Sociocultural Barriers to the Development of Autonomous Foreign Language Learning: Some Teaching Strategies to Overcome Such Challenges in a Mexican Context

Authors : Zaideth Zobeida Ponce Alonso, Laura Emilia Fierro Lopez, Maria del Rocio Dominguez Gaona

Abstract : The present study is part of the Master in Modern Languages at the Universidad Autónoma de Baja California, and it aims to analyze how the sociocultural background might influence the development of learner autonomy in foreign language education in order to propose some strategies to overcome such challenges. Given the lack of research on the sociocultural barriers in learner autonomy in a Mexican context and the need to hear teachers' voices about this issue, qualitative data was obtained from semi-structured interviews with six language teachers on their perspectives on learner autonomy, its application to the language classroom, and their experiences with Mexican and foreign learners/contexts in order to find out differences regarding learner autonomy. The results suggest three main sociocultural characteristics: preference for an authority figure, tendency towards collectivism, and low tolerance of ambiguity. Finally, nine strategies were proposed in order to help language teachers to deal with such sociocultural characteristics when fostering learner autonomy in the border city of Mexicali, where this study was carried out.