial activities that help learners overcome their weaknesses after each language point studied. Such activities would enhance learners' study skills not also inside the classroom but also beyond the walls of the classroom. The textbook under study does not overtly offer any remedial works to students. It does offer, however, a section called *Grammar Reference* that extends from page 122 to page 238 and which presents essential grammatical notes with rules and examples to be referred to by learners when they have a grammatical activity to solve in every lesson, or to be used by them for personal study outside of classes. It also offers possibilities for both teacher and learners to identify learning weaknesses through the evaluation sheet used at the end of each unit. It can be used as a reference document for the design of remedial activities by the teacher or for self-study by the learners who might be willing to overcome their weaknesses outside of the classroom.

II.8. Does the textbook provide training in the use of learning strategies?

Overviewing the content of the textbook has revealed that it provides training in the use of learning strategies throughout all its units. Examples of listening and speaking strategies developed herein are making and checking hypotheses and predictions, listening for gist, listening for detail, recognizing and showing a sequence of events, representing findings on a chart, using illustrations to tell stories, giving a narrative account, responding to opinions, note taking, summarizing/synthesising information, responding to a text, speaking from notes, debating, making inferences, responding to an oral text, agreeing and disagreeing, making suppositions and hypotheses, recognizing the structure of a lecture, predicting the sequence of ideas.

On the other hand, some of the reading and writing strategies developed in *New Prospects* are: skimming, scanning, paragraphing ideas, making logical links between sentences and paragraphs, analysing and making sentences, predicting the content of a text, making inferences, distinguishing between different types of reasoning in argumentative texts and demonstrating critical thinking and judgement.

II.9. Does the textbook provide problem solving activities?

Concerning problem solving situations that aim at enabling learners to discover knowledge by themselves, it has been possible to identify a considerable number of them by overviewing the content of the textbook. For example, in the *Grammar Explorer* sections in each unit throughout the textbook, learners are given a grammatical task to solve without any explanation of the rules to follow, but they are asked to consult the *Grammar Reference* at the end of the textbook (from page 211 to page 238) where they have to read by themselves the grammatical rules whenever they are not sure about a certain grammar point and apply them in activities. They can also use this section for revision and for personal study after classes. In the *Vocabulary Explorer* sections in each unit, learners are required to use different learning strategies to process vocabulary items. For example, they are instructed to look up the dictionary to help themselves explain and grasp new vocabulary items to use them in different ways in subsequent activities, use word maps to generate words from an certain item, add prefixes and suffixes to stems to create new word forms, match words and phrases in a text with their definitions, or to guess their meanings from the context. So training in the use of learning strategies is combined with problem solving skills.

II.10. Does the textbook provide opportunities for interactive learning through peer work?

Reviewing the textbook under study has revealed that it includes activities that require the learners to work collaboratively. Each unit of the textbook contains activities which require each learner to compare his/her answers with a partner's, to exchange drafts of a writing activity with a partner for correction and to discuss his/her answers with a partner. There are also activities that require the learners to pair up to write assignments, revise them and read them out loud to the class or to join a group, for instance, to discuss the meanings of proverbs, prepare leaflets or improve an article. Some other activities require learners to work as a whole class in order for example to discuss a topic, discuss their answers about certain questions to the whole class, to express agreement or disagreement with a raised issue, report their ideas or findings or justify points of view. The projects at the end of each unit are meant to be realised by a group of learners even if their instructions do not make a clear statement about how they should be realised. However, it is worthwhile to note that activities that require individual work considerably outnumber those that need learners to work collaboratively.

II.11. Does the textbook encourage learners to use English outside the classroom?

The textbook under study does not provide any explicit instructions for the learners to activate the use of English outside the classroom. However, the *Projects* and the sections entitled *Research and Report* are opportunities for the learners to extend the use and practice of English outside of the classroom wall, at least in its written form.

II.12. Does the textbook encourage learners to become teachers?

Giving the learners the possibility to teach, assess or explain things to each other is a factor of great importance in the promotion of autonomy in language learning. Although *New Prospects* does not include activities which require learners to help their classmates in comprehension of language material, it definitely often requires them to present the final product of their written work to the whole class. The projects assigned at the end of each unit may also contribute to encouraging learners to become teachers when they are presented to the whole class because they allow them to share and display new information to their classmates. In addition to this, all the textbook units contain activities which after completion need to be submitted to a classmate for revision and correction. In doing so, the learners are somehow assuming teacher roles.

II.13. Does the textbook encourage learners to become researchers?

In addition to the project which is a group work that consists of making research outside the classroom to collect data, synthesise it, make a report about and finally present it to the class, the textbook offers other possibilities for the learners to develop their research skills. Five sections entitled *Research and Report* are included in the different units of the textbook. They all provide possibilities for the learners to select one topic among the alternatives offered to carry out research either to prepare themselves for the project outcome at the end of the same unit or to present the result of their research to the class.

III- Results and discussion

This table summarises the results of the evaluation:

1. Does the textbook make instruction goals clear to learners?	Yes
2. Does the textbook allow learners to create their own goals?	No
3. Does the textbook enable learners to decide on what to learn?	Only in two sections of each unit: <i>Research and Report</i> and the <i>Project</i>
4. Does the textbook raise the learners' awareness about learning content?	Yes
5. Does the textbook provide the learners with means of self-evaluation?	Yes
6. Does the textbook provide the learners with means to verify their knowledge about their own learning?	Not sufficiently
7. Does the textbook provide learners with remedial activities that help them overcome their weaknesses after each point studied?	Not overtly
8. Does the textbook provide training in the use of learning strategies?	Yes
9. Does the textbook provide problem solving activities?	Yes
10. Does the textbook provide opportunities for interactive learning through peer work?	Yes
11. Does the textbook encourage learners to use English outside the classroom?	Not explicitly
12. Does the textbook encourage learners to become teachers?	Yes, to some extent
13. Does the textbook encourage learners to become researchers?	Yes

Table: Summary of the Evaluation Results

Giving learners possibilities to choose what to learn and what activities to do among many alternatives contributes to the process of transferring responsibility from teachers

to learners which is the very essence of learner autonomy. Teachers need to revise their roles and become facilitators rather than instructors and confer more responsibility to their learners. Textbooks need to offer learners possibilities' to take decisions about objectives and about what to learn. They also need to provide them with means of self-evaluation because learners who feel that they are part of decisions made in relation to their language competence are likely to be more enthusiastic about learning. Reviewing the textbook to verify to what extent it facilitates this transfer of responsibility has revealed that learners are not involved in making decisions about their learning goals or activities nor even to select goals and activities from a list of alternatives. An exception to this is the project works and the sections entitled *Research and Report* in each unit where many alternatives are presented to the learners to choose from what to do. However, *New Prospects* provides means of self-evaluation to learners in the form of an evaluation grid at the end of each unit so as they check their progress. Their ability to successfully employ the skills and strategies learnt in each unit is self assessed by the reading the texts that appear in the section called *Resources Portfolio* at the end of the textbook. Self-evaluation is also promoted in all the writing activities under the section called *Writing Development* whereby learners are required to check their first draft for coherence, and grammar and spelling mistakes. Before the final draft is handed over to the teacher, it needs to be peer corrected so as to increase the sense of responsibility in the learners.

Learner autonomy is also attained when learners' awareness about pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using is raised (Nunan, 1997, 2003). This awareness is also promoted in learners if they are offered opportunities to take in charge their own learning by encouraging critical reflection by which they verify their knowledge about their own learning. This is also possible if the textbook provides learners with activities that would remedy their weaknesses after each language point studied and if it suggests external links that would enhance learners' study skills beyond the walls of the classroom. The book map used at the beginning of the textbook explicitly informs the learners about the content they are supposed to learn and the objectives they are supposed to achieve so as to increase their awareness about where they are exactly progressing. However, there are only four activities in the whole textbook that require the learners to verify their knowledge about their own learning. In addition to this, no remedial works are provided to the learners so as to enable them to overcome their learning weaknesses or enhance their study skills beyond the walls of the classroom except for the *Grammar Reference* at the end of the textbook which presents essential grammatical notes for the learners to refer to whenever they are not sure about a certain grammar point.

A condition for independent learning is for learners to be able to work at their own pace employing their own learning strategies which indeed constitute necessary tools for language learners. This is likely to make them more efficient and successful and to involve them more significantly in their own learning process. In this respect, the textbook under study makes considerable provision of activities that aim at training the learners in the use of learning strategies throughout all its units. Putting much emphasis on strategy training in language textbooks seems to be a necessity in order to establish in learners effective learning habits independently from the teacher. This aims at raising their awareness of the importance of strategy use in learning and at empowering them to use them to ultimately become autonomous learners. However, the textbook does not train learners to identify their preferred strategies as they are not given a range of options to select from the kind of strategies that suit them. Nevertheless, the fact there is a wide variety of strategies practiced in the classroom may fit the different preferences of different learners.

Researches in the field of learner autonomy have stressed the importance of social learning through peer activities where learners work together to share information, negotiate meaning, decide on the objectives and attempt to achieve them in such a way as to promote their autonomy. Review of the content of *New Prospects*

has revealed that it includes an important number of activities that foster collaboration among learners such as pair work, group work, or even activities that require the whole class to work as a group such as debates involving expression of agreement and disagreement and discussions of different topics. However, to consolidate what has been mentioned earlier in this discussion, learners are not offered any possibilities to decide on the objectives neither individually nor in groups. It also needs to be restated that the number of activities that require the learners to work individually is largely superior to those that require peer work. Indeed, *New Prospects* presents the learners with activities that enable them to work at their own pace so as to assimilate the different language points such as grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation then they check what they have done with peers (peer assessment), discuss it or engage in whole classroom discussions.

Although the principles of both the CBA and autonomous learning clearly stipulate that the knowledge (including language) learnt inside the classroom should be extended and be made useful in the learners' everyday life outside of the classroom, *New Prospects* neither provides guidelines about how the use of English outside the classroom could be activated nor give any instructions that explicitly require the learners to do so. However, the *Project* and the *Research and Report* sections which are clearly meant to be realised out of the classroom can be regarded as the means by which language learnt inside the classroom could be practiced outside of it, at least in its written form. In addition to the possibilities for language learning and practice they offer to the learners, these two activities are valuable in the sense that they train learners in research skills. Autonomous learners are those able to make research on their own to consolidate their learning.

Such activities also provide learners with opportunities to assume roles similar to the teacher's because they research information and present it to the class and may even explain it whenever asked to. Such activities clearly give value to the work of the learners and develop greater self-confidence in them as they appear to be experts in the field they had written about or researched.

As a recapitulation of this discussion, it may be stated that six principles of autonomous learning out of thirteen are conclusively present in the textbook, namely that it makes instructional goals clear to learners, raises their awareness about learning content, provides them with means of self-evaluation, with training in the use of learning strategies, with problem-solving activities and with opportunities for interactive learning. Four principles are present but only through the use of the *Project* and the *Research and Report* section; that is, it enables learners to decide on what to learn, encourages them to use English outside the classroom and to become teachers and researchers. Two principles are not sufficiently or overtly present, namely that the textbook does not sufficiently provide learners with means to verify their knowledge about their own learning and does not overtly provide them with remedial activities that help them overcome their weaknesses after each point studied. However, a major principle of autonomy in learning which learner ability to create their own learning goals is totally absent in the textbook. Therefore, it might be claimed that *New Prospects* complies to the principles of autonomous learning.

IV- Conclusion

The impetus for this article has been the fact that the principles of the CBA which was introduced to the Algerian educational system as a result of educational reforms in 2002/2003 show a clear tendency towards autonomous learning. Therefore, the purpose of this paper has been to evaluate the extent to which *New Prospects*, third year secondary school textbook, designed along the principles of the CBA, promotes autonomy in Algerian learners throughout its pages. The results obtained show that the textbook conforms to a large extent to the principles of autonomy in language learning reviewed in the literature used in this article. This implies that when it is properly applied in the classroom it might produce conditions that promote a teacher-learner pedagogical partnership in which teachers do not simply tell and show learners what to

do and how to do it but rather one in which learners take an active role towards a better learning. In this particular respect, it might be claimed that the hypothesis that constitutes the foundation of this paper has been confirmed. However, it needs to be stated that the present article is limited to the investigation of the promotion of autonomy in the textbook in question in terms of its content. Further research needs to be carried out to investigate teachers' and learners' perception of the extent to which such autonomy is enhanced in practical terms in Algerian classrooms.

Appendix

1. Does the textbook make instruction goals clear to learners?
2. Does the textbook allow learners to create their own goals?
3. Does the textbook enable learners to decide on what to learn?
4. Does the textbook raise the learners' awareness about learning content?
5. Does the textbook provide the learners with means of self-evaluation?
6. Does the textbook provide the learners with means to verify their knowledge about their own learning?
7. Does the textbook provide learners with remedial activities that help them overcome their weaknesses after each point studied?
8. Does the textbook provide training in the use of learning strategies?
9. Does the textbook provide problem solving activities?
10. Does the textbook provide opportunities for interactive learning through peer work?
11. Does the textbook encourage learners to use English outside the classroom?
12. Does the textbook encourage learners to become teachers?
13. Does the textbook encourage learners to become researchers?

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