

Friday 5 June

10:00am - 10:40am

Room: Block Y, Room Y304

Presentation Title: Autonomy in learning languages: What students and teachers in an institution of higher education understand by autonomy in language learning

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Theme:	Learner and teacher experiences
Presentation Type:	Paper presentation

Abstract

This research explores the beliefs students and teachers hold about self-learning, autonomy or independent learning (SAIL) in particular in a higher education institution in Mexico. The institution was 15 years old at the time of the research, one of the newest public universities in the country, and claims to promote SAIL.

The participants were 68 students, 6 teachers, 2 Self-Access Centre (SAC) and the differences and similarities among their beliefs are explored. Students' knowledge and awareness about their role in SAIL and the influences that the learning context and educational background has in the exercise of SAIL are described and compared with the views of teachers and senior administrators.

The study was carried out through a rigorous qualitative analysis of data obtained from guided interviews and focus group discussions with students and teachers, class observations and discourse analysis of institutional documents.

Findings are discussed in relation to research on the definition and promotion of autonomy in language learning. Participants' understanding of language learning is described and the ways in which students practise SAIL in the institution are identified. It is shown how the understanding of learning has been influenced by the policies and practice of an institution claiming to promote SAIL. The work also shows how the participants' views of language learning reflect the institutional context. How far SAIL is supported or obstructed in the university is found to depend partly on the imposition of explicit regulations and also on the beliefs about language and language learning held by learners and teachers and senior administrators.