Autonomy and motivation: a study case of an intensive graduation course of languages major in English

Autonomia e motivação: um estudo de caso de um curso de graduação intensiva em licenciatura Língua Inglesa

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Abstract: The present paper aims to investigate in which way the academics from the intensive course of languages major in English at Universidade Federal do Pará in Bragança city, apprehend autonomous practice. It will have as a main focus the periods when the students are not present in classrooms for a better appropriation of the oral skill, because they have difficulties to express themselves when they come back to the class period at university. The research methodology is a study case through semi-structures interview based on the theories of Autonomy by Little (1997) and Dickinson(1992), and Motivation by Ushioda (1996) and Dörnyei (2005).
Key words: Autonomy, motivation, oral skill learning.

Resumo: O presente trabalho tem como objetivo averiguar de que forma os acadêmicos do curso de licenciatura em língua inglesa, em caráter intensivo da Universidade Federal do Pará, na cidade de Bragança, apreendem práticas autônomas. Terá como foco principal os períodos em que os acadêmicos não estão presentes em sala de aula para uma melhor apropriação da habilidade oral, visto que é esta a habilidade de maior dificuldade de expressão ao retornar à academia. A metodologia utilizada nesta pesquisa é o estudo de caso através de entrevistas semi-etruturadas com base nos pressupostos teóricos de Autonomia de Little (1997) e Dickinson (1992), e Motivação de Ushioda (1996) e Dörnyei (2005).
Palavras-chave: Autonomia, motivação, aprendizagem da habilidade oral em inglês.

1 INTRODUCTION

During the process of my intensive graduation course, I could perceive that, on one hand, some students could not speak the language – English – they were learning very well as time went by. On the other hand, others could. Bearing this in mind I can say that when someone decides to study languages Major in English at any University, especially if it is an intensive course, the learner has to understand that there are some specific factors that influence his or her learning process. In this paper I point out two of them: motivation and autonomy.

The paper is divided into three parts. In the first part I present the theoretical support, observing some of the important aspects for the data analysis and discussion which are motivation and autonomy. The second part is about the methodology used to the accomplishment of this work. In order to do so, a qualitative research was conducted by semi-structured interviews with the data collected during the ending period of the last level of language – advanced II – with 5 students who were willing to help to help me with this work. In the third part of this paper I analyze the retextualized narratives with a discussion, and the results are presented using graphs to ease and

quantify how motivated students have been since they first saw the language until now and if they are autonomous learners in and outside the classroom environment.

The aim of this study is to find out why it happened during these four years of intensive undergraduation and why they have so different levels of oral proficiency. It analyzes students attitudes towards their learning process, specially their motivation to start studying English and its process during the course. The aspect of autonomy are also mentioned so that a positive or negative result of the learners learning process was achieved.

The information that will be given in the following chapters and subchapters will not necessarily be related only with foreign or second language learning. They can be applied to other areas of knowledge even to the subjects which regular schools offer. The focus of this paper is on the English language. So, it will be only related to this language from now on. Only female pronouns will be used for the term teacher, not for the matter of prejudice but for avoiding mistakes or ambiguous interpretation. When referring to "learner" or "student", which will be referred to as both male and female.

2. OBJECTIVES

The general objective of this paper is to understand why students have had so different levels of oral proficiency in the English language. The specific objectives are to point out motivational aspects students have had or have created during classes since the very beginning; to identify how students were or were not autonomous during undergraduation; and to find out if the course accomplishes its *Pedagogical Political Project* objectives.

3. THEORETICAL SUPPORT

To talk about language learning there are studies related to this field. In this chapter I will present theoretical support based on researches about learner's motivation and learner's autonomy.

3.1. MOTIVATION

The study of motivation started with Garner and Lambert (1972). The term – motivation – in every aspect has a complex meaning and an abstract definition. Dörnyei and Otto (1998, p. 65 apud Dörnyei, 2001, p. 9) define as

> The dynamically changing cumulative arousal in a person that initiates, directs, coordinates, amplifies, terminates, and evaluates the cognitive and motor processes whereby initial wishes

and desires are selected, prioritized, operationalised and (successfully or unsuccessfully) acted out.

When it comes to learners' motivation it can be identified as the willingness to invest an effort to learn something – in this case English – and progress on that. The more motivated the learner is the better and more pleasant his/her learning will be.

Many motives can be part of the learning process, such as culture, politics ethnic associations or just because the learner likes the language itself. A variety of factors can influence the students' motivation towards learning, two of them are the intrinsic and the extrinsic motivation. In the intrinsic the effort learners have to accomplish some kind of task comes from their own willing and their rewards are not material, there is no external incentive. The learner in the intrinsic motivation has the most important role to his/her learning process.

In the extrinsic motivation there is an external factor that motivates the learner to go on and achieve better results. In opposition to the intrinsic the extrinsic motivation can enhance the former. Some aspects that can motivate learners extrinsically are an exchange program in a foreign country, the desire of being an English teacher when you see someone teaching the language, the demand of your work to get in contact with international companies, etc.

In this kind of motivation the teacher has an important role. It depends on her to involve the learners in the classroom activities and how she is going to use the language to motivate them and make it useful in a variety of tasks.

Moreover, Ur (1991) states that a lot of aspects can be taken into consideration when you are talking about a motivated learner. The motivated learner is not strictly related to the language he knows or how easily he learns that language, but the learner who has specific characteristics. Ur (1991, p. 275) numbers seven of them:

> (1) Positive task orientation. The learner is willing to tackle tasks and challenges, and has confidence in his or her success.; (2) Ego-involvement. The learner finds it important to succeed in learning in order to maintain and promote his or her own (positive) self-image; (3) Need for achievement. The learner has a need to achieve, to overcome difficulties and succeed in what he or she sets out to do; (4) High aspirations. The learner is ambitious, goes for demanding challenges, high proficiency, top grades; (5) Goal orientation. The learner is very aware of the goals of learning, or of specific learning activities, and directs his o her efforts towards achieving them; (6) Perseverance. The learner consistently invests a high level of effort in learning, and is not discouraged by setbacks or apparent lack of progress; (7) Tolerance of ambiguity. The learner is not disturbed or frustrated by situations involving a temporary lack of understanding or confusion; he or she can live with these patiently, in the confidence that understanding will come later.

The characteristics mentioned above are just some of the attitudes learners might have. Having one of them or all of them is also important when starting or continuing studying another language. Likewise, Weiner (apud Dornyei, 2001, p. 2) says that: "Any theory based on a single

concept, whether that concept is reinforcement, self-worth, optimal motivation, or something else, will be insufficient to deal with the complexity of classroom activities". The classroom is sometimes just a stage where teachers and students have opportunities to be together sharing experiences and knowledge. However, when the learner is able to perceive his or her role in a classroom, how motivation can lead him or her to be a better learner and how he or she can cope with the information, it is time to understand the role of autonomy.

3. 2. AUTONOMY

For many decades teachers were the center or the focus of a classroom. The explanatory teacher-centered classes were a trend in all kinds of schools. Now it has been changing. Students are now the focus and their learning process is more important than ever.

Recent studies about language teaching and learning have showed that autonomy has become one of the most discussed topics nowadays. In the learning process field Little (1991, p. 4) says:

> Essentially, 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 for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts.

Despite having this definition, learners are not aware of it. Sometimes they go to a language course and think that they are capable of learning techniques and communicative skills only by being present in a classroom. When enrolling in a language course the learners will not get this information from their books and not even from their teachers if they do not use it as part of the curricula.

The definition of autonomy is sometimes mixed up with the one of independence. In the learning process Dickson (1992, apud Benson; Voller 1997, p.2) associates 'autonomy' with the idea of learning alone and 'independence' with active responsibility for one's own learning. Although different words may have similar meanings with one trait in common: learners must be able to learn without anyone's help or guidance. They have to do it by their own. Benson (2002, p.10) also states that autonomy "depends ultimately on the learner's own efforts to develop it in a variety of contexts experienced over a relatively long period of time."

A previous consideration may be made when dealing with autonomy. The process of learning a foreign language sometimes happens at the same time of regular school education. I also consider that the learning process in most of the schools is focused on college entrance examinations: the vestibular. In this final process, especially during the three years of education before University, students go through hours of study. Sometimes they get tired and stressed of attending classes. Some of them also study overnight, trying to memorize formulas and concepts to get a better result.

This process of learning does not lead the students to be autonomous. Their minds unconsciously realize that the learning process happens when someone prepares everything - here I mean explanations and exercises to do in classes or at their homes - and that they just have to accomplish or memorize the sequence, process, definitions, answering exercises as if they are perfect students only by doing that.

In most of the students' cases it may happen, especially if they have gotten through the whole educational system and after they enroll in a foreign language course. They do not have any idea of how to be autonomous learners neither of how to act as constructors of their own learning acting in a reflexive way.

In agreement of what I have mentioned above Illich (apud Little, 1991, p.9) argues that:

> "School institutionalizes values, and thus teaches students to confuse process and substance: The pupil […] is "schooled" to confuse teaching with learning, grade advancement with education, a diploma with competence, and fluency with the ability to say something new."

Some aspects of autonomy might be understood or acquired by the learners during elementary school. Language as a whole is an area of knowledge and it can be acquired as mother language (L1) and sometimes, depending on the country, it can also be acquired as foreign language (FL). The acquisition process of the language in general does not happen easily, especially if it is a foreign one. I can assure that everything that is acquired[1] in some way can also be learned[2].

Unfortunately the learning context of English does not happen effectively. The students are victims of overcrowded classrooms, lack of didactical material and, sometimes, inexperienced teachers.

4 METHODOLOGY

In this session we explain the methodological procedures used in the qualitative research. First of all, a narrative research based on a recorded questionnaire was conducted. The narrative research according to Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach and Zilber (1998, p. 2):

> (…) refers to any study that uses or analyzes narrative materials. The data can be collected as a story (a life story provided from an interview or a literary work) or in a different manner (field notes of an anthropologist who writes up his or her observations as a narrative or in personal letters)

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[1] Process where the construct of knowledge happens unconsciously.
[2] Process where the construct of knowledge happens consciously.

To perform this narrative research we decided to use the cross-sectional type of data analysis.   Moreover, a semi-structured [3] interview was conducted to understand the way students were or were not autonomous and motivated during the graduation course. The individuals involved in this research are part of the intensive undergraduation in Letters course Major in English in Bragança. Only 5 out of 12 agreed to take part of this research and helped with its accomplishment.   The research and interviews were conducted in the 7th period of classes in the city of Bragança, after the ending of the last level of language – the discipline advanced II.

To accomplish this paper, the students answered a 12-question interview, which is in the annex 1 of this paper, trying to explain their experience during the intensive undergraduation course of letters in Bragança since the very beginning of 2006 until the present moment.   Their experiences towards their learning process during the classes in the intensive period, outside classroom and even in the extensive period, when they do not have classes.

It is also important to remark that not all of the students that will probably graduate were part of this work. So the information here will not be one hundred per cent applied to the letters course in Bragança, nor to the other intensive courses around the state of Pará.

As we are dealing with interviews, it is common to use transcriptions when we are going to change the oral text to the written text but in this paper the use of a retextualization based on a model proposed by Marcuschi will be necessary to organize the ideas better.   It does not mean that the information will be changed somehow concerning meaning, but from one modality to another – from spoken to written modality.   As he (2001, p. 49, our translation) says:

> As we deal with oral and written materials, there is an interesting distinction to be made between the retextualization and the transcription activity. Transcribing the speech is to change one text of its own sound realization to the graphical way based on a series of conventional procedures. Safely, in this way, there is a series of operations and decisions that conduct the relevant changes that cannot be ignored. Nevertheless, the operated changes on the transcriptions must be made in a way which does not interfere with the production of the discourse nature considering the language and content point of view. However, in the case of retextualization, the interference is bigger and there are more sensible changes, especially in the language case.[4]

To ease the reading process the interviews in the annex 2 of this paper were retextualized. The retextualization process followed the essence of the text accurately; only pauses, repetitions,

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[3] The semi-structured interview focuses on the subject of the research and we create a previous script with main questions. In addition, other questions can be included according to the circumstances of the interview.
[4] Como lidamos com materiais orais e escritos, há uma distinção interessante a ser feita entre a atividade de retextualização e a de transcrição. Transcrever a fala é passar um texto de sua realização sonora para a forma gráfica com base numa série de procedimentos convencionados. Seguramente, neste caminho, há uma série de operações e decisões que conduzem a mudanças relevantes que não podem ser ignoradas. Contudo, as mudanças operadas na transcrição devem ser de ordem a não interferir na natureza do discurso produzido do ponto de vista da linguagem e do conteúdo. Já no caso da retextualização, a interferência é maior e há mudanças mais sensíveis, em especial no caso da linguagem.

external interference and commentaries not related to the answer of the questions on the dictionary were discarded.

5 NARRATIVES OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION

In this section I will present the data collected with the interviews. It shows us, based on the theories related to motivation and autonomy, how the students dealt with their experiences. To do so I needed to ask questions related to their first contact with the language, their experiences with it, how they dealt with their difficulties and with strategies they have used to overcome them, how motivated they were during this process and if they developed some autonomous attitude toward their learning process.

The first student (S1) expressed how she felt when I asked her about her first contact with the language. She also stated her awareness of the process of learning and assessment comparing an elementary school with a free course she was attending at that moment.

> Porque o primeiro, primeirinho eu posso relatar foi na escola. Na escola fundamental a gente não tinha professor e no final do ano no mês de dezembro arrumaram um professor, porque a gente precisava ter avaliação da disciplina e aí a professora passou trabalhos para a gente fazer valendo as quatro avaliações. [...] Mau contato. Foi uma coisa assim que a gente fez sem um propósito, só pra ter uma nota mesmo e pra colocar no currículo e fingir que a gente teve inglês durante o ano. Foi só isso. Mas assim, o contato com a língua falada pra aprender a falar foi no curso livre. E eu considero bom. Tive um bom professor. A metodologia que ele usava eu considero uma boa metodologia.[5]

When I asked the same question to the second student (S2), he answered that he was fascinated with the language, even though the contact with an oral language was so rare.

> Eu achei superinteressante. Sei lá. Escutar, pois eu sempre tive curiosidade de escutar música, escutar qualquer coisa e entender o que a pessoa tava falando. Até hoje o que me motiva mais é essa curiosidade. Eu achei fantástico, a professora em si falava tudo perfeito. Ela deu só dois anos de aula pra gente. Isso foi no ensino fundamental. Foi um bom contato.

Even though studying in the same context, the students usually get their first contact with the English language at school and some of them get fascinated with the language, because it is a new subject as it can be seen through this excerpt from S4.

> O meu primeiro contato com a Língua Inglesa foi quando eu estava na 5ª série e como era uma coisa diferente eu me atraí muito. Quando eu tinha a idade de 12, 13 anos eu me atraia muito por coisas novas. Então todas as matérias novas que eu tinha na 5ª série a que eu mais gostei foi o Inglês.

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[5] Even though it is an English written article, the author decided to maintain the narratives in Portuguese to preserve the authenticity of the texts because it is the mother tongue of the interviewees.

However, due to educational problems in Brazilian system and to the lack of English teachers, some of them did not have this first contact with the language in elementary school.

It is important to notice that one of the students (S3) had never seen the language before going to University.

> Bom, meu primeiro contato com a língua inglesa foi aqui na universidade. Eu nunca tinha tido experiência com a língua inglesa, é... pra falar a verdade eu sempre tive notas muito ruins na escola, sabe? Eu nunca tive facilidade pra passar... sempre tive notas vermelhas. E aí eu resolvi fazer vestibular pra língua inglesa, mas ainda assim eu não gostava da língua e quando eu passei no vestibular eu pensei em desistir da vaga, porque eu achei que eu realmente não fosse capaz, principalmente por ser um curso intervalar que exige muito, né, você tem que, que se dedicar ao máximo pra poder aprender qualquer tipo de matéria num curso intervalar, especialmente uma língua estrangeira e aí... no primeiro dia de aula quando a professora entrou falando inglês na sala de aula eu fiquei desesperada.

In the four narratives above some motivational and demotivational aspects of when the students got their first contact with the language can be identified. S2 and S4 could easily express themselves remembering how their first contact with the language was, telling that it was a good or fascinating contact. The curiosity was something very important for their learning process. So, they had put some effort to learn the language. Although nothing was done by anyone in this first contact, they had the inner motivation to learn English. On the other hand, S1 and S3 reacted differently because of the problems they had had and they did not know how to deal with them. It was something out of their control and they had to find ways to overcome the problems. S1 enrolled in a free course and, only by doing it, she could feel that English could provide her another experience, different from school, and change her attitude. S3 almost gave up the course, because she felt unable to succeed inthe beginning because it was so intense.

S3 had to count on an extrinsic motivation, because she had not had any intrinsic motivation until that moment, and she said that three teachers were paramount part of her learning and how much knowledge she had at the moment of the interview.

> Não... eu odiava inglês. As duas professoras fizeram eu gostar de inglês. Eu conheci primeiro elas, comecei a gostar de inglês a partir delas e foi aí que eu entrei no curso de idiomas e foi meu professor lá que só fez complementar essa motivação. [...]Se não fosse elas talvez eu tivesse desistido do curso. Eu não tinha motivação nenhuma pra aprender inglês. Eu não gostava de inglês, não sabia inglês, eu não tinha essência, não tinha química com inglês. Não tinha condição nenhuma. Hoje sou apaixonada por inglês. Eu respiro inglês 24 horas por dia.

Dörnyei (2001, p. 175) says that teacher motivation affects the motivational disposition of the learners. He says that "there is some indirect evidence and a certain amount of theorizing available to confirm that teacher motivation has a direct impact on student motivation and achievement." So, in this situation, the motivation of the teacher towards their students and teaching process has lead S3 to be in love with the language. Nowadays she works full-time with the language and has developed her

intrinsic motivation to learn. Brown (2001, p. 76) says that extrinsic motivations are always related to rewards to oneself. In this case she needed the reinforcement of her skills coming from someone else – the teachers – to make her continue studying. That was her reward.

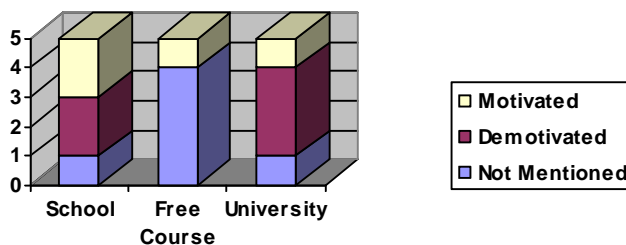The graph below shows the results related to motivation:

Chart 1 Motivational aspects of learners experiences.

Comparing the obtained results, it is possible to perceive that the demotivational aspect appears at school and at University. One student who faced a demotivational situation at school enrolled in a free course and felt motivated to continue studying the language. At University, 3 out of 5 students were demotivated due to the difference of approach and methodology in the beginning. Only 1 out of these 3 ones mentions the change of attitude and became motivated due to extrinsic motivation.

When I asked the students about their oral practice before and after joining the University, they said that they had never seen any real communicative oral practice during school, only repetition of dialogues or ready-made statements. They argued that they felt lost, desperate and shocked when they first saw their first language teacher at University only speaking in English. Only two of them had had the practice of the oral skill, but when they were studying in a free course.

S5 said:

> Até a 7ª série, na 6ª e na 7ª eu tinha um pouco de prática de conversação. A professora passava uns diálogos e a gente tinha que ler o diálogo ou reproduzir o diálogo. Só que era uma prática onde ela lia, a gente via a pronúncia que ela tinha e não uma pronúncia de um CD, com falantes nativos e a gente tinha que reproduzir o que o falante nativo falava. E a partir da 8ª série foi diminuindo e até que no ensino médio acabou a prática de conversação. A prática era mesmo da escrita e ensino de gramática.

S4 also said:

> "Não, na 5ª e na 6ª não tinha essa prática. Eu nunca tive essa prática na sala de aula no ensino fundamental."

S2 said that, when he was studying English before University, the technique was focused on reading and writing. He stated:

"Não. Nenhum. [...] Era técnica de leitura e escrita. Agora falar assim, não, nenhum."

S3 had never had any oral practice of English, even at school. She said:

"Não tive nenhuma prática oral em lingua inglesa. [...] Não tinha prática oral, nem escrita. Nada."

Although, after starting English as a school subject and before viewing the language at University, two students, S1 and S4, enrolled in a free course. They said that while they were studying the language at school they were also studying in a free course. S1 said:

Já, eu já tinha. Eu estava fazendo o meu curso de inglês no curso livre. Eu acredito que quando eu entrei na universidade eu já estava terminando o básico, eu já estava iniciando o pré-intermediário. Então quando eu entrei na universidade, o básico que eu vi eu já tinha visto. Então foi uma coisa de consolidação do que eu já tinha visto, porque até então tinha visto em sala de aula, mas não tinha sentido a necessidade de usar numa situação real.

According to what they (S1 and S4) stated during the interview, they did not have any communicative or real life experience during their experience in a free course. S4 said:

...eu era muito presa a frases feitas. [Tipo. What are you doing? I am doing tá-ra-rá (sic). Sabe? Uma frase que é uma short answer e que não te dá nenhuma informação adicional e que não te faz pensar melhor no que falar, no que dizer depois disso.] E eu tive que arranjar um jeito de formar as minhas próprias frases, a saber desenvolver melhor. A me expressar melhor.

So, we have the following result according to the students' oral experience before University:
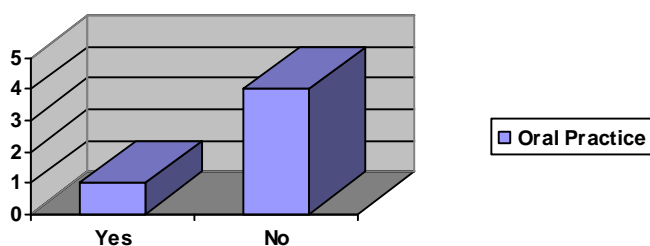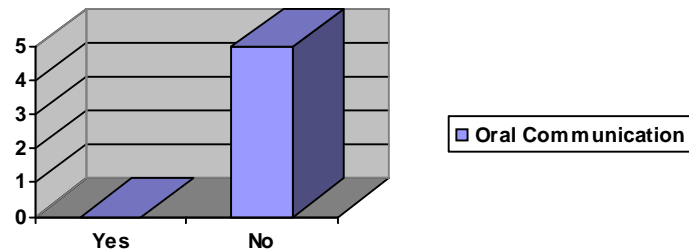

Chart 2 Students' oral practice before university.

Chart 3 Students' oral communication before university.

With this in mind I can surely say that all those students did not have the idea of how to use the language they have learnt and what to do with it and when to use it. This might be due to the process of teacher-cantered teaching they faced or methodology and approach. With this outcome, the students probably did not have any use of language during the class, especially orally. For Ushioda (1996, p. 33):

> We [teachers] should not simply rely on students to generate their own opportunities for language use outside the classroom, but make sure that they become users of language in the classroom so that they engage immediately in successful communicative experiences and discover what they are capable of doing in the language.

Based on the assumption that 4 out of 5 learners had never been motivated to learn the language by themselves nor by their teachers before the University, they could never be able to put all their efforts to communicate in English. Dörnyei (2001, p. 32) confirms that almost everything an experienced teacher does in the classroom has a motivational influence on students.

S3 gave support to what Dörnyei said in this excerpt:

> Eu tenho três pessoas que são responsáveis pela minha fluência na língua inglesa. [...] São professores que mais me incentivaram, pra falar a verdade foram professores que eu me inspirei, sabe? Aquele professor que você olha e fala "cara, eu quero ser feito ele, assim...".

He (2001, p.32) also mentions that there are four general points teachers must have to motivate their learners which are: enthusiasm, commitment to and expectations for the students' learning; relationship with the students and relationship with the students' parents. So, enthusiasm, commitment and relationship are of paramount importance to motivate students.

Another point is that "without motivation there is no autonomy." (Ushioda, 1996, p. 40). In any kind of learning environment, students have to understand that they must be autonomous. Like riding a bike, driving a car or starting to walk, speaking a language has its process of starting point of learning so that with the development of abilities and links of what comes first and what comes next the learners will be able to do it by themselves. In the beginning, however, they cannot do it alone.

What I am trying to say is that, to be an autonomous L2 learner, you may have the guidance of someone else, in this case, the teacher.

When the students were asked about how they dealt with their learning process during the intensive course and outside this full-time educational system, the answers varied according to what each student does during such periods. In this sense, the oral skill was focused, because it is the most difficult ability students still face.

S5 started saying that the oral communication in English is difficult to happen even during classes:

> É difícil acontecer esse tipo de exposição ao oral até mesmo quando a gente está aqui na universidade. A exposição se consiste mais no período em que a gente está na sala de aula. Fora de sala de aula é muito complicado. Agora nesse último semestre que a gente começou a tentar conversar fora de sala de aula, algumas coisinhas em inglês, mas dentro de sala é complicado. E fora do período letivo é pior ainda. Até porque aqui em Bragança são poucas as pessoas que têm conhecimento da língua inglesa pra gente tirar um dia pra conversar ou dialogar em inglês. As pessoas da nossa turma cada um tem as suas ocupações, suas rotinas, o que faz com que a gente não se encontre para poder conversar em inglês.

S1 also agreed with S5 and pointed out:

> Na verdade, fora da sala de aula, no início não. Agora a gente já tenta. Tenta conversar em inglês, mas no início a gente não fazia isso até porque quando a gente se propunha a fazer, na hora das dificuldades, aí vinha o português aí então a pessoa desistia com muita facilidade e não dava. Mas, eu também, às vezes, acabava desistindo quando encontrava as dificuldades de comunicação, acabava partindo pro (sic) português mesmo.

S3 said that she speaks during the activities in classes and outside the classroom she searches things that the teacher does not ask her to do:

> Durante o período letivo eu fico praticamente... durante todo o dia quando nós estamos trabalhando com... com disciplinas de inglês eu tô sempre praticando. E aí quando eu chego em casa fico sempre revendo, eu tenho muitos CDs, eu faço muito "listening", eu gosto muito de escutar e repetir.

S4 said that she tries to talk with friends in English, but sometimes it does not happen:

> Ah, durante sim. Eu sempre procuro conversar em inglês com os amigos em sala de aula, mas nem sempre dá certo.

S2 said that he cannot do it during classes, but in the end of the course he can start thinking in English during classes somehow:

> Eu utilizo a língua mais somente durante as aulas. Eu tento, sei lá, fazer o raciocínio na língua inglesa, só que eu, sei lá, não consigo. Agora que eu tô conseguindo já desenvolver o

raciocínio pensando mais em inglês. Mas, na maioria das vezes eu penso em português e traduzo pra poder falar. Eu tento... eu acredito que é só o tempo que eu tô em sala.

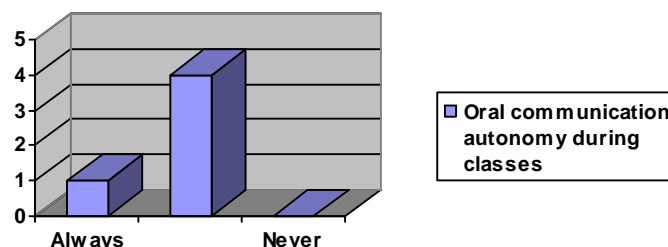In the sequence, the result is shown:

Chart 4 Students' oral skill autonomy during classes period.

In addition to the intensive period classes, S1 also said that the students cannot have a proper assimilation of the language that is taught, even though she had already learnt the language in a free course:

> Na universidade veio suprir essa necessidade de prática, por mais que os meus colegas, muitos estavam aprendendo eu estava no processo de consolidar a prática do oral. No entanto, o que eu posso dizer é que eu acho devido o tempo, são coisas assim, que você deveria ver num semestre, você vê em duas semanas é uma prática intensa em sala de aula, mas acaba sendo um intensivo que prejudica. Ajuda ali na hora, mas que você acaba não tendo tempo pra assimilar tudo aquilo.

Sometimes, as Widdowson (apud Benson and Voller, 1997) points out, language teachers are solely concerned with the achievement of the learning 'objectives' of a course and the language learning is reduced to a technical activity divorced from social relationship of any kind. As any intensive course, the teacher and the students may be concerned about teaching and learning a specified textbook content. However I believe that part of this content would be the concern with teaching learners how to be autonomous.

I am saying that because, from the narratives I have collected, the students did not have any idea of how to be autonomous. They had the material; some of them had and still have other opportunities to learn by their own, but only few of them did something related to the autonomous learning unconsciously or consciously.

The next question they were asked was if they stopped speaking outside the full-time period of the course. S1 answered:

Desde o início da graduação eu tenho uma amiga que a gente tem momentos de dias de conversação em inglês. Agora eu não estou tendo mais esse momento com ela, mas eu tenho em sala de aula e com os meus colegas de trabalho. Então, e também com outras pessoas que são os meus amigos que fizeram curso comigo ou que eu sei que fala inglês eu tento conversar. Eu preciso conversar.

S2 pointed out:

Eu utilizo a língua mais somente durante as aulas.

S3 stated:

Não. Não paro. Eu... eu trabalho com inglês mais ou menos umas 12 horas por dia de segunda a sábado. Com prática oral, prática escrita, principalmente oral.

S4 said:

Eu paro. No semestre passado eu parei, porque eu não tinha com quem me comunicar, principalmente por falta de tempo. Até porque a pessoa que eu pratico Inglês estava sem tempo e nem sempre dava pra gente se encontrar e se comunicar. E eu não procurei também.

S5 did not stop speaking at all, but he does not have any communicative experience, only repetition of an oral practice:

Por completo não. Eu paro a questão da conversa. Uma situação real de comunicação. Mas, em questão de oralidade eu tento ouvir músicas e cantar junto com o CD e até decorar um pouquinho e tento cantar sozinho sem acompanhamento. Isso é uma das coisas que está favorecendo a oralidade.
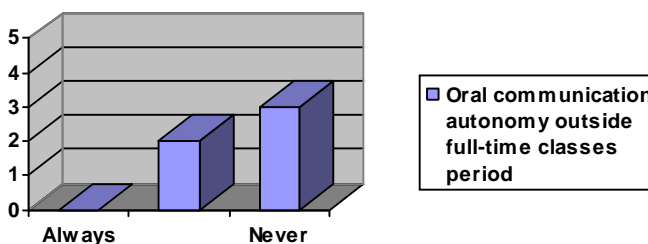
As a result:

Chart 5 Students' oral communication autonomy outside full-time classes period.

Although questions were interpreted differently by each interviewee, it was clear that 3 out of 5 do not have opportunities or time to practice with other people who speak English. The other two ones do it mainly in the workplace as teachers.

6 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

When I selected this theme to research and work on this paper I was worried about how much language students were using outside classroom, because sometimes I felt that when they got back to the full-time class environment they were lost, not knowing what to say and sometimes what to do.

Autonomy is something that must be developed by the students throughout their whole lives, not only as students, but also as citizens. The results show us that the process of autonomy in learning English does not happen for enjoyment. The ones who use the language outside classroom do it only as work obligation, not for pleasure.

The autonomy of learning a language is, according to Little (1991), a matter of absorption of new linguistic knowledge that requires constant reorganization of what is already known. According to this excerpt students must use the language in other situations to practice even if they do not have real people beside them to talk. Like many other abilities, speaking a foreign language needs practice and it will only happen if the students search for contexts of learning the language in and outside classroom. It does not necessarily need to be only in a workplace as something they are forced to do just because they are being supervised by a coordinator. Language learning is something that has to be a pleasure for the learner, so that he or she will find ways to practice the language during and outside course classes.

In addition to this the language learners' attitudes can change with time. If they are willing to learn how to speak the language, they will find ways to go after it, so that they will be more motivated by noticing they are improving their oral skill and will feel confident and comfortable to speak during and after classes.

Although the results cannot be considered as a generalization for such intensive courses, they can contribute to the teaching and learning process and to the discussion of teachers and students involved from the very beginning of the course until its end. Teachers can even use strategies to motivate their students and the students can develop assignments related to autonomy in and outside the full-time class process.

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