

构建中国特色的外语 自主学习理论

江晓丽 著

人民法院出版社

构建中国特色的外语自主学习理论

——中国高校学生英语学习观研究

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

构建中国特色的外语自主学习理论/江晓丽著. - 北京:
人民法院出版社, 2009. 5

ISBN 978 - 7 - 80217 - 866 - 3

I. 构… II. 江… III. 外语 - 学习方法 - 研究
IV. H3

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字(2009)第 103369 号

构建中国特色的外语自主学习理论

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责任编辑 张承兵

出版发行 人民法院出版社

地 址 北京市东城区东交民巷 27 号(100745)

电 话 (010) 67550564(责任编辑) 67550516(出版部)
67550558 67550551(发行部)

网 址 <http://courtpress.chinacourt.org>

E - mail courtpress@sohu.com

印 刷 北京人卫印刷厂

经 销 新华书店

开 本 880 × 1230 毫米 A5

字 数 290 千字

印 张 11.75

版 次 2009 年 5 月第 1 版 2009 年 5 月第 1 次印刷

书 号 ISBN 978 - 7 - 80217 - 866 - 3

定 价 32.00 元

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序

自主学习不是简单意义上的自学，其核心是一种学习能力，指学习者有能力掌控自己的学习，包含设定合理的学习目标，选择合适的学习材料，运用恰当的学习策略，监督自己的学习进度并检查自己的学习效果。它相对于机械被动式学习，通过开发调动学生潜在的主动性，促使学生高质量地完成学习任务，并为其终身学习和自我发展打下基础。20 世纪 60 年代以来，西方国家提出以学生为中心的教育改革，并把培养学生自主学习能力作为一项重要的教育目标，几十年来在教育领域积累了丰富的自主学习理论。外语自主学习的研究从这些理论中汲取营养，同时结合外语学习及语言习得的学科特点，逐渐形成了基本的理论框架。近年来，随着对培养具有高素质外语能力和创新型人才的重视，国内外语自主学习研究迅速引起学者们的兴趣，并取得了一定的成果。美中不足的是这些研究通常‘照搬’西方的理论，来解读中国外语学习者的外语自主学习情况，得出的结论是否全面客观地反映了中国语言学习者自主学习状况，还有待商榷。

本书作者在英国著名高校用了近五年的时间研究中西方自主学习的理论与实践，尤其是英语自主学习的理论与实践，探索性地大胆提出构建中国特色的外语自主学习理论。该书深度剖析了中西方自主学习概念的起源、在教育领域的发展和运用、以及在外语教育领域的形成发展过程。从理论的高度阐明了构建中国特色的外语自主学习理论的重要性。作者在出国攻读博士学位前，已经积累了多年丰富的外语教学研究经验。本

书结合外语学习的自身体会和经验，通过科学系统的研究方法和翔实的数据分析，充分论证了创建该理论的必要性和可行性。在外语自主学习研究日益国际化和本土化的今天，本书的出版将会对丰富外语自主学习理论，并对在中国和其它英语为非母语国家的自主学习研究提供参考借鉴。

本书原创性和开拓性的理论观点，多次在国际会议和高校间交流，受到了国内外同行的高度评价和首肯。回国后，作者又结合自己的教学工作，对原有的研究成果进行系统梳理，这次出版以飨读者，嘱我开篇作一简介，我很高兴，也很荣幸！是为序。

陈仲利

二零零九年一月

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore Chinese learners' conceptions of learner autonomy from learners' perspective since researchers in language education argue that concepts of learner autonomy may bear cultural imprints and recent college English language education reform in China sets learner autonomy as a prime goal.

The study first presents general background and an introduction to the research context. There follows a comprehensive literature review, tracking origins of the concept of learner autonomy in the fields of philosophy, general education, and language education, with distinctive 'Western' and 'Chinese' emphases. This is followed by a review of relevant research on learner autonomy in language education, which consists of research on learner autonomy as a concept, as a means for effective learning, relationships with culture, and methodological issues. To investigate Chinese learners' conceptions of learner autonomy, the study adopted a mixed research approach to collect data: with a qualitative method as the main research method to capture in – depth understandings of learners' conceptions, and a quantitative method as a supplementary one to support qualitative data findings and at the same time reveal further diversity. Moreover, to avoid any imposition of learner autonomy theory pre – occupied in the researcher's mind, the study does not ask directly about learner autonomy to learners but instead examines whether concepts of learner autonomy are embedded in

students' accounts of successful English language learning.

The study involved 27 interviews and a questionnaire survey of 450 college English language learners among three different Chinese universities. The main findings of the study are as follows: 1) Both 'Western' and 'Chinese' emphases and core elements of learner autonomy are found in Chinese learners' conceptions of successful English language learning; 2) Chinese learners' conceptions of learner autonomy are found to exist in two distinctive domains: learner autonomy for academic success (LAAS) and learner autonomy for communicative competence (LACC. 3) Learners' conceptions of learner autonomy can be influenced by different sources: political, economical, social, cultural, and individual. 4) Learners' conceptions of learner autonomy are dynamic, and subject to various factors such as progress of level of education and individual language learning experiences.

Based on the data findings, a reconsideration of concepts of learner autonomy drawn out from students' conceptions of successful English language learning is discussed, which combines 'Western', 'Chinese' emphases and core elements of learner autonomy, associated behaviours, and sources of influences on them. This reconstruction of the concept of learner autonomy in the Chinese context contributes to a better understanding of learner autonomy theory. The research has important implications for policy makers, teachers, parents, and students in understanding learner autonomy from learners' perspectives and for research into concepts of learner autonomy in different contexts.

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CHAPTER 1 BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of personal motivation for the research

My motivation for the present research on learner autonomy was a natural interest extended from my Master's study, along with my experience of being an English language teacher and learner.

1.1.1 Why learner autonomy?

The concept of learner autonomy aroused my attention during my engagement in my Master's thesis. By the end of my Master's course (2003 – 2004), I was motivated to explore Chinese learners' strategy use in their English language learning since I found that the literature on Chinese language learners' learning behaviours was contradictory and apt to attribute them, via the anecdotal descriptions or limited research findings, to Chinese cultural influences. During this process, I touched upon a new concept, 'learner autonomy', in reviewing Wenden's (1991) well-known book *learner strategies for learner autonomy: planning and implementing learner training for language learner*. With the expansion of my reading about 'learner autonomy', I realized it was a popular concept although it received strong criticism of various kinds. For example, one typical debate regarded generalizability of such a concept across cultures. For most learner autonomy proponents, autonomy is 'Western' in its origins and possibly inimical to 'Asian/Eastern/

Chinese' culture. This discovery aroused my initial interest to fight against overgeneralization of culture, just as I was doing in my Master study. Frankly speaking, my interest was more an instinctive reaction than a mature thought at that time. However, this instinct was coupled to my own experience of being an English language teacher and learner.

I never doubted that there were autonomous learners on the soil of China during my six years of English language teaching in a university in China. These learners often were active participants in classrooms but also demonstrated a wide range of learning in their after class learning. For quite some time, I kept wondering why: these learners had high concentration in classroom instruction; they completed all teachers' recommended tasks with sufficient effort and quality; they seemed to explore more about the subject area in their own time. This question was further complicated by my other observation: those students who were not so active in ways teacher might prefer had clear opinions on what they wanted to learn or how English should be learned. However, when teachers' ways failed to meet their expectations, they chose to be 'passive'. As a language teacher, the first type of 'autonomy' was always my favourite whereas the latter was my headache. Nevertheless, reading literature on learner autonomy for the first time fundamentally challenged my definition of learner autonomy. Was the first type that was transmitted from my parents and teachers since I was a young learner the right one for all students to aim at?

I took for granted that my own learning was the example of learner autonomy since this term was often heard and used when I was a learner. Ever since my entrance into formal education, I was often seen as a model 'autonomous' student by both teachers and parents. I demonstrated a strong capacity to manage my learning as