Title: Independence, Interaction, Interdependence and Interrelation: Learner Autonomy in a Web-based Less Commonly Taught Language Classroom

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ABSTRACT
In the United States, teaching less commonly taught languages has been a very challenging task due to low student enrollment and the high costs of hiring permanent teaching faculty. Therefore, web-based distance learning (DL) is beginning to attract serious attention from the less commonly taught languages profession (Fleming, Hiple and Du, 2002). However, DL classes are often associated with student isolation, where learners are deprived of non-verbal clues, vocal expression, and eye contact that are crucial for foreign language learning (White, 2005). Thus, working in a more isolated context requires higher learner autonomy (White, 2005). This article provides a review of literature on autonomy that exists in the foreign language field, and describes four aspects of autonomy that need to be considered by language teachers while developing their web-based courses. It also offers some practical suggestions for the less commonly taught language instructors that foster autonomy and decrease isolation online.

Introduction

In the United States, teaching less commonly taught languages has been a very challenging task because of low student enrollment and high costs of hiring permanent teaching faculty. Therefore, web-based distance learning (DL) is beginning to attract serious attention from the less commonly taught languages profession (Fleming, Hipple and Du, 2002). Web-based teaching provides numerous advantages, such as convenience and flexibility, and accessibility. However, DL classes are often associated with student isolation where learners are deprived of non-verbal clues, vocal expression, and eye contact that are to the norm in a face-to-face environment and that are crucial for foreign language learning (White, 2005). Working in a more isolated context requires higher learner autonomy and a greater ability

to maintain initial motivation without face-to-face support and/or encouragement from the teacher (White, 2005).

Over the past several decades there has been a remarkable growth of interest in the concept of student autonomy in foreign language education. Autonomy has become a *buzz word* (Little, 1991, p. 2) in language learning research as a result of the shift towards communicative approaches in teaching languages that put the student in the center of the learning process (Wenden, 1998). Autonomy is an "ability to have and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3). It is both a social and an individual construct, which involves the personal development of each student and, at the same time, interaction with others (La Ganza, 2001, 2004). Autonomy can take a variety of forms depending on the learning environment and on learner characteristics, but often autonomous students are expected to assume greater responsibility, to take charge of their own learning (Benson, 2001) and to develop a "capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (Little, 1991, p. 4). While every learning context requires a degree of independence, motivation, and discipline from a learner, these aspects are especially critical in foreign language DL, where the student is largely self-directed and unsupervised and is expected to be more autonomous. When students are more autonomous, "they are likely to be more enthusiastic about learning" (Littlejohn, 1985, p. 258) and will develop a focused and a purposeful approach towards their language acquisition process (Camilleri, 1997; Chan, 2001, 2003; Dam, 1995; Little, 1991). Autonomy also promises to resolve the problem of motivation, even for those students who lack enthusiasm (Little, 2001). Learner autonomy, thus, is very important in any educational environment, but especially, it is crucial in foreign language DL.

Despite its importance, there are several challenges related to autonomy in the foreign language DL context. First, a single universal definition of autonomy does not yet exist (Little, 2001). This construct remains obscure, particularly in relation to language learning and teaching at a distance (Benson, 2001). Numerous definitions of autonomy often contain its synonyms, such as "independence" (Sheerin, 1991), "language awareness" (Van Lier, 1996), "self-direction" (Candy, 1991), and "andragogy" (Knowles, 1980). Auton-

omy has also been defined as a capacity or behavior, as learner responsibility or learner control, as a psychological phenomenon or political notion, and as a developmental skill that depends on teacher autonomy (Benson 2001). Most researchers agree, however, that autonomous learners know the purpose for their learning, accept responsibility for it, set their own goals, initiate their learning activities, and are involved in the ongoing revision and evaluation of their work (Holec 1981; Little 1991). Holistically, learner autonomy can be viewed as a combination of cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social dimensions of language learning that are in constant interaction with one another (Little, 2001; Benson, 2001; White, 2005; La Ganza, 2001, 2004).

Another challenge with learner autonomy in a web-based DL context is that it is often confused with self-learning and self-instruction. Traditionally, DL has been a very isolated activity where students work on their assignments independently, such as in correspondence courses (Holmberg, 1986). Most DL courses in the past had a pre-set structure in which the outcomes, the pace, and the content of the courses were predetermined by the course writers and not by the students. If we assume that autonomous learners need to be "able to make significant decisions about what is to be learned, as well as how and when to do it" (Van Lier, L., 1996, p. 12–13), then it seems that a pre-determined DL environment created obstacles for this process. Distance study today is more than a self-study. According to Holmberg (1989), distance education is "a kind of conversation in the form of two-way traffic" that "occurs through the written or otherwise mediated interaction between the students and the tutors and others belonging to the supporting institution" (p. 27). Learner autonomy, therefore, does not assume self-instruction but presupposes the ability to interact in such traffic.

Finally, technological innovations also bring challenges to the learning process and demand constant growth and expansion of learner autonomy. Students need to exhibit and develop new skills, motivation, and commitment (Kötter 2001; Rogers & Wolff, 2000). They also need to know how to use these high-tech tools to build their language competence and to navigate in a complex, interconnected, and constantly evolving community of peers through discussion forums, chats, blogs, teleconferencing, and other types of inter-

active activities that were not previously available (White, 2003). Thus, learners' ability to self-guide their learning process (i.e., to create online identity, to recognize their personal needs and to choose learning opportunities and resources that match these needs) becomes very important in the online classroom (White, 1995). Inevitable technical glitches and slow internet connections may also seriously impair learning and lead to student dissatisfaction with a course resulting in students' withdrawal (Hara & Kling, 1999). These barriers can create the potential for misunderstandings between students and instructors and increase student isolation online.

Autonomy in the Foreign Language Context

There are a number of descriptions of autonomy, but the foreign language field still lacks a theory of autonomous language learning and even fails to provide a unified definition of this concept (Benson & Voller, 1997). Many foreign language scholars either follow a constructivist view of autonomy, which describes this construct as an individual quality, or view it through the social interactionist perspective, which emphasizes the social dimension of autonomy. There are four aspects of autonomy that seem to arise from the literature review: independence, interaction, interdependence and interrelation. Let us examine each of these aspects in more detail below.

Independence

The individual dimension of autonomy (independence) is based on the constructivist psychological theory, according to which people are constantly trying to make sense of the world around them based on their previous experience. "A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events" (Kelly 1955, p. 46). Kelly (1955) believed that we anticipate events by "construing their replications" (p. 50), which means that we give meaning to events through our interpretation of them. Each individual creates his or her meaning differently. In this way, autonomy is an independent feature that belongs to the learner. Consequently, the learning process is individual and the constructs involved in this process, including autonomy, are also individual. One of the most frequently quoted definitions of learner autonomy that stems from this constructivist world view comes from Henri Holec (1979). In his

paper "Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning," Holec defined autonomy as an "ability to have and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" (p. 3). He believed that such ability involves several decisions on the part of the learner, such as determining objectives, defining contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring the procedure of language acquisition, properly speaking (e.g., rhythm, time, place, etc.), and evaluating what has been acquired (Holec, 1979).

The autonomous learner is capable of making all of the decisions about educational process and taking charge of his or her learning process (Benson, 2001; Holec, 1979). Dickinson (1995) also advocated an individualized view of autonomy and defined it as a "capacity for active, independent learning…. for critical reflection and decision making, as well as the skills necessary to carry out a self-directed learning program, i.e., the ability to define objectives, define content and so on" (p. 167). The autonomous learner in this set of definitions is a proactive member of the learning process, rather than a passive receiver of learning materials (Boud, 1988; Kohonen, 1992; Knowles, 1975). Holec (1979) added the importance of choice as a necessary means of autonomy development. He referred to individual choice, rather than to collective choice made by a group of students. According to the researcher, knowledge cannot simply be passed on from the teacher to the learner. Each learner observes and controls his or her own learning process and makes decisions (or choices) of what to learn. In order to facilitate such personalized learning process, there must be room in a course for freedom of choice for the individual as well as for groups of learners.

David Little (1991) brought a psychological dimension to the definition of learner autonomy. He believed that autonomy is "essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning, a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (Little, 1991, p.4). Little (2000, p 69) combined his older definition from 1991 with Holec's (1981) definition:

> Autonomy in language learning depends on the development and exercise of a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making and independent action (see Little 1991, p. 4); autonomous learners assume responsibility for determin-

ing the purpose, content, rhythm and method of their learn-
ing, monitoring its progress and evaluating its outcomes (see
Holec, 1981, p. 3).

The assumption here is that the ability to manage the learning expe-
rience depends on the underlying psychological capacities of the
learner. From this perspective, Holec's (1981) definition described
the implementation of autonomy rather than autonomy itself; his de-
finition explained *what* autonomous learners are able to do but not
how they are able to do it. Wenden (1991) saw learner autonomy as an
educational goal and as a learning process, or autonomous learning,
not as a product. Autonomy, is thus a developmental concept and a
learner is constantly working toward it (Kostina, 2011). The underly-
ing belief here is that there are some things to be achieved by the
learner, as well as some ways of achieving these things (La Ganza,
2004).
      Benson (2001) warned us, however, that a view of autonomy
that shifts the focus from the internal experience to the process of
learning has created a crisis of identity (p. 13) where autonomy is no
longer seen as an individual capacity but as a learning process or
situation (Benson, 2001; Dickinson, 1995). Benson (2001) maintained
that such a definition of autonomy was not accurate, as it presumed
that the "individualized self-directed learning" was a "sufficient con-
dition" for autonomy (p. 13). Similar beliefs were exhibited in Hurd's
(1998) work, who stated that "if learners are not trained for autono-
my, no amount of surrounding them with resources will foster in
them that capacity for active involvement and conscious choice, al-
though it might appear to do so" (p. 72–3). White (1995) also sup-
ported this idea, stating that "a self-instruction context for learning
does not automatically equate with learner autonomy, but autonomy
may arise and develop within the learner as a response to the specific
demands of a self-instruction context" (p. 209). The view of autono-
my as an individual characteristic has brought many important in-
sights to the field of foreign language DL but also has limited its un-
derstanding. It has negated the very nature of this construct, which
includes a social dimension, as autonomy is only meaningful in rela-
tion to others (La Ganza, 2004).

Interaction

The social view of autonomy is based on the Social Interactionism perspective, according to which we do not learn in isolation but through our interactions with others (Vygotsky, 1978). Vygotsky's *zone of proximal development* is the gap between what learners can achieve on their own and what they can achieve in collaboration with others. Both Kohonen (1992) and Little (1996) considered the idea of collaborative learning through social interaction to be central for learner autonomy because it allows the development of reflective and analytic skills in learners. These abilities "depend on the internalization of a capacity to participate fully and critically in social interactions" (Little, 1996, p. 211). The origin of the view of autonomy as a social construct coincided with the wave of communicative language teaching in the 1980s (Breen & Candid, 1980; Canale & Swain, 1980). The followers of the communicative language movement emphasized the importance of interpersonal dimension in language learning and communication was placed at the heart of learning. The focus of language learning was on "the development of the learner's communicative knowledge in the context of personal and social development" (Breen & Candlin, 1980, p. 91). Canale and Swain (1980) introduced the concept of "meaningful communication" as a complement to linguistic knowledge and focused on "use, not usage" (p. 24). The shift to a learner-centered classroom placed importance on the teacher in the development of learners' autonomy. The teacher, in this perspective, played an important role in matching his/her strategies with the appropriate levels of autonomy of their students. Candy (1991) stated that learner autonomy "is not a single, unitary concept, but rather a continuum along which various instructional situations may be placed" (p. 205). Breen and Mann (1997) maintained that autonomy is a "way of being that has to be discovered or rediscovered" (p. 134). They saw the classroom as a "microcosm of the wider world in which the self relates to society" (p. 142). Teachers have an important role in this process, as developing awareness of language learning does not come naturally to most learners; it is the result of conscious effort and practice and instruction. It is essential that an autonomous learner "is stimulated to evolve an awareness of the aims and processes of learning and is capable of critical reflection" (Dam, 1995, p.

2). Murphy (2005) argued that learners must be encouraged to enhance their capacities for reflection and self-direction; they should be given an explicit framework to guide their progress; and they must be provided a clear rationale, encouragement, support, and opportunity to practice within the course materials.

Collaboration with other students also becomes important in this social dimension of learner autonomy. Language skills are acquired with more success when learners participate in personally meaningful activities in the context of social interaction rather than receive knowledge from the materials (Candlin & Byrnes, 1995). Thus, a foreign language is not "a subject to be absorbed but a symbolic medium through which knowledge about an arena of interest might be generated by the learner in society with others, through a focus on the constructive process of learning" (La Ganza, 2004, p. 24). Therefore, both teachers and student peers become an integral part in the process of the development of learner autonomy.

Interdependence

Besides independent and interactive dimensions of autonomy, interdependence is also viewed as a key ingredient of the complex construct of autonomy. Little (2001) argued that autonomy in language learning develops through interaction, and that the independence of a learner is built through interdependence. Breen and Candlin (1980) also described a teacher as an "interdependent participant" (p. 99). In opposition to Holec's individual sense of autonomy, Breen and Candlin (1980) emphasized the interdependence of the teacher and other learners as part of a communicative process where all parties "actively share the responsibility for learning and teaching" (p. 99). Early Holec's (1979) and Little's (1991) definitions of autonomy were criticized by Hall and Beggs (1998) as being "asocial" (p. 27). They maintained that autonomy should be seen as an "internalised and individual state of mind." They noted that Holec's (1979) and Little's (1991) definitions did not address "the interactive nature of language learning" (p. 27) and did not include "the interdependence" that is at the core of language learning. Later, however, Little (1995) argued that learner autonomy depends on teacher autonomy. In order to foster learners' autonomy, teachers must exhibit it in themselves. Teachers and students use the same reflective and self-

directing strategies for different goals: teachers, for managing their classrooms and students, for learning. Hence, teachers who wish to promote greater learner autonomy need to "start with themselves," and should reflect on their own beliefs, practices, experiences, and expectations of the teaching and learning situation (Little, 1995; Smith, 2001). Therefore, according to the interdependent perspective, learner autonomy is dependent on teacher autonomy and vice versa. As a social construct autonomy is seen as a result of interdependent relationships whereby both teachers and learners share responsibility for the learning process.
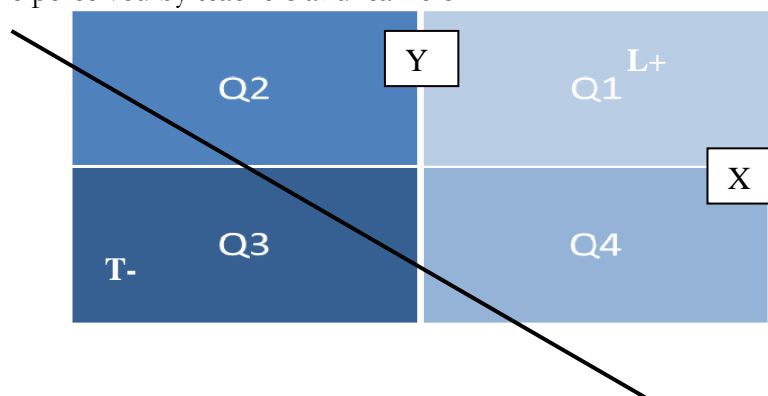
Therefore, autonomy seems to be both an individual and a social construct. According to La Ganza (2004), autonomy "arises from juxtaposed objectivistic and constructivist notions of reality and knowledge" (p. 23). Autonomy is, thus, an individual systematic learner progression leading to competencies in learning (Holec, 1979), but it is also a subjective individual construction through social discourse (La Ganza, 2004). Using Ackermann's (1996) metaphor of learning process, which he described as "a dance between diving in and stepping out" (p. 32), I can conclude that autonomy is a result of the personal reflection (stepping out) as well as of social interaction (diving in).

Interrelation

A new perspective on learner autonomy has been developed by La Ganza (2001, 2004) and supported by Kostina (2011). According to the theory of Dynamic Interrelational Space (La Ganza, 2001, 2004) interaction is important for the development of learner autonomy. However, it goes beyond individual and social views of autonomy and includes an *emotional aspect* of interaction introducing the concept of interrelating. La Ganza (2008) stated that "interrelating implies more than just reciprocal action, which is sometimes referred to in the literature as interaction; rather, it implies establishing association, connection, verbally and non-verbally: interrelating comprises an affective dimension" (p. 370). According to La Ganza's model, it is not sufficient to define learner autonomy as a learner taking control or taking responsibility, but by the extent to which a learner can realize these achievements depends upon his or her relationship with the teacher. Therefore, learner autonomy is seen as an achievement, at-

tained interrelationally, between learner and teacher. It depends on how learner and teacher relate to each other and whether they develop relationships that are conducive to developing learner autonomy.

The core features of the Dynamic Interrelational Space model (see Figure 1) are the *dualities*, or sources of inner tension. These dualities (T+/T- and L+/L-) may be explained as states of tension that are perceived by teachers and learners.

Q 1	T+	Teacher seeks to influence the learning experience and/ or to assist the learner.
	L +	Learner accepts Teacher's influence on the learning experience and the assistance offered, or seeks Teachers' assistance
Q 2	T-	Teacher resistant: encourages Learner to initiate and / or define his or her work and / or define the learning experience
	L +	Learner seeks Teacher's assistance concerning work to be done or some clarification of the learning experience
Q 3	T-	Teacher resistant: encourages/ allows Learner to initiate and/ or define his or her work and / or define the learning experience
	L-	Learner seeks empowerment: indicates to Teacher that he or she would like to struggle alone to initiate and/or define his or her own work and/ or define the learning experience
Q 4	T+	Teacher seeks to influence the learning experience and/ or to assist the learner.
	L -	Learner seeks empowerment: indicates to Teacher that he or she would like to struggle alone to initiate and/or define his or her own work and/ or define the learning experience

Figure 1. The Dynamic Interrelational Space Model

T+ signifies that the teacher is trying to influence the learning experience; T- denotes that the teacher resists from this influence. L+ indicates the learner's willingness to accept the teacher's influence; and L- signifies the learner's resistance to the teacher's influence and/or his/her desire to seek empowerment to influence the learning experience in some way. La Ganza (2001, 2004) believed that the development of a learner's capacity to be autonomous mainly occurs in the Q3 interrelational climate. Such a climate is characterized by restraint and some discomfort on the part of the teacher. The learner here struggles in his/her learning process. The learner makes mistakes, experiences doubt and uncertainty, and resists appealing to the teacher for correct answers and solutions. Besides developing a capacity for resisting the influence of the teacher, the learner must also develop a capacity for persistence in using outside resources, as well as the teacher, for learning. The teacher, on the other hand, must develop a capacity for communicating to the learner and express to the learner that he/she is concerned for the student's well-being in this educational process. The teacher also needs to be able to cope with his or her own anxieties associated with facilitating the learning process, such as worry about "when or [when] not, and if so, how, to offer help to the learner should the learner not seek the teachers' influence" (La Ganza, 2008, p. 66). This model shows that a learner's capacity for development of autonomy can vary with different teachers depending on their interrelation.

Therefore, La Ganza (2004) believed that learner autonomy is only meaningful in the psycho-social context and only when the teacher and the learner interrelate. Hence, La Ganza (2001, 2004, 2008) saw the term *learner autonomy* as problematic because it only emphasizes one side of the dynamic relationship whereby the learner self-governs in isolation from external factors. "The paradox of learner autonomy is that the learner can be autonomous while in facilitating relationship with the teacher who is present externally, or, after satisfactory experiences of autonomy, internally" (La Ganza, 2008, p. 67). Therefore, La Ganza (2008) redefined the term learner autonomy as "the capacity of a learner to sustain a predominantly third quadrant interrelational climate in his or her experience- or a Q3 capacity" (p. 67).

Figure 1 shows a line going through quadrants 2 and 3 to quadrant 4. This line is the Critical In-Mind Boundary, which demonstrates the place where teacher-learner interrelating risks breaking down because of a lack of rigor. La Ganza believed that if this boundary is crossed, the online learner might feel isolated, while the teacher might also feel unsuccessful in fostering learner autonomy. The exact position of the Critical In-Mind Boundary depends on each teacher-learner relationship. Usually, the teacher receives a sign from the student that the boundary is about to be crossed, and that their connection is breaking down. The teacher might feel a loss of touch, after which the learner might drop out without a word. Thus, the relationship between the instructor and learner is effective within the boundary and breaks down beyond it. The role of the teacher is to maintain the boundary through a balanced student-instructor dialogue, which does not need to be verbal but must be affective.

La Ganza (2004) suggested that the instructor must *hold* the Q3 and to develop learner autonomy without crossing the Critical In-Mind Boundary. In the contexts where teachers do not interfere with the learning process of their students, they need to show concern for their students. Interrelating thus includes more than the social presence described by Rourke, Anderson, Garrison, and Archer (1999) or e-moderating discussed by Salmon (2003), neither one of which includes the affective aspect of the teacher-learner dialogue that needs to be maintained. In order for the instructor to successfully foster the learner's autonomy, he or she must engage intellectually and emotionally with the student. This emotional investment will also allow the teacher to feel connected to the student while they are engaged in the construction of knowledge. Such *in-mind* student-teacher dialogue can be evidenced through various communicative exchanges, whereby the teacher shows his or her concern and the student accepts it. However, such in-mind interaction often is nonverbal, which is more complicated to maintain online. In the face-to-face classroom "the blink of a learner's eye can appear to signal a refusal of what a teacher was offering" (La Ganza, 2004, p. 365). In the online environment, student-instructor interaction can be interrupted by the student's sudden silence and lack of responsiveness. Such interaction involves both intellectual and emotional engagement that must be constantly

maintained. Therefore, student-instructor dialogue is more than *interacting*; it is also *interrelating* (La Ganza, 2004).

To conclude, autonomy is a multi-level, multi-dimensional construct. As a *multi-level construct*, autonomy is a dynamic phenomenon that changes over time (Kostina, 2011). It is a progression from being dependent to being fully autonomous (Wenden, 1991). Autonomy also seems to be unique for different students. According to Little's (1991), "autonomy can take numerous different forms, depending on their age, their proficiency, and so on" (p.4). However, autonomy is not just something that happens on its own in the online classroom (Benson, 2001; White, 1995). It needs to be developed and supported by instructors (Hurd, 1998; Little, 2001). Specific instructor strategies that involve communication, interaction, and interrelating create a climate where autonomy can be fostered (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004; La Ganza, 2011)

As a *multi-dimensional construct*, autonomy is both an individual and a social concept. As such, autonomy includes a combination of skills that is related to the personal characteristics of the learner or is dependent on other ingredients, such as interaction with others, interdependence, and interrelation. This complex nature of autonomy that includes individual, social and interrelational dimensions can be visually illustrated by Figure 2.

Figure 2. Dimensions of Multi-level
Multi-dimensional Construct of Autonomy

Conclusion: Suggestions for Less Commonly Taught Language DL Teachers

Independence

In order to foster student autonomy without pushing the learner beyond the *critical in-mind boundary,* less commonly taught language DL teachers should understand the factors that contribute to students' feelings of isolation and use those techniques that are proven to promote students' feeling of connectedness and increase their autonomy. Since many students value communication with their instructor (Kostina, 2011), teachers need to provide detailed, timely, and individualized feedback and to be easy to reach. Establishing expectations for how soon students will receive their grades or how often they will hear from their teacher will promote student satisfaction and increase their feelings of connectedness. Developing rapport with students is also important. Teachers can start a course with ice-breaking activities to ensure that students learn about each other and feel more comfortable contacting their peers during the course. Besides, posting some personal information about the teacher and even creating social networking opportunities within the class will also help connect with the students.

The less commonly taught language DL teachers should also remember that autonomy is a developmental construct. Each student in their classroom comes with an individual set of skills and a varying degree of autonomy. It is crucial for the teachers to tune into their students' abilities and adjust their instructional strategies accordingly. Through continuous communication with their students, and a quick assessment of their autonomy levels at the beginning of the course, an instructor can create a strategic approach for each individual student and provide more support to some learners while allowing others to take charge. In addition, creating an organized online environment that is easy to navigate, that contains printable materials, and various opportunities for practice have the potential to increase students' learning experience online. The use of a variety of media, especially for foreign language learning, can make studying online fun and can create differentiation where various activities can match diverse students' learning styles.

Interaction

In a DL less commonly taught language classroom, the development of communicative competence seems of particular importance (Kostina, 2011). Therefore, teachers should structure their classes so that more time is devoted to the actual use of the language. It has been noted that many web-based language programs focus on reading, writing, and listening, rather than speaking (Ros I Sole & Hopkins, 2007). However, less commonly taught language DL teachers, just like face-to-face teachers should not revert to teaching grammar and passive language skills online, but should promote oral interaction and create opportunities for speaking in the target language. This need could be addressed by limiting grammatical presentations and posting more practice exercises online while freeing more time in the synchronous classroom for speaking. Less commonly taught language DL teachers should also not forget that in the online classroom peer discussions are as important as in the face-to-face context. Creating collaborative activities where students speak to each other in the target language will encourage students to develop their communicative skills and at the same time feel less isolated from others. Additionally, in a language DL classroom, the use of video for the synchronous classes seems to be of a great importance (Kostina, 2011). It makes the learning process more personal and close. It is also crucial for learners' listening comprehension and pronunciation.

Despite the fact that teachers' contact information is usually available to all students in a web-based course, research shows that it is not enough (Kostina, 2011). Because of the lack of natural conversations in the web-based DL classroom, online teachers need to implement strategies that encourage student-instructor and student-student dialogue (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Hansson & Wenno, 2005). Therefore, such strategies as sending reminders, regular check-ins, and the creation of collaborative tasks will promote these types of dialogue and will increase student satisfaction in the classroom.

Interdependence

DL seems to be a very transparent environment where physical distance does not diminish people's ability to detect others' feelings and intentions (Kostina, 2011). A teacher needs to sense when to pull back and when to reach out to his/her students. Many students

demonstrate the need to solve problems, and even to struggle on their own (Kostina, 2011). Thus, the instructor needs to develop their own autonomy as it is interdependent with the autonomy of his/her students. In addition, instructor's effort and genuine interest in the topic can be contagious for their students (Kostina, 2011). Often, online teachers do not have enough room in the course for sharing their personal feelings about their subject with the students. However, teachers should allow their passion for the topic to guide their virtual classes, just it would guide their face-to-face discussions. Providing extra resources that ignite students' interest for the target language and culture, for example, will permit teachers to share their fascination with certain aspects of that language or culture and to demonstrate the instructors' effort. All this in turn may boost students' motivation and satisfaction.

Interrelation

La Ganza (2001, 2004, 2008) provides several strategies for continuously showing care for their students in order to maintain an interrelational climate where both teacher and student resist influencing each other on the academic level. Instructors in such a climate need to create a very strong affective bond with students to allow them to struggle on their own and still feel connected. La Ganza believes that for this task, the teacher must be a perceptive resource, a participant observer, and a supporter of each learner's individuality. As a *perceptive resource,* the teacher needs to invite consultation and welcome it when it occurs. He/she needs to provide meaningful help to the student's inquiries and reply to requests, indicating that the learner's questions have priority in the teacher's schedule. The instructor should also follow up on the situations that reflect any uncertainty. As a *participant-observer,* the instructor should use individual learning contracts and demonstrate genuine interest in what the learner might discover, showing empathy for the learner. The instructor should also make an occasional discreet inquiry, reassuring the learner that he/ she is thinking about him/her. Being *supportive of each learner's individuality* means to encourage discussion on various topics and to seek the learner's opinions about the areas of his/her expertise and experience (La Ganza, 2004).

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