

# FROM SELF-AWARENESS TO AUTONOMY. THE POTENTIAL OF COACHING DIALOGUE IN SUPPORTING LEARNERS' METACOGNITIVE AWARENESS AND AUTONOMY AMONG LANGUAGE DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

## Summary

The present thesis aims to investigate the potential of coaching dialogue in developing metacognitive awareness and autonomy in foreign language learning and teaching. In a broad sense, the dissertation aim is to contribute to a better understanding of the phenomenon of metacognitive awareness in foreign language pedagogy (Papaefthymiou-Lytra 1987, Sinclair 2000, Aleksandrak 2003) as well as to explore its role in developing students' autonomy (Wilczyńska 2002). There are many ways of supporting learners' metacognitive activity which may improve the effects of their foreign language learning. Yet, an individual dialogue with a student preceding or accompanying the learning process, which opens the space for deep reasoning questions and discussing issues important from the student's perspective, is still under-researched in Poland (Nerlicki 2011, Bieniecka-Drzymala 2020). The concept of coaching for foreign languages is well developed in German academic environments where it has been subject to numerous research projects (Kleppin 2003, Claußen 2009, Yan 2019), but the study described in the present thesis is the first one that approaches coaching dialogue applied as a way of developing metacognitive awareness and autonomy in foreign language learning in Poland.

The theoretical part of the dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter I presents two key paradigms in contemporary foreign language teaching – autonomizing and mediative glottodidactics, whereas Chapter II provides a historical outline of the theories and approaches significant for their development (sociocultural theory, cognitive approach, humanistic psychology, dialogue philosophy). Chapter III discusses autonomy in foreign language learning in the light of two crucial concepts – self-awareness and self-regulation. In the second part of this chapter, a construct of metacognitive awareness is explored as interplay of metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive strategies. Chapter IV is devoted to analysing some practical forms of developing students' self-awareness present in the contemporary foreign language teaching practice. First, the chapter discusses the definitions of metacognitive skills suggested by the Common European

Framework (Council of Europe 2001) and the concept of existential competence *savoir-être* (Smuk 2016a). Importantly, a language teacher and his activity is here as a key factor in developing learners' metacognitive skills. It is underlined that in modern language pedagogy the teacher role is no longer confined to providing knowledge. Teachers become also the facilitators of the language learning process: they encourage students to start self-reflection, lead them throughout the process and thus allow them to take responsibility for their own learning process, both in the classroom and outside. Chapter IV ends with the presentation of selected ways of developing learners' metacognitive awareness within the metacognitive-contextual approach (Wenden 1998). The author's own proposal here is the coaching dialogue. Since coaching is a relatively new concept in the field of foreign language teaching and learning in Poland, Chapter V presents its origin and principles concentrating especially on its potential as a process of building metacognitive awareness. The dialogue presented in the study is based on the guidelines of International Coaching Federation and the constructive-systemic model of coaching for foreign languages (Spänkuch 2014). The model includes active listening and student-centred communication based on C.R. Rogers' (1959) principle of helping relation. In the last part of Chapter V, which concentrates on the model of Griffiths (2008), the author of the thesis presents the process of gaining metacognitive awareness that can be followed in a single coaching dialogue.

The empirical part of the study starts in Chapter VI with general and detailed research questions, the presentation of methodology (action research and evaluative qualitative study) and research techniques used in the project. Chapter VII contains an introduction to the research, the characteristics of the research group and it presents a specific research design employed in the study. The research material consists of 36 coaching dialogues conducted with 6 students of Applied Linguistics within a period of one academic term. In addition, semi-structures interviews were carried out with all the study participants – they allowed for recording their impressions and opinions concerning the idea and the process of conducting coaching dialogues as part of their learning. The research procedure documented the process of developing the participants' metacognitive awareness (collecting, applying and integrating self-knowledge) in 18 selected documents. It confirmed the autonomizing potential of coaching dialogue – considerable development was observed in all three researched aspects of autonomy (expanding self-knowledge, ability to set up and realize learning goals and changing attitude into more autonomous). Importantly, it was noticed that a non-directive way of leading the coaching dialogues and the character of the relationship with the teacher (coach) were very important factors in this development. Finally, the results of the qualitative content analysis were confronted with the research questions posed at the beginning of the study. Thus, Chapter VIII presents the general conclusions stemming from the project as well as the relevant methodological and pedagogical implications. The last subchapter of the thesis specifies the directions for further research.