

IDENTIFYING EFL INSTRUCTORS' BELIEFS AND PRACTICES  
ON LEARNER AUTONOMY

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## KABUL VE ONAY

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Fulya Demircan Yıldırım

To my unborn daughter, Efla YILDIRIM,  
who is always with me  
in every phase of this study.  
I am looking forward to your  
coming into our world.

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## ÖZET

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Bu çalışma Gazi Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu İngilizce okutmanlarının öğrenen özerkliğiyle ilgili inançlarını ve uygulamalarını araştırmak amacıyla yapılmıştır.

Araştırma 64 okutmanın katılımıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmaya ait veriler, anketler ve röportajlar aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Çalışma da kullanılan anket 5 ana bölümden oluşmaktadır. Birinci bölüm öğrenen özerkliğiyle alakalı 10 kavramı kapsayan 37 maddelik beşli likert ölçeğinden oluşmaktadır. İkinci bölüm öğrencilerin çeşitli becerilerinin ve dersle ilgili kararlara dahil edilmelerinin öğretmenler tarafından ne kadar istenildiği ve bunun ne kadar uygulanabilir olduğu üzerinde yoğunlaşmaktadır. Üçüncü bölümde öğretmenlere öğrencilerinin ne kadar özerk oldukları ve dil öğretiminde özerkliği ne ölçüde destekledikleri sorulmuştur. Dördüncü bölümde öğretmenlerin demografik bilgileri toplanmıştır. Beşinci bölümde ise öğretmenlerin çalışmanın ikinci bölümüne katılmak isteyip istemedikleri sorulmuştur. Son olarak da çalışmanın ikinci bölümüne katılmaya gönüllü olan öğretmenlerle yüz yüze görüşmeler yapılmıştır.

Çalışmanın sonuçlarına göre öğretmenlerin öğrenen özerkliğine karşı olumlu fikirleri ve farklı bakış açıları ortaya çıkmıştır. Öğretmenler genel olarak öğrencilerini öğrenme sürecine dahil etme taraftarıdır ve bu süreçte sorumluluğu üstlenmelerini desteklerler. Öğrencilerini öğrenen özerkliğini geliştirmeye teşvik ederler fakat öğrencilerin bu konudaki çabalarına dair olumlu fikirlere sahip değillerdir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Öğrenen özerkliği, özerk öğrenen.

## **ABSTRACT**

DEMİRCAN YILDIRIM, Fulya. Identifying EFL Instructors' Beliefs and Practices on Learner Autonomy, Master' s Thesis, Ankara, 2014.

The aim of this study was to investigate the beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy of EFL instructors at Gazi University The School of Foreign Languages.

The study was conducted with 64 instructors and the data was collected through questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire had five major sections. Section 1 consisted of 37 five point Likert-scale items, covering ten concepts in learner autonomy. Section 2 focused on teachers' views about the desirability and feasibility of various learner abilities and learner involvement in language course decisions. Section 3 centered upon teachers' beliefs about how autonomous their learners were and on the extent to which they promoted autonomy in their teaching. The fourth part of the questionnaire gathered the demographic information of teachers. Section 5 asked teachers to volunteer for the second phase of the study. Finally, the interviews were conducted with the teachers who stated their voluntariness at the final part of the questionnaire.

The findings of this study revealed that the instructors have favorable opinions and different perspectives on learner autonomy. They are in favor of involving their learners in the learning process and they support their learners to take the responsibility of their own learning. They generally promote learner autonomy with their learners; however, they do not feel much positive about their learners' efforts on development of autonomy.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy, Autonomous Learner.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**EFL** : English as a Foreign Language

**ELT** : English Language Teaching

**L2** : Second Language

**SPSS** : Statistical Package for Social Sciences



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION .....	i
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	ii
ÖZET .....	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ABBREVIATIONS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES .....	x
CHAPTER 1 .....	1
2 INTRODUCTION .....	1
2.1 Background of the Study.....	1
2.2 Purpose of the Study .....	3
2.3 Research Questions.....	3
2.4 Significance of the Study .....	4
2.5 Limitations of the Study.....	5
2.6 Definition of Terms.....	5
CHAPTER 2 .....	6
3 LITERATURE REVIEW .....	6
3.1 The origins of Learner Autonomy in Language Education .....	6
3.2 Learner Autonomy .....	8
3.3 Misconceptions on Learner Autonomy.....	12
3.4 Fostering Autonomy .....	15
3.4.1 Resource-Based Approaches.....	20
3.4.2 Technology-Based Approaches .....	22
3.4.3 Learner-Based Approaches .....	22
3.4.4 Classroom-Based Approaches .....	23
3.4.5 Curriculum-Based Approaches .....	24
3.4.6 Teacher-Based Approaches.....	25
3.5 Characteristics of Autonomous Learner.....	27
CHAPTER 3 .....	29
4 METHODOLOGY .....	29

4.1	Setting .....	29
4.2	Participants.....	30
4.3	Instruments.....	31
4.4	Interviews.....	36
4.5	Data Collection Procedure .....	37
4.6	Data Analysis.....	37
CHAPTER 4 .....		39
5	RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS .....	39
5.1	Research Question I: What does ‘learner autonomy’ mean to English language instructors?.....	39
5.1.1	Findings Regarding Technical Perspectives on Learner Autonomy .....	39
5.1.2	Findings Regarding Psychological Perspectives on Learner Autonomy .....	41
5.1.3	Findings Regarding Social Perspectives on Learner Autonomy.....	42
5.1.4	Findings Regarding Political Perspectives on Learner Autonomy .....	43
5.1.5	Findings Regarding the Role of the Teacher in Promoting Autonomy.....	44
5.1.6	Findings Regarding the Cultural Universality of Learner Autonomy.....	45
5.1.7	Findings regarding age and learner autonomy .....	46
5.1.8	Findings Regarding Proficiency and Learner Autonomy .....	47
5.1.9	Findings Regarding Learner-centeredness and Learner Autonomy.....	48
5.1.10	Findings Regarding Benefits of Learner Autonomy to Language Learning..	49
5.1.11	Interview Findings on Teachers' Views about Learner Autonomy.....	50
5.2	Research Question II: To what extent, according to the instructors, does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?.....	52
5.3	Research Question III: How desirable and feasible do teachers feel it is to promote learner autonomy?.....	54
5.4	Research Question IV: To what extent do instructors feel their learners are autonomous? How do they describe autonomous language learner?.....	58
5.5	Research Question V: To what extent do teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?.....	62
CHAPTER 5 .....		65
6	CONCLUSION.....	65
6.1	The Summary of the Study .....	65
6.2	Implications and Suggestions for Practise .....	66

6.3 Implications and Suggestions for Future Research.....	69
REFERENCES .....	70
APPENDICES .....	77
APPENDIX 1.....	77
APPENDIX 2.....	81

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1</b> Research questions and instruments.....	4
<b>Table 2</b> Autonomy: Levels of Implementation .....	15
<b>Table 3</b> Sex of the instructors who participated in the study. ....	30
<b>Table 4</b> The years of teaching experience of the instructors who participated in the study..	30
<b>Table 5</b> The academic background of the instructors who participated in the study .....	31
<b>Table 6</b> Statements and Constructs from Questionnaire used in Borg & Busaidi (2012) .....	32
<b>Table 7</b> A Sample of questionnaire items in Section 1 .....	35
<b>Table 8</b> A Sample of questionnaire items in Section 2 .....	36
<b>Table 9</b> Technical perspectives on learner autonomy .....	40
<b>Table 10</b> Psychological perspectives on learner autonomy.....	41
<b>Table 11</b> Social perspectives on learner autonomy .....	42
<b>Table 12</b> Political perspectives on learner autonomy.....	43
<b>Table 13</b> Statements about the role of the teacher in promoting autonomy .....	44
<b>Table 14</b> Statements about the cultural universality of learner autonomy .....	45
<b>Table 15</b> Statements about age and learner autonomy .....	46
<b>Table 16</b> Statements about proficiency and learner autonomy .....	47
<b>Table 17</b> Statements about learner-centeredness and learner autonomy .....	48
<b>Table 18</b> Statements about the benefits of learner autonomy to language learning .....	49
<b>Table 19</b> Desirability of student involvement in decision-making .....	54
<b>Table 20</b> Feasibility of student involvement in decision-making .....	55
<b>Table 21</b> Desirability of learning to learn skills in students.....	56
<b>Table 22</b> Feasibility of learning to learn skills in students.....	56
<b>Table 23</b> Students have a fair degree of autonomy .....	59
<b>Table 24</b> Developing learner autonomy .....	63

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>Figure 1</b> Developing autonomy through language teaching .....	18
<b>Figure 2</b> Autonomy in language learning and related areas of practice .....	20

# CHAPTER 1

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents background of the study, purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, and definitions of terms used in the research.

### 1.1 Background of the Study

With the emergence of the communicative approach, autonomy began to be addressed in the foreign language teaching field. Previously, teacher was seen as the only authority who control all the learning activities and students did not have many rights except choices made by the school. Thus, there was no space for autonomy in the classroom. However, in the seventies autonomy started to appear as a central feature in foreign language teaching with the emergence of a new concept of language- language as communication- and the emphasis on the cognitive processes. In brief, the communicative approach made a room for more autonomous learners (Paiva& Braga , 2008).

Camilleri (1999) accepts learner autonomy as a crucial concept in the communicative language approach. Within this context, learners are given the opportunity to take responsibility in the learning process. In addition, they are allowed to share their individual knowledge, experiences and feelings with others. They are encouraged to learn to monitor and evaluate their own progress as well.

Nunan (1988) also stated that in contrast to the traditional language teaching, autonomy paved the way to the concept of learner-centered rather than teacher-centered education. He defines learner-centered education as teachers and learners' collaborative effort which is different from traditional language teaching. In this situation, teachers are no more suppliers of information, but they act as counselors raising learners' awareness of learning and language, and as facilitators motivating learners and helping them to acquire the skills and knowledge needed for

autonomous learning (Benson and Voller, 1997). Holden and Usuki (1999) also point out that students should be encouraged to study in an atmosphere in which they are free to express themselves, speak with and question others and contribute to the management of others all of which are not supported in traditional teacher-centered classes.

What makes this new concept important and desirable is that it involves learners to take responsibility for their own learning (Thanasoulas, 2000). Similarly, Little (1999) argues that learner autonomy makes learners more aware of their learning goals and methods. By this way, they are given the opportunity to take responsibility in their own learning process such as deciding the objectives of the course and the ways of achieving them and so learning becomes more effective and learners can go beyond the limitations of their learning environment. In addition, learner autonomy necessitates learners' full involvement in determining realistic and reachable learning goals, selecting appropriate methods and techniques to be used, monitoring their own learning process and evaluating the progress of their own learning (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Wenden, 1991, Scharle & Szabo, 2000; Benson, 2001).

Camilleri (1999) suggest that as autonomy prepares learners for a lifelong learning through the ability to organize and direct their own learning in and out of the school, it should be the primary concept in language learning and teaching. He argues that it is not possible to provide students with all the knowledge that they will need in their whole life only with the help of a school or a programme. Trim (1988, as cited in McCarthy, 1998 p.3) also emphasized that:

No school, or even university, can provide its pupils with all the knowledge and the skills they will need in their active adult lives. It is more important for a young person to have an understanding of himself or herself, an awareness of the environment and its workings, and to have learned how to think and how to learn.

According to Breen and Mann (1997) autonomous learners look for opportunities to learn outside classroom setting and make their own instructional settings without depending on the teacher. It is crucial for learners to take advantage of as many opportunities as they can to learn and use the target language. Field

(2007) states that learners' independent learning outside the classroom helps their learning process continue, and they take more responsibility for their learning.

To sum up, learner autonomy is of great importance in language learning and classroom contexts. In order to foster autonomy, teachers should provide the learners with an appropriate environment where they have the opportunities to develop language-learning skills, increase their motivation, take the responsibility of their own learning and utilize the activities and materials outside the classroom.

## **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The general purpose of this study is to explore in an elaborative way what "learner autonomy" means to language instructors who work at Gazi University School of Foreign Languages and their practices with their students.

## **1.3 Research Questions**

The following research questions were asked to reach the purpose of the study mentioned above.

1. What does 'learner autonomy' mean to English language instructors?
2. To what extent, according to the instructors, does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?
3. How desirable and feasible do teachers feel it is to promote learner autonomy?
4. To what extent do instructors feel their learners are autonomous? How do they describe an autonomous language learner?
5. To what extent do teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?



The table 1 illustrates the distribution of the questionnaire sections and the interview questions with regard to the research questions.

**Table 1 Research questions and instruments**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Instruments</b>
<b>1.</b> What does ‘learner autonomy’ mean to English language instructors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• First section of the questionnaire</li> <li>• Interview question 1</li> </ul>
<b>2.</b> To what extent, according to the instructors, does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview question 3</li> </ul>
<b>3.</b> How desirable and feasible do teachers feel it is to promote learner autonomy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Second section of the questionnaire</li> <li>• Interview question 4</li> </ul>
<b>4.</b> To what extent do instructors feel their learners are autonomous? How do they describe an autonomous language learner?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third section of the questionnaire (first question&amp; open-ended question)</li> <li>• Interview question 2</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b> To what extent do teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third section of the questionnaire (second question)</li> <li>• Interview question 5</li> </ul>

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

It is a fact that for most of the language teachers it is difficult to make the students participate in the lessons, work cooperatively with their friends, and study outside the classroom. Developing autonomy in learners can be seen as a solution to these problems, because, it helps develop sense of responsibility for learners' own learning and understand their roles in the classroom. After they gain autonomy, they take more responsibility in the learning process and it will make them more motivated and independent learners.

In this sense, the results of this study will reveal the beliefs of EFL instructors on learner autonomy and display their practices with their learners. The results may also offer new insights to EFL teachers and other scholars in language learning and teaching.

## 1.5 Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the data collected from 64 instructors working at Gazi University the School of Foreign Languages. Therefore, it can be said that the study is limited to a small number of teachers, which makes it hard to generalize the findings in different groups of teachers in other educational settings.

Another limitation is that instructors' classroom practices were not observed, thus their reports of whether they promoted learner autonomy and how they did it, are the only sources that can be relied on.

## 1.6 Definition of Terms

In this study the following terms will be used for the following meanings:

**Learner Autonomy:** "Autonomy is the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (Holec, 1981).

**Autonomous Learner:** "Learners who are capable of identifying their learning objectives, who know what to learn and how to formulate their learning objectives in parallel with their teachers" (Dickinson, 1993).

**Learner-centered Teaching:** "Learner-Centered Teaching (LCT) is an approach that aims "to create learning environments that optimize students' opportunities to pay attention and actively engage in authentic, meaningful, and useful learning" (Doyle, 2011).

**Self-access Learning:** "The learning which takes place in a self-access center. A self-access center consists of a number of resources (materials, activities, help) in one place, that accommodates learners of different levels, styles, and with different goals and interests. It aims at developing learner autonomy among its users" (Reinders, 2000).

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **2 LITERATURE REVIEW**

This present chapter reviews the literature related to the background of the concept, various definitions and misconceptions of learner autonomy, ways to foster learner autonomy and characteristics of autonomous learners.

#### **2.1 The origins of Learner Autonomy in Language Education**

Benson(2001) claimed that the perspective of autonomous learning in second language setting is attentively dealt with "the organization of institutionalized learning". Thus, the history of autonomy dates back to nearly thirty years ago. With the establishment of Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project in 1971, the term of autonomy first appeared in the field of language teaching. The foundation of The Centre de Recherches et d'Applications en Langues (CRAPEL) at the University of Nancy, France, was one of the outcomes of this project. This centre became an important place for research and practice in a very short time for language teaching. Yves Chalon, the founder of CRAPEL, is accepted as the father of autonomy by many. Henri Holec took over the leadership after his death and has stayed as an outstanding person in the field of autonomy since then. His project report to the Council of Europe is accepted as a key early document on autonomy in language learning. (Benson, 2001)

According to Gremmo and Riley (1995); however, the origins of autonomy go back to previous years. They state that in the 20 to 25 years following the Second World War, the ideas of autonomy became focus of interest in educational research and practice. They identified some important social events and currents of thought which contributed to the emergence and spread of the ideas related to learner autonomy in language learning in that period:

- 1.** Firstly, the wave of minority rights movements was very crucial in the occurrence of the concepts connected with learner autonomy in language learning.

2. The reaction against behaviorism was another factor:
  - a. There was a convergence on the notion of learner-centeredness among the educationalists despite the numerous differences.
  - b. Linguists and philosophers of language started investigation in sociolinguistic disciplines.
  - c. Two different but compatible reactions against behaviorism within the field of psychology were humanistic and cognitive psychology.
3. The interest in minority rights had a direct influence on the development of adult education in Europe. Probably the single most important manifestation of this influence was the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project.
4. Developments in technology made an important contribution to the spread of autonomy.
5. The demand for foreign languages greatly increased as a result of political development (European Union, the United Nations), the rise of multinational corporations (IBM, Renault, Shell) and easier travel and tourism.
6. The commercialization of language provision, together with the movement to raise consumer awareness has also had an influence on the way the language learner's role is perceived.
7. The vast increase in the school and university population encouraged the development of new educational structures to deal with large numbers of learners.

Learner autonomy has become vital in the foreign language education with the emergence of the communicative approach. In the past there was no place for autonomy in the classroom setting because teachers were the only authority and the students had no rights to comment on any learning activities in the classroom (Paiva & Braga, 2008). Nunan (2000 as cited in Chi-Yen), likewise, highlights that the idea of autonomy in language learning can be connected to communicative language teaching (CLT) both historically and theoretically.

Little (1991, 1994, 1997a as cited in Benson & Toogood 2002, p.14) also enhanced a relationship between autonomy and communication in two basic ways.

First, he supports, as in the case of other supporters of communicative approach, that language learning means "learning how to communicate in the target language and that communicative competence means "the use of the target language as a medium of communication in the classroom". However, Little (1994, p.438 as cited in Benson & Toogood 2002, p.14) also goes beyond this arguing that learners can achieve communicative proficiency not simply practicing prefabricated dialogues and role plays but using the target language to express their own meanings in the performance of communicative purposes that arise naturally in the course of learning dialogue. The foreign language must be not only the content of learning but also the medium of learning.

In fact, this signifies that communicative competence is not only contingent on the use of the target language but also the learner's ability to activate autonomy in utterance of meanings in the process of language use.

Recently from a very wide perspective, autonomy in foreign language learning has been paid more attention in language literature. Most of the scholars solely focus on independent learning. Benson (2011) shed light onto a comprehensive analysis of precise issues in learner autonomy. Moreover, many researchers constitute revised versions of the studies in autonomy (Barfield & Brown, 2007; Benson & Voller, 1997; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2003; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Pemberton, Toogood, & Barfield, 2009; Sinclair, McGrath, & Lamb, 2000; Vieira, 2009).

## **2.2 Learner Autonomy**

Learner autonomy has been a "buzz-word" in language learning (Little, 1991). Thus it has been defined in different perspectives in language learning. To understand it better, it is essential to refer to some of these definitions.

One of the oldest and most often cited definitions of autonomy is from Holec (1981). He defines learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning". It means taking the responsibility for all the decisions regarding the learning. It includes; "determining the objectives of the course, defining the contents and progressions, selecting methods and techniques to be used, monitoring the

procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.), and evaluating what has been acquired" (Holec, 1981).

The autonomous learner has the capacity to decide the learning which he wants to be involved. Benson and Voller (1997, p.1) assert Holec's (1981) definition as a proper definition of learner autonomy for language education. They propose five different methods to use the autonomy term in language education in compliance with this definition:

1. For circumstances in which learners study themselves;
2. For some skills that can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;
3. For an innate capability which is dispelled by institutional education;
4. For practice of learners' responsibility for their learning;
5. For learners' right to decide the way of their learning.

Ryan (1991; as cited in Littlewood, 1999) proposes that achievement of autonomy should be examined as one of the basic needs and purposes of human beings. Therefore, he defines autonomy as a process of 'self-determination' or 'self-regulation' indifferent aspects of lifelong learning. Ryan (1991, as cited in Littlewood p.75) states that autonomy develops more effectively in an interpersonal environment. He lists the factors which constitute the ideal facilitating environment for autonomy as physical support for the supply of help and resources; personal interest and participation from notable others; chances for making a choice; and to get rid of the sense of being controlled by outer agents.

Benson (2001, p.47) simplifies the definition of learner autonomy just to take control over one's own learning assuming that: "it is neither necessary nor desirable to *define* autonomy more precisely than this because control over learning may take variety of forms in relation to different levels of the learning process. In other words, it is accepted that autonomy is a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times." He (2001, p.2) sets forth the three main points important to the theory and practice of learner autonomy:

1. The concept of autonomy is grounded in a natural tendency for learners to take control over their learning. As such, autonomy is available to all, although it is

displayed in different ways and to different degrees according to the unique characteristics of each learner and each learning situation.

2. Learners who lack autonomy are capable of developing it given appropriate conditions and preparation. The conditions for the development of autonomy include the opportunity to exercise control over learning. The ways in which we organize the practice of teaching and learning therefore have an important influence on the development of autonomy among our learners.

3. Autonomous learning is more effective than non-autonomous learning. In other words, the development of autonomy implies better language learning.

Little shortly defines autonomy as an acceptance of learners' taking responsibility on their own learning (Little, 1991). "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/her learning. " He summarizes (Little 1991, p.8) the advantages of adoption of learner autonomy as follows;

- because the learner sets the agenda, to make learning more effective it should be more focused and purposeful;
- because learners are responsible for their own learning, there shouldn't be any obstacles among learning and living as in traditional teacher-led educational structures,
- it is much easier for learners to transfer their ability for autonomous behavior to other parts of their lives if all the obstacles among learning and living are removed, and so they become more useful members in the society and more effective participants in the democratic process.

Phyak (2010) proposes that learner autonomy is a social concept as well as individual. Besides it is also a process not only a product. It is not possible to develop a 100% autonomous learner. Autonomy stays in degree and process all the time. To promote autonomy, learners should be given a chance to take part in interactions where they can express their opinions. At some point, autonomy is inconsistent with the learning through interaction and collaboration. If learner

autonomy is taken as an individual concept, this tension is severe. In short, there should also be social-cultural factors in the theory behind autonomy. The presentation of the teachers themselves in the classroom also determines the level of learner autonomy.

Sinclair (2000; as cited in Borg 2012, p.5) suggests 13 aspects of learner autonomy which appear to have been recognized and broadly accepted by the language teaching profession;

- 1.** Autonomy is a construct of capacity;
- 2.** Autonomy involves a willingness on the part of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning;
- 3.** The capacity and willingness of learners to take such responsibility is not necessarily innate;
- 4.** Complete autonomy is an idealistic goal;
- 5.** There are degrees of autonomy;
- 6.** The degrees of autonomy are unstable and variable;
- 7.** Autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent;
- 8.** Developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process – i.e. conscious reflection and decision-making;
- 9.** Promoting autonomy is not simply a matter of teaching strategies;
- 10.** Autonomy can take place both inside and outside the classroom;
- 11.** Autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension;
- 12.** The promotion of autonomy has a political as well as psychological dimension;
- 13.** Autonomy is interpreted differently by different cultures.



In a nutshell there are many different definitions of learner autonomy and they have some points in common. Littlewood (1999, p.71) remarks some central features of all these definitions of the learner autonomy term as;

- Students should take responsibility for their learning. Because all learning can only be fulfilled by the students themselves and also because they need to develop the ability to continue learning after the end of their formal education.
- "Taking responsibility" involves learners in taking responsibilities of many processes partially or totally such as deciding on learning objectives, selecting the learning methods and evaluating the progress, which have traditionally belonged to the teacher.

### **2.3 Misconceptions on Learner Autonomy**

There are also some other views related to the concept of learner autonomy in terms of what it is or what it is not. Learner autonomy has been seen as a troublesome term to define. Therefore it has also been discussed in terms of what it is not. It is necessary to know what we intend to say when we talk about autonomy, however the meaning of it might be different for other people. Autonomy has different forms, but it is essential to identify the form that we choose to use in a study. Little describes what autonomy is not. (Little 1991, p.3)

1. Autonomy is not a synonym for self-instruction; in other words, autonomy is not limited to learning without a teacher.
2. In the classroom context, autonomy does not entail an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher; it is not a matter of letting the learners get on with things as they can.
3. On the other hand, autonomy is not something that teachers do to learners; that is, it is not another teaching method.
4. Autonomy is not a single, easily described behavior.
5. Autonomy is not a steady state achieved by learners.

Benson (2001, p. 1) also focuses on the misconceptions about the nature of the concept of learner autonomy and its implementation. There are two basic misconceptions. Firstly, he explains that autonomy often implies learning in isolation, learning without a teacher or learning outside the classroom. Secondly, he says that autonomy is often seen as necessarily implying particular skills and behaviors and particular methods of organizing the teaching and learning process. He concludes by emphasizing that “these misconceptions are, at least in part, a result of terminological and conceptual confusion within the field itself.”

Pemberton (1996; as cited in Chiu, 2006) asserts that the problem in discussions of autonomy with the terminology is that different terms are generally used to refer to the same thing; however, the same term can mean different things. For Gardner & Miller (1999), there are three reasons for the difficulty in defining the concept of autonomy. First, authors have defined the concept in several ways. Second, there are fields of continual argument and so definitions are continuing to mature because of the discussions. Third, these concepts have been discussed in different places and so they have been defined with different terminologies.

Esch (1997) asserts three common misconceptions which should be avoided related to the learner autonomy term. The first is the reduction of autonomous learning to a set of skills, or to a series of techniques to train language learning skills. He puts this reduction in a different way as the negation of the radical content of the concept. However, he acknowledges that this misconception, not surprisingly, seems to be increasingly popular at a moment when the range of technical possibilities for accessing information and manipulating data at a distance is increasing. He supports that competing for markets is higher on the agenda than reflecting on educational values. Second misconception is the avoidance of specific language learning issues in definitions and implementation of the learner autonomy. Esch proposes that it should be considered whether language has specific features which need to be taken into account while talking about the learner autonomy. He poses the question “Is language learning different from any other learning, say physics or geography?” and he says the answer is yes as it is used to describe and talk about learning experience. Hence, avoiding those specific issues would lead us to a misconception related to understanding and implementing learner autonomy. Third common misconception is that autonomous learning means learning in isolation. He claims that the

developments of especially the last two decades (new technologies, self-learning materials, etc.) brought a sense of freedom to language learning. However, this new found 'freedom' has led to confusion with individualization and isolation, but neither of these concepts are in fact relevant to autonomous learning.

Chiu (2006) asserts that another misconception is to comprehend autonomy as a single, easily defined behavior. It is not easy to define autonomy because it may indicate many different forms. Eventually, because their performance can never be guaranteed, autonomy is not a steady state achieved by some learners. A learner who is highly autonomous in one situation may not be autonomous at all in another.

The common characteristics of the learner autonomy and the other terms which can be counted as synonyms to learner autonomy cause the existence of so many definitions and misconceptions in the field. These terms involve self-instruction, self direction, self-access learning, individualized instruction, independent learning, self regulated learning, distance learning, flexible learning, self-direction, and semi autonomy. Balçıkanlı (2006) discusses each term in a detailed way to put an end to this confusion.

- Self-instruction puts emphasis on the non-existence of a teacher by contrast with autonomy.
- Distance learning is usually carried out with a teacher; however, it happens in a place which is far away from the teacher, which cannot be related to autonomy.
- Individualized instruction is a type of instruction in which the learners' needs and interests are regarded by the teacher but teacher sets objectives, evaluates the learners' performance and prepares the materials.
- Flexible learning has some common points with autonomy such as making decision over what to do or when, but it is not totally same with autonomy.
- Self access learning is similar to autonomy in a way that the materials to be used in the classroom are generally picked up by the learners.
- In self-direction, learners take the responsibility for all the decisions in concern with the learning.
- Semi-autonomy is the process by which the learners are preparing to take the responsibility of their own learning.

- Independent learning is when the learners can make decisions necessary to meet their own needs.
- Self-regulated learning emphasizes the importance of the academic skills.

## 2.4 Fostering Autonomy

Improvement of learner autonomy is helpful to learning. Some of the learners can improve autonomy on their own without the need for teacher. However, if autonomy is a target of language education, teachers and educational institutions should try to foster it with the help of the practices that will give learners a chance to contend with learning methods in which this capacity can be improved. (Benson, 2001)

Nunan (1997) asserts that fully autonomous learners are a rarity, but encouraging them to lead autonomy is best done inside a classroom. To accomplish it, there are two sets of complementary goals which needs to be integrated into a language program. First set of goals are composed of language content goals and the second set is composed of learning process goals. Both sets should be incorporated into the curriculum in harmonious ways not separately. Nunan (1997, p. 195) proposes five levels for encouraging learner autonomy;

**Table 2 Autonomy: Levels of Implementation**

(from Nunan 1997, p. 195)

Level	Learner Action	Content	Process
1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using.	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles/strategies.
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer.	Learners make choices among a range of options.
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning programme.	Learners modify/ adapt tasks.
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives.	Learners create their own tasks.
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the	Learners become teachers and

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classroom and make links researchers.  
between the content of  
classroom learning and the world  
beyond.

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Brajcich (2000, p.1) also suggests a list of practical tips to develop learner autonomy in language classrooms by suggesting that learners should have opportunities to learn according to their own individual styles and preferences.

1. Encourage students to be interdependent and to work collectively. Thus, the dependence of the students on teachers will be less and the gain of autonomy will be more. In the classroom, it can be done with pair and group works. Pairs and groups can read dialogues together, do information-gap activities and consult each other on the meaning and clarification of the task at hand.
2. Ask students to keep a diary of their learning experiences. In this way, students can become more aware of their learning preferences and start to think of new ways of becoming more independent learners.
3. Explain teacher/student roles from the outset. Asking students to give their opinions on the issue of roles could be beneficial. Reaching an agreement on the roles can encourage them to develop autonomy.
4. Progress gradually from interdependence to independence. Give the students time to get used to new learning strategies and do not expect too much too soon. Start the development of learner autonomy from larger groups, then work towards smaller groups, pairs, and finally individuals.
5. Give the students projects to do outside the classroom. It helps to increase the students' motivation.
6. Give the students non-lesson classroom duties to perform. It also helps to increase the students' motivation.
7. Have the students design lessons or materials to be used in class. An inventory on "interests and ability" at the beginning of every school year can be done to fulfill this task. This will encourage students to have control over the management of learning resources.
8. Instruct students on how to use resource centers of the school. Students should be encouraged to go and use school libraries, language labs and language lounges.

9. Emphasize the importance of peer-editing, corrections, and follow-up questioning in the classroom. It helps to increase the interdependence among the students involved.

10. Encourage the students to use only English in class. By using only English in the classroom, students will be able to achieve their goals easier.

11. Stress fluency rather than accuracy. Communication and the negotiable and interpretive aspects of English conversation should be stressed. More information could be conveyed and absorbed if students spent less time worrying about their language accuracy.

12. Allow the students to use reference books. They can develop autonomy and independence by using these reference books on their own, in pairs, or in groups.

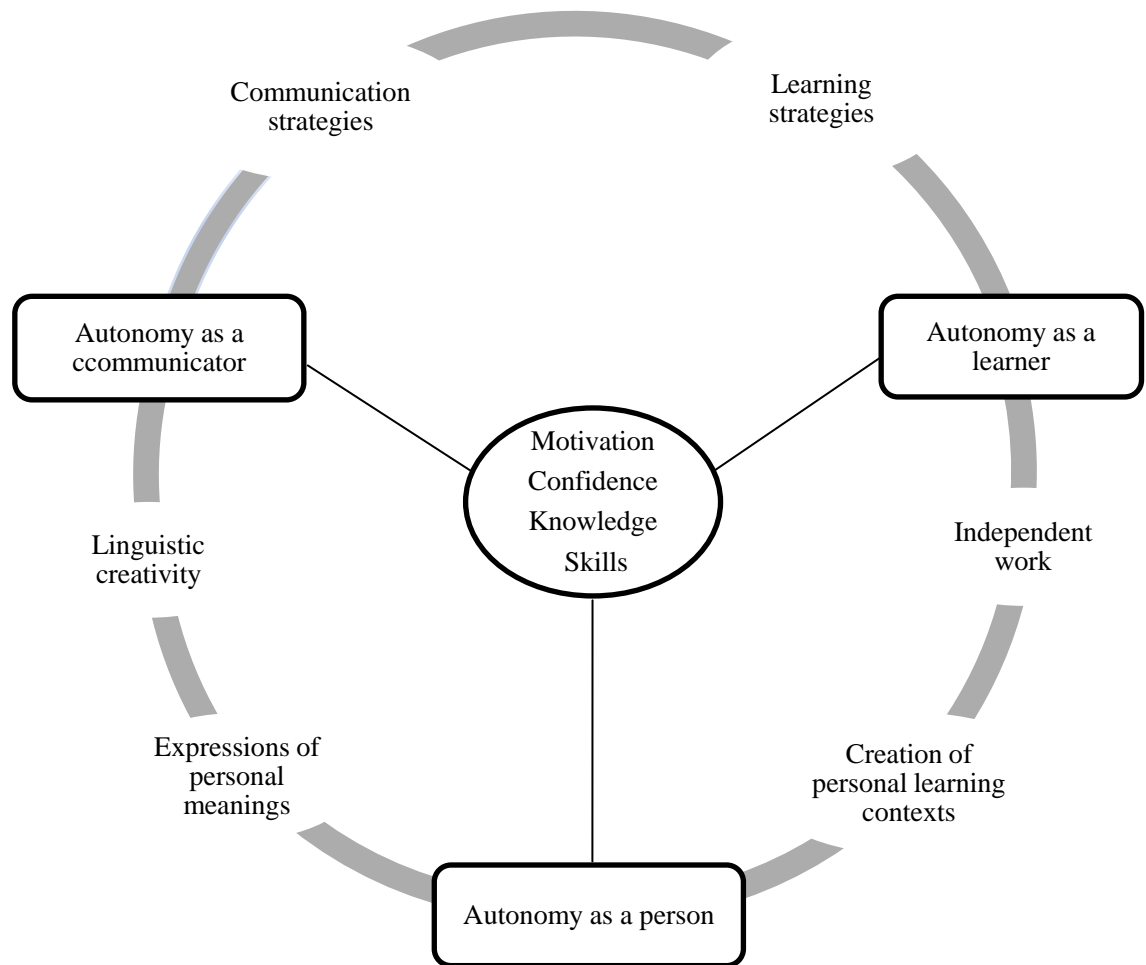
According to Littlewood (1997, p. 82) there are three kinds of autonomy which are relevant to language teaching;

1. Language teachers target to improve students' skills to study independently with the language and use the language to communicate in real, unpredictable situations.

2. Language teachers target to help their students to improve their skills to take responsibility for their learning and to apply active, personally meaningful strategies to their work both in and out of the classroom.

3. Language teachers also try to reach the goal of helping their students to develop greater generalized autonomy as individuals by helping students to raise their skills to communicate and learn independently.

However, autonomy is possible only when students possess both willingness and ability to act independently. Their willingness to act independently depends on the degree of their motivation and confidence, and their ability for it depends on the degree of their knowledge and skills (Littlewood, 1997). Teachers need to help learners develop motivation, confidence, knowledge and skills that are essential in order to communicate and learn more independently, and be more independent as individuals to develop autonomy. Figure 1 below shows how to develop autonomy in language teaching. (Littlewood 1997, p. 83)



**Figure 1 Developing autonomy through language teaching**

(from Littlewood 1997, p. 83)

The circle in the centre includes the four components which makes a contribution to a learner's willingness and ability to act independently. The three outside boxes demonstrate the three kinds of autonomy which students can develop. The other six labels put around the circle demonstrate some of the concrete ways in which these three kinds of autonomy are expressed in language learning.

Cotterall (2000) claims that fostering learner autonomy is a crucial and suitable goal in language course design, and proposes five course design principles for language courses to foster learner autonomy:

- **Learner goals:** Courses designed to promote learner autonomy should include goals which the learners consider important. If they know what they attempt to achieve, the

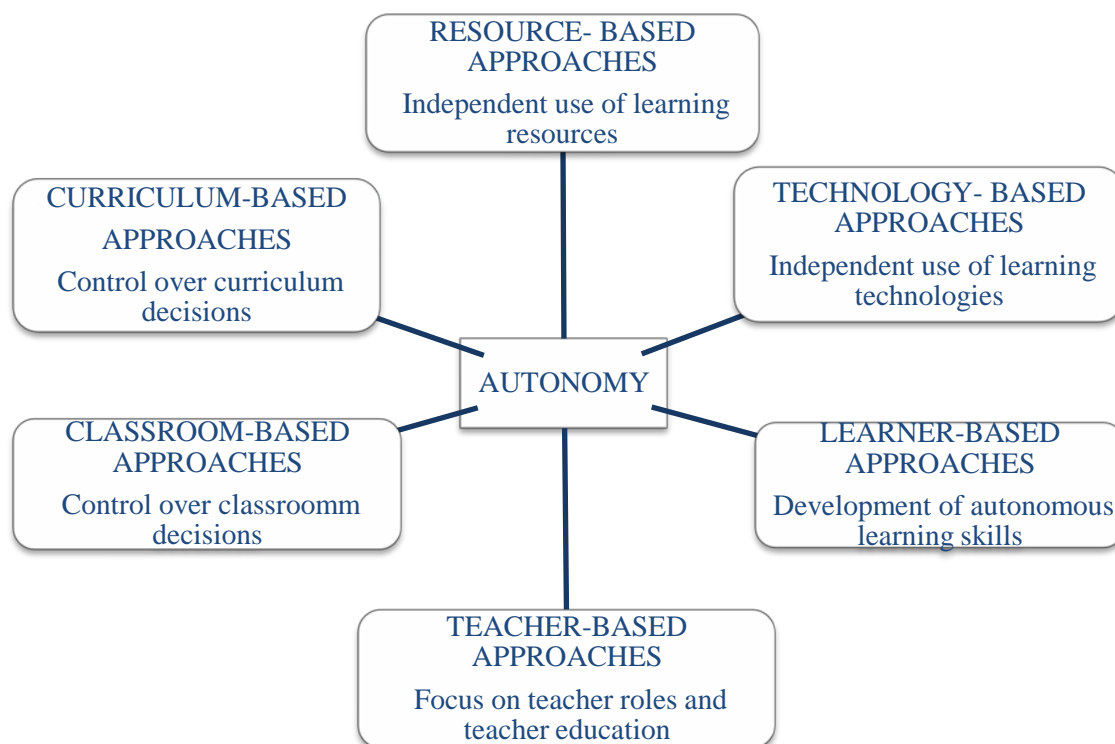
learners will benefit from learning. Hence, to foster autonomy of students, learner awareness should be increased in terms of identifying goals, specifying objectives, identifying resources and necessary strategies to accomplish goals and measuring progress.

- The language learning process: Learners who want to control their own learning should have a basic understanding of language learning process. Equipped with a model of their own learning, learners can question the function of input texts and tasks, be open to alternative strategies, and ask for feedback on their performance.
- Tasks: Course tasks should be designed according to learners' needs and goals and lead them to develop their ability to manage their own learning.
- Learner strategies: There is the concept of choice at the heart of learner autonomy. Hence, strategic behaviors learners have should be extended, and in order to promote learner autonomy it's necessary to learn the weak parts of the strategies.
- Reflection on learning: Learner's ability to reflect critically on their own learning is a measure of the effectiveness of the learning environment. The potential for learner autonomy increases the grow of learner's awareness. Hence, the aim of the activities which prompt learners to reflect on their learning is to enhance their insight into their learning processes.

Cotterall (2000) claims that a language course that includes these principles will make a contribution both to learners' control over their own language learning process, and to their developing language ability.

According to Benson (2001), the capacity for control over learning has various types so autonomy may take various forms. Hence, fostering learner autonomy doesn't mean a particular approach to practice. Theoretically any practice that encourages and enables learners to take greater control on their learning can be considered a means of fostering learner autonomy, though in the field of language education, autonomy has come to be closely identified with certain practices. Benson (2001, p.111) discusses the practices to foster learner autonomy under six broad headings. Figure 2 represents these approaches. Each approach is described in detail below.





**Figure 2 Autonomy in language learning and related areas of practice**

(from Benson 2001, p. 111)

Benson states that the distinctions made in this classification are largely a matter of focus and approaches are often combined in practice.

### **2.4.1 Resource-Based Approaches**

The improvement of autonomy, in resource-based learning, depends on the interaction of learners on their own with learning resources. By means of resource-based learning, learners have a chance to control learning plans, to choose the learning materials, and to evaluate their own learning. In research-based approaches, learners are to develop skills in freedom of choice through experimentation and discovery. (Benson, 2001)

In this sense self-access is claimed to foster autonomy as a way of resource-based approaches. Sheerin defines(1991, p.143; as cited in Benson 2001, p. 113) self-access is "a way of describing learning materials that are designed and organized in such a way that students can select and work on tasks on their own." According to

Benson(2001) a self access centre can be defined as a place where learners can easily reach learning materials. Among these resources there are audio, video, and computer workstations, audiotapes, videotapes and computer software, and a variety of printed materials.

Self-access is based on the theory that foreign language learners can learn better if they have the right to speak about their own learning, for example, to choose learning materials among different resources that are available during independent study (Klassen, Detaramani, Lui, Patri, & Wu, 1998). Therefore it is also based on the learner-centered approach, which supports learning based on students' active rather than passive participation (Gibbs, 1995), on student (rather than teacher) responsibility for learning and on autonomous learning.

According to Sheerin (1997) there are two reasons for setting up self-access centers; pragmatic and ideological. Pragmatic reason is concerned with individualization. Individual learners have different learning styles and preferences, and particular weaknesses. There may also be time constraints or other factors that restrict learning. In self-access centers there are opportunities for affective individualization of learning, and without any scheduled organization, students can benefit from these centers whenever they want.

The other reason for providing self-access facilities is ideological which represents the promotion of independent learning. Learners are expected to take responsibility for their own learning and developing effective learning strategies. In other words, they learn how to learn.

A resource-based approach is effective because it gives chance to learners to direct their own learning and so learners can contribute to their learning by planning and evaluating the learning process, and choosing the materials. As a result, it fosters the learner autonomy. As learners become more autonomous, they become more willing to work independently and to pursue their own learning goals.

## **2.4.2 Technology-Based Approaches**

Benson (2001) states that technology-based approaches are similar to resource-based approaches in many aspects, except that the former focuses on the technologies to access resources. According to Motteram (1997 as cited in Benson 2001, p. 136) there is a close relation between educational technology and learner autonomy. The studies of Gardner (1994), Little (1994), Gardner and Blasco Garcia (1996), Milton (1996), Guillot (1996), Lewis (1996) and Aston (1997) are the important ones which are associated with new technologies to foster autonomy. Technology-based approaches in these studies are student-produced video, computer-enhanced interactive video, electronic writing environments, concordance, informal CD-ROMs, E-mail language advising, and computer simulations. The common point of them is the interaction with the technology (Benson, 2001). Computer assisted language learning (CALL) and the Internet are the most popular technology-based approaches among them.

## **2.4.3 Learner-Based Approaches**

Resource-based and technology-based approaches to autonomy centre upon opening up opportunities for learner control; on the contrary, learner-based approaches centre directly upon the production of behavioral and psychological changes which allow learners to control their own learning. The primary goal of this approach is to help learners to be "better" language learners (Benson, 2001). Benson (2001, p. 143) categorized the approaches to learner development under six main headings:

1. Direct advice on language-learning strategies and techniques, often published in the form of self-study manuals for independent learners.
2. Training based on 'good language learner' research and insights from cognitive psychology.
3. Training in which learners are encouraged to experiment with strategies and discover which work well for them.
4. Synthetic approaches drawing on a range of theoretical sources.
5. Integrated approaches treating learner training as a by-product of language learning.

6. Self-directed approaches in which learners are encouraged to train themselves through reflection on self-directed learning activities.

In learner-based approaches, language learning strategies and techniques are the important skills that learners need to have. They have a crucial role in the development of autonomy. Cohen (1998; as cited in Benson, 2001) defines strategy training as teaching learners how to apply language learning and language use strategies. It can develop learners' efforts to reach their goals in language learning since it encourages them to use their own ways to succeed, thus it promotes learner autonomy and self-direction.

In brief, learner-based approaches are effective to develop learner autonomy because they enable learners to control their own learning (Oxford, 1990; Esch, 1997; Dickinson, 1995; Dickinson, 1988; McDonough, 1995; Mc Donough, 1999; Lee, 1998).

#### **2.4.4 Classroom-Based Approaches**

Classroom-based approaches lay emphasis on changes in the relationship between teachers and students. These approaches help to foster autonomy by taking learners in decision-making processes on management of their own learning. The main point in the development of autonomy is the involvement of the learners into the planning and evaluation of the classroom learning (Benson, 2001). The studies in which learner control over the planning of classroom activities have shown positive results in terms of both autonomy and language learning (Littlejohn, 1983; Fitz-Gibbon & Reay, 1982; Assinder, 1991; McNamara & Deane , 1995; Saito, 2003).

Depending on the extent to which learners' decisions are limited by or go beyond learning procedures which they already know, they can develop the capacity to control cognitive aspects of their learning with the opportunity to take decisions in the classroom. They can also develop the capacity to define and determine the content of their learning, but it again depends on the extent to which decisions are constrained by pre-determined learning content (Benson, 2001). In brief, encouragement of learners to take a degree of control over the planning and assessment of classroom learning has positive effects on their learning.

## 2.4.5 Curriculum-Based Approaches

The curriculum-based approaches to autonomy expand learner control over the management of learning to the curriculum on the whole. The principle of learner involvement has been formalized in the idea of process syllabus in which learners are supposed to make main decisions connected with the content and procedures of learning with their teachers. (Benson, 2001)

Nunan (1999) claims that there should be mutual understanding between learners and teachers while designing the curriculum to promote learner autonomy. Learners are involved in decision-making process focusing on the content what they are going to learn. Their active involvement in this process concerning their own learning may support effective learning, since learning can be more focused and purposeful for learners.

The issues that could be discussed in the framework of curriculum based-approaches are course content, selection and use of materials, position of desks and seating of students, discipline matters, homework tasks, time, place and pace of the lesson, methodology and types of activities, and assessment. (Dam, 1995)

Learners can be included in the curriculum by taking their preferences related to the following concepts into consideration (Brown, 1995 p: 187) ;

1. Learning approaches
2. Attitudes toward learning
3. Learning styles
4. Strategies used in learning
5. Learning activities
6. Patterns of interaction
7. Degree of learner control over their own learning
8. What constitutes effective teaching
9. The nature of effective learning.

As a result, learner involvement in decision making process is generally believed to promote learning because it becomes more meaningful and purposeful for learners. Moreover, since learner involvement gives learners the sense of ownership of their own learning, they take the responsibility for it easily (Benson, 2001; Little, 1991; Nunan, 1999; Nunan, 2004).

## **2.4.6 Teacher-Based Approaches**

Teacher-based approaches emphasize the teacher's professional development and teacher education. (Benson, 2001) Teacher role in autonomous learning is located in the framework of "interpretation of teaching". Terms that describe the role of the teacher within this perspective include "facilitator, helper, coordinator, counselor, consultant, advisor, knower, and resource" (Benson, 2001). Voller (1997) gives just three of them: facilitator, in which teacher provides support for learning; counselor, in which there is one-to-one interaction with the learner; and resource, in which teacher is the source of knowledge and expertise. He discusses the features of these basic teacher roles in autonomous language learning under two headings: technical support and psycho-social support (Voller 1997, p. 102).

The features of technical support are:

- helping learners to plan and carry out their independent language learning by means of needs analysis ( both learning and language needs), objective setting (both short and longer term, achievable), work planning, selecting materials, and organizing interactions;
- helping learners evaluate themselves (assessing initial proficiency, monitoring progress, and self and peer-assessment);
- helping learners to acquire the skills and knowledge needed to implement the above (by raising their awareness of language and learning, by providing learner training to help them identify learning styles and appropriate strategies).

The features of psycho-social are:

- the personal qualities of the facilitator (being caring, supportive, patient, tolerant, emphatic, open, non-judgmental);
- a capacity for motivating learners (encouraging commitment, dispersing uncertainty, helping learners to overcome obstacles, being prepared to enter into a dialog with learners, avoiding manipulating, objectifying or interfering with, in other words, controlling them);

- an ability to raise learners' awareness (to 'decondition' them from preconceptions about learner and teacher roles, to help them perceive the utility of, or necessity for, independent learning).

Scharle and Szabo (2000) suggest three stages that teachers should take into consideration while promoting learner autonomy; raising awareness, changing attitudes, and transferring roles. In the first stage teachers present new view-points and experiences to the learners in order to make them aware of the concept of taking more control on their own language learning process. In the next stage, teachers try to make students practice skills introduced at the first stage, and in this way they try to help learners get accustomed to taking more responsibility. In the last stage there occurs a considerable change in the roles of the teacher and learners in the classroom.

Little (1995) discusses the importance of promoting learner autonomy in future language teachers' education. He suggests that in order to be a good promoter of learner autonomy, first of all the teachers must be autonomous. He, therefore, states that learner autonomy must be a part of teacher. Little (1995) suggests that future teachers of English can be provided with some information related to importance and fostering of learner autonomy, but that would not be enough unless they are provided with the opportunities of feeling learner autonomy themselves in their own learning process.

To conclude, teacher-based approaches are very crucial since teachers are the basic stones of teaching and learning processes in the classroom. Therefore, teachers have the most important roles in promoting learner autonomy. To involve students actively in their own learning process largely depends on the teacher's ability to redefine the roles in the classroom. ( Nunan, 1997)

These six approaches suggested by Benson (2001) may help foster learner autonomy in language learning, providing that all these approaches are combined in the practice. He (2001) claims that "there is no unique technique or method to foster autonomy".

## 2.5 Characteristics of Autonomous Learner

An autonomous learner is the one who takes active role in all the activities in the class and who can internalize what is taught during the learning process and make connections to his or her earlier knowledge.

According to Dickinson(1993), autonomy is an attitude toward language learning, although it may not necessarily have many external, observable features. She characterizes autonomous learners in many ways according to this attitude. Firstly, they are able to identify what has been taught. Moreover, they can understand the importance of doing that and, being concerned about what they are trying to do. Thus, they are aware of the teacher's objectives. Secondly, she adds that, they are able to formulate their own learning objectives, often in collaboration with the teacher, or as something which is in addition to what the teacher is doing. Thirdly, they can and do select and implement appropriate learning strategies, often consciously. Fourthly, they are able to identify strategies that are not working for them, that are not appropriate, and use others. And finally, they can assess their own achievement. In other words, they can monitor their own learning.

In addition to Dickinson's description of autonomous learners, Thanasoulas (2000) suggests that autonomous learners:

- have insights into their learning styles and strategies;
- take an active approach to the learning task at hand;
- are willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs;
- are good guessers;
- attend to form as well as to content, that is, place importance on accuracy as well as appropriacy;
- develop the target language into a separate reference system and are willing to revise and reject hypotheses and rules that do not apply; and
- have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

Chan (2001), who conducted a study on students' perceptions of learner autonomy, also stated that her class identified the following characteristic qualities of autonomous learners: highly motivated, goal oriented, well organized, hard



working, initiative, enthusiastic about learning, flexible, active, willing to ask questions, making use of every opportunities to improve their learning.

Moreover, in the study of Al-Shaqsi (2009) , the main characteristics of autonomous learners identified by teachers were that they can use computers to find information, use a dictionary and ask the teacher to explain when they do not understand. Teachers also defined autonomous learners in terms of their ability to learn independently, to co-operate with others, to take responsibility, and to assess their own strengths and weaknesses.

## CHAPTER 3

### 3 METHODOLOGY

The main objective of this study is to investigate what learner autonomy means to the teachers and what their practices are. This chapter is composed of four main sections. The participants of the study; instruments used for data collection ;the data collection procedure; and the data analysis process and analytical procedures are described in detail.

#### 3.1 Setting

The study was conducted at Gazi University School of Foreign Languages in 2013-2014 academic year. Gazi University is located in Ankara-the capital city of Turkey, and it is among the leading educational institutions of Turkey.

In some of the faculties, the medium of instruction is English. Thus, the students of these faculties have to take English preparatory program in their first year. The Department of Foreign Languages offers a one-year intensive English program for students at two different levels, as starter and elementary. At the beginning of the academic year, a placement test is done and according to their scores, the students are placed into the levels. Starter level students take 25 hours and elementary level students take 20 hours of English courses in a week.

Gazi University The School of Foreign Languages is well-equipped with technology. It offers anything that a language teacher and learner might need in this teaching and learning process. Each of the instructors has a personal laptop donated by the university. Also, there is wireless internet access at the university. Each classroom has an overhead projector. And there is a self-access centre and a study room which are free for the students. They are allowed to use these places, which help them to develop autonomy, by studying after the classes.

## 3.2 Participants

The study was conducted with 64 EFL instructors. 13 of the instructors were male, and 51 of them were female.

**Table 3 Sex of the instructors who participated in the study.**

<b>Gender</b>	<b><i>f</i></b>	<b>%</b>
Male	13	20.3
Female	51	79.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The participants varied in reference to their years of teaching experience. 22 of the instructors had a teaching experience between 0-4 years, 14 of them had 5-9 years of experience, 12 of them had 10-14 years of experience, 9 of them had 15-19 years of experience, 4 of them had 20-24 years of experience, and 3 of them had more than 25 years of experience.

**Table 4 The years of teaching experience of the instructors who participated in the study**

	<b><i>f</i></b>	<b>%</b>
0-4 years	22	34.4
5-9 years	14	21.9
10-14 years	12	18.8
15-19 years	9	14.1
20-24 years	4	6.3
25+ years	3	4.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>

As for the academic background, 2 of the participants had a Diploma degree, 30 of them had Bachelor's degree, 28 of them had Master's degree, and 4 of them had Doctorate degree.

**Table 5 The academic background of the instructors who participated in the study**

	<i>f</i>	%
Diploma	2	3.1
Bachelor's	30	46.9
Master's	28	43.8
Doctorate	4	6.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100</b>

### 3.3 Instruments

As Benson (2001) stated, it is difficult to observe the autonomy level of the teachers or learners directly, but exercise of autonomy in different aspects of learning can be observed. As beliefs and views of teachers are not easy to observe, different types of questionnaires were commonly used measurement instruments of these aspects in many studies. For instance, Chan (2001 and 2003), Camilleri (1999), Cotteral (1995), Borg& Al-Busaidi (2012) preferred questionnaires as instruments of data collection in their studies. Questionnaires are also the easiest and the most practical way of gathering information from larger groups (Cohen, 2011).

Present study is based on the research conducted by Borg& Al-Busaidi (2012). The beliefs and reported practices regarding learner autonomy of 61 teachers of English at a large university language center in Oman were studied via questionnaires and interviews in their studies. In the present study the learner autonomy questionnaire that was developed by Borg& Al-Busaidi (2012) was used.

The questionnaire has five major sections (see Appendix 1). Section 1 consists of 37 Likert-scale items addressing 10 constructs below;

1. Technical perspectives on learner autonomy
2. Psychological perspectives on learner autonomy
3. Social perspectives on learner autonomy
4. Political perspectives on learner autonomy
5. The role of the teacher in learner autonomy
6. The relevance of learner autonomy to diverse cultural contexts
7. Age and learner autonomy
8. Proficiency and learner autonomy
9. The implications of learner autonomy for teaching methodology
10. The relationship of learner autonomy to effective language learning (Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012).

However, in the published version of the study of Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) there was no information about the number of the items addressing the constructs given above. Thus, the researcher asked for the question item numbers through email and got the information about them. Table 6 indicates the distribution of these items and statements according to the constructs.

**Table 6 Statements and Constructs from Questionnaire used in Borg & Busaidi (2012)**

Questionnaire statement Number	Statement	Group
31	Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy.	Technical perspectives on learner autonomy [4]
2	Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.	Statements which focus on learning on one's own and on developing the technical ability to do so.
21	Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre.	
6	Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.	
29	Learning how to learn is key to developing learner	Psychological perspectives on learner autonomy [5]

	autonomy.	
32	The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.	Statements which focus on the internal psychological capacity to self-direct one's own learning and on developing the attitudes and beliefs which allow learners to take more responsibility for their own learning
37	To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	
11	Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	
33	Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	
30	Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.	Social perspectives on learner autonomy [5]
19	Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.	Statements which focus on socially mediated learning and on developing in learners the skills and strategies needed for effective learning and participation in groups.
16	Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	
3	Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.	
25	Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.	
22	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.	Political perspectives on learner autonomy [5]
7	Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	Statements which focus on the power to control one's situation and on developing in learners the skills to exercise choice. This includes statements about the 'threat' curricula and course books pose to autonomy – by limiting learner control.
14	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	
4	Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	
27	Learner autonomy is	

	promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.	
8	Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	Statements about the role of the teacher in promoting autonomy [4]
18	Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher	
35	The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	
24	Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.	
13	Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.	Statements about the cultural universality of learner autonomy [2]
23	Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.	
1	Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.	Statements about age and learner autonomy [3]
20	Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners.	
10	It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.	
34	The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.	Statements about proficiency and learner autonomy [3]
26	Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.	
9	It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.	
15	Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centered classrooms.	Statements about learner-centeredness and learner autonomy [3]
17	Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.	
28	Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.	

5	Individuals who lack autonomy cannot be effective language learners. Revise: are not likely to be ...	Statements about the benefits of learner autonomy to language learning [3]
12	Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	
36	Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner.	

In this Likert type scale questionnaire, the respondents were directed to answer thirty seven statements, and the statements have five options to tick “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “unsure”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”.

**Table 7 A Sample of questionnaire items in Section 1**

		strongly disagree	disagree	unsure	agree	strongly agree
1	Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.					
2	Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.					
3	Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.					
4	Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.					
5	Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.					

Section 2 focuses on teachers' views about the desirability and feasibility of various learner abilities (e.g. self-evaluation) and learner involvement in language course decisions (e.g. in setting objectives).



**Table 8 A Sample of questionnaire items in Section 2**

		Desirability				Feasibility			
		Undesirable	Slightly desirable	Quite desirable	Very desirable	Unfeasible	Slightly feasible	Quite feasible	Very feasible
	<b>Learners are involved in decisions about:</b>								
1	The objectives of a course								
2	The materials used								
3	The kinds of tasks and activities they do								
4	The topics discussed								
	<b>Learners have the ability to:</b>								
1	Identify their own needs								
2	Identify their own strengths								
3	Identify their own weaknesses								
4	Monitor their progress								

Section 3 focuses on teachers' beliefs about how autonomous their learners are and on the extent to which they promote autonomy in their teaching. Section 4 asks teachers for demographic information. The final section asks teachers for the second phase(interview) of the study, if they are volunteer or not.

### 3.4 Interviews

Qualitative data were collected with follow-up interviews with teachers who had completed the questionnaire and volunteered to speak. The questions which were asked in the interview process were presented in Appendix 2. The purpose of the interviews was teachers' responses to the questionnaire in detail and to get more information about their practices with their own students. Of the 64 questionnaire respondents,13 of them volunteered to do an interview. The interviews were tape-recorded and later transcribed.

### **3.5 Data Collection Procedure**

In the present study, the data were collected through aforementioned questionnaire and a semi-structured interview with teachers who completed the questionnaire and volunteered to speak. Quantitative data were collected through Likert-type scale.

Before administering the questionnaire, the participants were informed about the aim of the study, and were guaranteed that the results would be confidential, and would not be used for other aims. Almost a hundred questionnaires were distributed to the instructors and they were given a week to hand in. Sixty four of the questionnaires were handed back nearly in three weeks.

The interviews with 13 volunteer instructors were held at the predetermined date and time. The researcher informed the interviewees about the scope and purpose of the study prior to the interview and they were held in English. Each interview took approximately 20 minutes to conduct. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher to be used in data analysis phase.

### **3.6 Data Analysis**

The data for the present study consists of both quantitative and qualitative data gathered from the questionnaires and the interviews. Quantitative data were analyzed by calculating frequencies and percentages for each question to decide teachers' views on learner autonomy. Each answers in the questionnaire was given a numerical value to calculate the frequencies, percentages, and means to analyze the data. "Strongly disagree" stood for one point, "disagree" stood for two points, "unsure" stood for three points, "agree" stood for four points, and "strongly agree" stood for five points. The closed questionnaire data were analyzed statistically using SPSS 18. Descriptive statistics (i.e. frequency counts and percentages) were calculated for all questions.

After the open questionnaire responses and the interview data had been fully transcribed, they were categorized through a process of qualitative thematic analysis. During this process the data were read carefully, key issues were identified, and as a last step these issues were organized into categories. The data obtained from the

analysis of the interviews were combined with the ones gained through the questionnaires to be presented and discussed under each research question in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4

### 4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter results obtained from the questionnaires and the interviews will be presented and discussed under five research questions. They will be introduced with regard to the distribution of the questionnaire sections and interview questions presented in the introduction part of the study.

#### 4.1 Research Question I: What does ‘learner autonomy’ mean to English language instructors?

In the first part of the study, the questionnaire which includes 37 items was employed to find out teachers' overall perceptions of learner autonomy. Table 9 presents the results regarding technical perspectives on learner autonomy. Table 10 presents the results regarding psychological perspectives on learner autonomy. Table 11 indicates the results regarding social perspectives on learner autonomy. Table 12 explains the results regarding political perspectives on learner autonomy. Table 13 demonstrates the results regarding the role of the teacher in promoting autonomy. Table 14 shows the results regarding the cultural universality of learner autonomy. The findings related to age and learner autonomy is presented on the Table 15. Table 16 displays the results regarding proficiency and learner autonomy. Table 17 represents the results regarding learner-centeredness and learner autonomy, and lastly, table 18 demonstrates the results regarding the benefits of learner autonomy to language learning.

##### 4.1.1 Findings Regarding Technical Perspectives on Learner Autonomy

Items 2, 6, 21, 31 explores technical perspectives of learner autonomy. These are the statements which focus on learning on one's own and developing the technical ability to do so. Table 9 displays the percentages, frequencies, means and

standard deviations of instructors' opinions about technical perspectives on learner autonomy.

**Table 9 Technical perspectives on learner autonomy**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
2. Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.	-	-	4	6.3	6	9.4	37	57.8	17	26.6	4.05	0.785
6. Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.	1	1.6	5	7.8	15	23.4	29	45.3	14	21.9	3.78	0.934
21. Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre.	1	1.6	7	10.9	12	18.8	35	54.7	9	14.1	3.69	0.906
31. Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy.	1	1.6	1	1.6	7	10.9	41	64.1	14	21.9	4.03	0.734

Drawn from the responses given to item 2 "independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy", majority of the instructors (N=54) reported their agreement. More than half of them agreed on item 6 "autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom". For item 21 "learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre", while 8 of them reported their disagreement, 44 participants stated their agreement. For most of the instructors (N=55), using the Internet for out-of-class tasks (item 31) can promote learner autonomy.

As can be concluded from the responses, majority of the instructors believe that autonomy can be developed outside the classroom through the activities conducted by learners on their own. Using the internet, studying at libraries and self-access centers independently are effective ways of promoting learner autonomy.

### 4.1.2 Findings Regarding Psychological Perspectives on Learner Autonomy

In items 11, 29, 32, 33, and 37, responses of the instructors on the psychological perspectives on learner autonomy were gathered. These are the statements which focus on the internal psychological capacity to self-direct one's own learning and the development of the attitudes and beliefs which allow learners to take more responsibility for their own learning. Table 10 indicates the percentages, frequencies, means and standard deviations of instructors' opinions about psychological perspectives on learner autonomy.

**Table 10 Psychological perspectives on learner autonomy**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
11. Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	2	3.1	1	1.6	4	6.3	28	43.8	29	45.3	4.27	0.895
29. Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.	1	1.6	2	3.1	2	3.1	25	39.1	34	53.1	4.39	0.828
32. The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.	1	1.6	2	3.1	9	14.1	32	50.0	20	31.3	4.06	0.852
33. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	1	1.6	1	1.6	3	4.7	29	45.3	30	46.9	4.34	0.781
37. To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	1	1.6	-	-	4	6.3	30	46.9	29	45.3	4.34	0.739

In the light of the data in table 10 , it is possible to say that the majority of the instructors think confident learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence in terms of self-learning . Similarly, they also think motivated learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated. Nearly all of the instructors stated their agreement (N=59) on item 29 "Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy" and item 37 " To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own

learning". Majority of them (N=52) agreed on item 32 "The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy".

As a result of the responses gathered from the instructors, a great majority of them think that confident and motivated language learners can develop autonomy more easily than the learners who are not confident and motivated enough. Moreover, to become autonomous, learners need to monitor and evaluate their own learning and they need to know how to learn.

### 4.1.3 Findings Regarding Social Perspectives on Learner Autonomy

The items in this section were directed to find out instructors' responses to the items regarding social perspectives on learner autonomy. These statements focus on socially mediated learning and improvement of the learners on the basis of the skills and strategies needed for effective learning and participation in groups.

**Table 11 Social perspectives on learner autonomy**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
3. Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.	-	-	1	1.6	10	15.6	42	65.6	11	17.2	3.98	0.630
16. Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	2	3.1	-	-	4	6.3	36	56.3	22	34.4	4.19	0.814
19. Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.	-	-	3	4.7	6	9.4	46	71.9	9	14.1	3.95	0.653
25. Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.	1	1.6	2	3.1	4	6.3	46	71.9	11	17.2	4.00	0.713
30. Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.	1	1.6	7	10.9	17	26.6	21	32.8	18	28.1	3.75	1.039

As the data indicate, the majority of the instructors (N=53) express that promoting learner autonomy is possible with regular opportunities given to learners to complete tasks alone (item 3) and more than half of the instructors think it is

necessary for learners to learn to work alone in order to develop learner autonomy (item 30). However, the responses given to the items 16, 19, 25 indicate that a clear majority of the instructors share the idea of working collaboratively helps promoting learner autonomy. Thus, it can be concluded that according to the instructors learning to work alone is as important as learning from each other for the development of learner autonomy.

#### 4.1.4 Findings Regarding Political Perspectives on Learner Autonomy

In this section, the statements which focus on the power to control one's situation and on developing in learners the skills to exercise choice take part. The items that include political perspectives on learner autonomy are 4, 7, 14, 22, 27.

**Table 12 Political perspectives on learner autonomy**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
4. Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	1	1.6	-	-	4	6.3	29	45.3	30	46.9	4.36	0.743
7. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	1	1.6	3	4.7	8	12.5	26	40.6	26	40.6	4.14	0.924
14. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	1	1.6	1	1.6	5	7.8	34	53.1	23	35.9	4.20	0.780
22. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.	4	6.3	5	7.8	17	26.6	32	50.0	6	9.4	3.48	0.992
27. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.	2	3.1	6	9.4	19	29.7	29	45.3	8	12.5	3.55	0.942

Responses to the items 4,7,14 reveal that for the development of the learner autonomy, learners need to be involved in decision making process during learning process and they need to be given chance to decide what to learn and how to learn. However, the number of the instructors who stated agreement to items 4,7,14 falls



from fifties to thirties for items 22 and 27. For item 22 " Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed " 38 of the instructors stated their agreement, however 17 of them were unsure and 9 instructors stated their disagreement. Likewise, for item 27 " Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials", 37 of the instructors stated their agreement; however 19 of them were unsure and 8 instructors stated their disagreement.

In conclusion, the instructors think that it is necessary to give opportunities to the learners while taking decisions during the learning process. Involving the learners in decision making process can help them to develop learner autonomy. It is clear from the responses that instructors prefer to involve learners in decision making process related to the activities which can be done in the classroom, the subjects to be taught and the ways of learning. However, they do not prefer involving them much in the assessment and choosing learning material process.

#### 4.1.5 Findings Regarding the Role of the Teacher in Promoting Autonomy

Teachers' perceptions about the role of the teacher in promoting autonomy were explored by means of the items 8, 18, 24, and 35. The items question the instructors' conceptions of the role that teacher plays on the development of autonomy.

**Table 13 Statements about the role of the teacher in promoting autonomy**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>F</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
8. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	6	9.4	22	34.4	23	35.9	11	17.2	2	3.1	2.70	0.971
18. Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.	3	4.7	16	25.0	19	29.7	25	39.1	1	1.6	3.08	0.948
24. Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.	9	14.1	33	51.6	16	25.0	6	9.4	-	-	2.30	0.830

35. The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	1	1.6	1	1.6	3	4.7	34	53.1	25	39.1	4.27	0.761
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Half of the instructors reported disagreement with item 8 "Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher" , 23 of them were unsure and 13 instructors reported their agreement. The number of the instructors (N=19) who stated disagreement with item 18 " Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher" is the same with the number of instructors (N=19) who were unsure and nearly half of them (N=26) reported their agreement. While most of the instructors (N=42) didn't think that learners need to be totally independent of the teacher to develop learner autonomy, 16 of them were unsure about that. The responses for item 35 indicate that a vast number of the instructors believe teachers have an important role on the development of learner autonomy.

The results reveal that to develop autonomy, learners need some independency; however, it does not mean to be totally independent from the teacher. They need the assistance of the teachers. Learner autonomy does not mean learning without a teacher. In this process, teacher should be a guide for learners.

#### 4.1.6 Findings Regarding the Cultural Universality of Learner Autonomy

The opinions of the instructors about cultural universality of learner autonomy were collected by means of the items 13 and 23. The preceding table displays the frequencies and the percentages of the responses to the items in this present section.

**Table 14 Statements about the cultural universality of learner autonomy**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
13. Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.	2	3.1	3	4.7	10	15.6	29	45.3	20	31.1	3.97	0.975

23. Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.	17	26.6	22	34.4	22	34.4	3	4.7	-	-	2.17	0.883
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As the data indicate, the majority of the instructors (N=49) stated that learner autonomy can be achieved by the learners of all cultural backgrounds. Only five of them disagreed and 10 of the instructors were unsure. While 39 of the instructors stated their disagreement on item 23 "Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners" 22 of them stated that they were unsure. Only three instructors agreed with that statement.

The results show that for most of the instructors, the cultural backgrounds of the learners are not considered to stop them from developing autonomy. However, it may be inferred that they may consider autonomy as a term that belongs to the western cultures. Thus, nearly half of the instructors are unsure if it is suitable for non-western cultures or not.

#### 4.1.7 Findings regarding age and learner autonomy

Instructors' views on age and learner autonomy are asked in question items 1, 10 and 20. The items in this section are employed to find out how the instructors see the connections between age and learner autonomy.

**Table 15 Statements about age and learner autonomy**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
1. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.	-	-	6	9.4	10	15.6	31	48.4	17	26.6	3.92	0.896
10. It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.	1	1.6	5	7.8	9	14.1	36	56.3	13	20.3	3.86	0.889
20. Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners.	19	29.7	30	46.9	14	21.9	1	1.6	-	-	1.95	0.765

Accordingly, 6 of the instructors disagreed, 10 of them were unsure, 31 agreed and 17 strongly agreed with the idea that the language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy. For item 10 "it is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults", only 1 of the instructors strongly disagreed and 5 of them disagreed with this idea. While 9 of them were unsure, 36 of the instructors agreed and 13 of them strongly agreed with this statement. Considering the item 20, "Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners." 19 of the instructors strongly disagreed, 30 of them disagreed, 14 instructors were unsure and only one instructor agreed.

As can be drawn from the data, for most of the instructors, there is no age limit to promote autonomy in learners. It is possible to become autonomous no matter how old the learners are. They don't make a distinction between young and adult learners in terms of developing autonomy.

#### 4.1.8 Findings Regarding Proficiency and Learner Autonomy

In this section, there are three items which include statements about proficiency and learner autonomy. The items intended to find out the instructors' remarks on the relation between proficiency and autonomy.

**Table 16 Statements about proficiency and learner autonomy**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
9. It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.	12	18.8	21	32.8	17	26.6	13	20.3	1	1.6	2.53	1.069
26. Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.	5	7.8	17	26.6	24	37.5	17	26.6	1	1.6	2.88	0.951
34. The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.	3	4.7	12	18.8	17	26.6	21	32.8	11	17.2	3.39	1.121

As can be drawn from the data, the majority of the instructors stated their disagreement with item 9 "It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners". 14 of them stated their agreement and 17 instructors were unsure. The number of the participants (N=22) who stated their disagreement on item 26 "Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners" is approximately the same as the number of instructors (N=24) who were unsure and who agreed (N=18). The responses of item 34 reflected that more than half of the instructors think the proficiency of a language learner does not affect the ability to develop autonomy, 15 of them disagreed and 17 of the instructors were unsure.

As the results illustrate, nearly half of the instructors accepted that there is a connection between proficiency and learner autonomy. They think proficient learners can develop autonomy more easily than the beginner learners. On the other hand, the other half of the instructors either disagree or are unsure about that. They think proficiency is not an issue that effects the development of autonomy. All learners can develop autonomy, no matter how much proficient they are.

#### 4.1.9 Findings Regarding Learner-centeredness and Learner Autonomy

The items 15, 17, 28 attempted to investigate the ideas of the instructors on the connection between learner autonomy and learner-centeredness. The preceding table illustrates the frequencies and the percentages of the participants' responses.

**Table 17 Statements about learner-centeredness and learner autonomy**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
15. Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centered classrooms.	3	4.7	9	14.1	14	21.9	24	37.5	14	21.9	3.58	1.124
17. Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.	1	1.6	9	14.1	14	21.9	28	43.8	12	18.8	3.64	0.998

28. Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.	1	1.6	3	4.7	4	6.3	35	54.7	21	32.8	4.13	0.845
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Table 17 reveals that more than half of the instructors expressed their agreement with item 15 "learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centered classrooms" and item 17 "learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching". The number of the participants (N=14) who were unsure about the items 15 and 17 is same. Furthermore, more than 10 instructors explained their disagreement with these statements. Besides, it is also clearly illustrated in the item 28 that a marginally large number of the participants (N=56) expressed their agreement with item 28 "learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy".

As can be deduced from the responses, instructors share the common idea that the ideal classrooms are the learner-centered ones for the development of autonomy. Learner autonomy can be fostered more easily in these classrooms. It is necessary to involve learners in learning process.

**4.1.10 Findings Regarding Benefits of Learner Autonomy to Language Learning**

The items in this section attempt to reveal the opinions of instructors about the benefits of learner autonomy to language learning. The following table 18 displays the descriptive statistics of this dimension.

**Table 18 Statements about the benefits of learner autonomy to language learning**

	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly Agree		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
5. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.	1	1.6	6	9.4	21	32.8	26	40.6	10	15.6	3.59	0.921
12. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	2	3.1	-	-	8	12.5	32	50.0	22	34.4	4.13	0.864

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36. Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner.	1	1.6	-	-	1	1.6	25	39.1	37	57.8	4.52	0.690
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As the data in the table 18 indicate, 36 of the instructors stated their agreement with the item "Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners". 21 of them were unsure and only 7 instructors disagreed. For item 12 "Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would" only a small number of instructors (N=2) showed their disagreement. On the other hand, a great majority of the instructors (N=54) expressed their agreement and 8 of them were unsure. Besides, nearly all of the instructors (N=62) share the idea that learner autonomy has a positive effect on success.

As a conclusion, it can be referred from the responses that instructors are of the same opinion that learner autonomy makes a great contribution to effective learning and success of language learners. In other words, by fostering learner autonomy it is highly possible to have successful language learners.

#### **4.1.11 Interview Findings on Teachers' Views about Learner Autonomy**

More information on teachers' views about learner autonomy was gathered with the opening question of the interviews. In the interview, as Appendix B shows, instructors were asked to extend what learner autonomy meant to them.

The concepts which repeated in the instructors' answers were responsibility , control, self-observation, choice, motivation and decision. The comments of different teachers below illustrate the prevalence of these ideas:

*"Learner autonomy means "taking charge of one's own learning". Autonomous learners can make decisions regarding their own learning. Autonomy can be described as showing responsibility for and having control over one's own learning."*

*"Lerner autonomy, in my opinion, is the students' taking responsibility in their learning, being able to motivate themselves, organizing themselves, and not expecting everything from the teacher."*

*"Learner autonomy refers to an ability of learners that they take the responsibility of their own learning. I think autonomy covers learners' individual studies, personal research, group works independent of teacher, doing tasks that are not compulsory, or other things they do without an outside control but with an inner motivation."*

*"Learner autonomy is learners' knowing the responsibility of their own learning."*

*"Learner autonomy is the ability to be responsible for one's own learning. When you say learner autonomy, "decisions, choices, options, responsibility" come to my mind."*

*"Only if a student can take the responsibility of his own learning and manage the learning process himself, he can be regarded as an autonomous learner."*

*"I believe, it is to make learners take responsibility of their own learning."*

*"Learner autonomy is a combination of the self-observation of one's own learning process and deeds that are done to carry out necessary effort including establishing motivational reasons and undergoing all kinds activities for the target itself."*

*"It is the ability to determine their own needs and ways to learn."*

*"It's the moment when the student starts to perceive learning as a process which is never limited within the classroom."*

*"Learner autonomy is learner's taking part in the learning process directly or indirectly by means of stating their decisions regarding to materials, activities or any other learning related subjects which are traditionally up to teacher in the first place."*

*"Learner autonomy is the ability of making decisions by learners during the learning process without seeking any major help, but guidance."*

*"It is a learner's ability to monitor his or her own learning. It is the learner's actively questioning herself about the learning process, trying to find her weak and strong points."*

As can be drawn from the responses, a great majority of the instructors share the common idea that autonomy means taking responsibility. They think that only if



learners take the responsibility of their own learning they become autonomous. Autonomous learners can determine their own needs and ways of learning. They actively take part in every part of learning; deciding what to learn and how to learn, choosing the tasks and activities. Furthermore, they can control the learning process by monitoring themselves. Learners, who are autonomous, are also aware of the fact that learning is not limited within the classroom so they are able to continue learning outside the classroom. Teachers' duty is to foster autonomy by guiding their learners.

#### **4.2 Research Question II: To what extent, according to the instructors, does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?**

The responses to the questionnaire revealed that 96.9 % of the instructors agreed that learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner, while 84.4 % agreed that learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would. In other words, instructors have strong positive views about the contribution of learner autonomy to language learning according to the results of the questionnaire.

To get more specific ideas, the researcher asked the instructors to elaborate on these positive views in the interviews. Outstanding features of autonomous learners in the responses of the instructors were given below:

- Autonomous learners are more responsible:

*"I agree with this statement as every individual is responsible from himself. As well as behavior, it includes education and learning process. If a person knows himself and his abilities, he can arrange his study system according to this. He can notice his strengths and weaknesses, and behaves accordingly. He doesn't expect the input from the teacher only; he struggles to learn and can activate and direct the learning process."*

*"An autonomous language learner knows his responsibility in learning and he is aware of his progress in language learning. He knows how he learns better. He studies his lessons using the techniques that are suitable for his learning style."*

- Autonomous learners are more efficient:

*" If students develop their own autonomy, they will be more efficient learners because they can find their own way. For example, what to look for, how to look at information about language, be aware of their talents."*

- Autonomous learners are more motivated:

*"In my opinion, it certainly has a positive effect on language learning. An autonomous student takes learning serious and does not get frustrated easily. Instead, they learn from their mistakes. Also, autonomy fosters motivation to learn which is the key element for the learning process."*

*"Learner autonomy helps the student to proceed more in the direction that the student desires, which boosts the motivation, and relatively the success."*

*"Autonomous learners can take responsibility of their own learning so they can be more motivated to study harder and more outside the class. therefore, autonomy can bring success as well...."*

- Autonomous learners are more active:

*" In my opinion, autonomy definitely helps a language learner to be successful. Since language learning is a process that requires the learner to be constantly active, autonomous learners are one step forward in that aspect."*

- Autonomous learners are more controller:

*" When the learners are autonomous, they are the ones controlling their language development process. Their learning is not limited to the class, but anywhere is an opportunity for the learner to learn. Thus, learners develop their language skills faster than those depending on only teachers."*

### 4.3 Research Question III: How desirable and feasible do teachers feel it is to promote learner autonomy?

The instructors' responses to this question were explored by means of the second section of the questionnaire. This section comprises two issues. The first issue is teachers' views on the desirability and feasibility of involving learners into a range of language course decisions. The instructors' responses were summarized in table 19 and 20. As it can be concluded from the responses, in general instructors were more positive about the desirability of student involvement than they were about its feasibility. Student involvement in decision making was seen to be most feasible in relation to topics and activities and least feasible in relation to objectives, assessment and classroom management. On the other hand, student involvement in decision making was seen to be most desirable in relation to materials, topics and activities and least desirable in relation to objectives, assessment, teaching methods and classroom management.

**Table 19 Desirability of student involvement in decision-making**

Items  Learners are involved in decisions about:	Undesirable		Slightly Desirable		Quite Desirable		Very Desirable		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
	1. The objectives of a course	9	14.1	13	20.3	26	40.6	16		
2. The materials used	1	1.6	9	14.1	33	51.6	21	32.8	3.16	0.718
3. The kinds of tasks and activities they do	2	3.1	10	15.6	22	34.4	30	46.9	3.25	0.836
4. The topics discussed	1	1.6	9	14.1	23	35.9	31	48.4	3.31	0.774
5. How learning is assessed	9	14.1	16	25.0	23	35.9	16	25.0	2.72	1.000
6. The teaching methods used	10	15.6	14	21.9	23	35.9	17	26.6	2.73	1.027
7. Classroom management	12	18.8	10	15.6	21	32.8	21	32.8	2.80	1.101

**Table 20 Feasibility of student involvement in decision-making**

Items	Unfeasible		Slightly Feasible		Quite Feasible		Very Feasible		$\bar{X}$	SD		
	Learners are involved in decisions about:											
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%				
1. The objectives of a course	23	35.9	24	37.5	12	18.8	5	7.8	1.98	0.934		
2. The materials used	15	23.4	25	39.1	16	25.0	8	12.5	2.27	0.963		
3. The kinds of tasks and activities they do	7	10.9	26	40.6	19	29.7	12	18.8	2.56	0.924		
4. The topics discussed	7	10.9	22	34.4	20	31.3	15	23.4	2.67	0.960		
5. How learning is assessed	27	42.2	23	35.9	12	18.8	2	3.1	1.83	0.846		
6. The teaching methods used	15	23.4	22	34.4	22	34.4	5	7.8	2.27	0.913		
7. Classroom management	16	25.0	21	32.8	19	29.7	8	12.5	2.30	0.987		

The second part of the section two asked teachers how desirable and feasible they felt it was for their students to develop a range of abilities that are commonly seen as indicators of learner autonomy. Table 21 and 22 indicate the results for this comparison. As in the previous part, the results were nearly the same in this part. In other words, desirability was consistently higher than feasibility here and in all cases the differences between the two ratings were statistically significant. In contrast to the previous set of items, though, all those listed here were considered desirable for learners. However, the skills "learning co-operatively and independently" were seen the most feasible skills in learners. The skills which were seen as the least feasible in learners were evaluating their own learning, identifying needs and weaknesses.

**Table 21 Desirability of learning to learn skills in students**

Items Learners have the ability to:	Undesirable		Slightly Desirable		Quite Desirable		Very Desirable		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
	1. Identify their own needs	1	1.6	7	10.9	18	28.1	38		
2. Identify their own strengths	1	1.6	6	9.4	19	29.7	38	59.4	3.47	0.734
3. Identify their own weaknesses	2	3.1	5	7.8	19	29.7	38	59.4	3.45	0.775
4. Monitor their progress	2	3.1	7	10.9	15	23.4	40	62.5	3.45	0.815
5. Evaluate their own learning	3	4.7	7	10.9	19	29.7	35	54.7	3.34	0.859
6. Learn co-operatively	2	3.1	2	3.1	17	26.6	43	67.2	3.58	0.708
7. Learn independently	1	1.6	6	9.4	13	20.3	44	68.8	3.56	0.732

**Table 22 Feasibility of learning to learn skills in students**

Items Learners have the ability to:	Unfeasible		Slightly Feasible		Quite Feasible		Very Feasible		$\bar{X}$	SD
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%		
	1. Identify their own needs	8	12.5	21	32.8	30	46.9	5		
2. Identify their own strengths	5	7.8	20	31.3	33	51.6	6	9.4	2.63	0.766
3. Identify their own weaknesses	8	12.5	24	37.5	25	39.1	7	10.9	2.48	0.854
4. Monitor their progress	6	9.4	24	37.5	25	39.1	9	14.1	2.58	0.851
5. Evaluate their own learning	11	17.2	26	40.6	22	34.4	5	7.8	2.33	0.856
6. Learn co-operatively	3	4.7	12	18.8	27	42.2	22	34.4	3.06	0.852
7. Learn independently	3	4.7	22	34.4	20	31.3	19	29.7	2.86	0.906

The instructors' opinions on students involvement in decision-making process were asked through the interviews. They were also asked to give examples about the decisions that they allow their learners to make in the classroom. Some of their responses were given below:

*"Since most of the students are not fully autonomous I believe we cannot involve them in important decision making processes. However I personally give them the chance to decide on the pre and post activities within the courses (shall we play a game or have a short discussion?) (would you like to do this written or oral?)etc. sometimes I want them to reflect on their own progress and from time to time I let them choose a topic for free writing activities."*

*"I strongly believe that the more the students are involved in the teaching/learning process, the more they will be eager to learn. They can actively take part in language learning process. I try to give my students opportunities to participate in decision making process. The objectives of the course are identified well in advance. However, I give them a chance to choose the tasks or activities that are used in the classes. Also, I try to create room for self-evaluation or peer evaluation."*

*"I don't think students should be involved in decision making process for objectives or materials. They have right to give their opinions about the style, the type of the materials and the method and the teacher can organize them accordingly, but that's it. The classroom management is their responsibility, and they should be autonomous in that area; they should know what they are responsible for, how they should behave in the classroom and what is expected. And the students are responsible for their methods of studying."*

*"Learners should be involved in making decisions about classroom rules, the materials used, activities and maybe topics. Their opinions can be asked about these topics so that they can feel more motivated and interested in the lesson."*

*"Although our courses are student centred , unfortunately ,we cannot always engage students in decision making processes of materials or objectives of them . I can easily conclude that the process of planning language learning is based on their needs and interests ,but their active participation is not possible at this stage. However, I can allow my students to make their decisions on class rules and organise course*

*according to their need .For example, If they're in need of speaking practice, I can focus on the practice of it rather than focusing on other skills."*

*"Learners should not be involved in overall objectives and curriculum design, yet within a class they can be involved in decision making on the objectives of the lesson....."*

*"I believe that students don't need to take part in the process of designing the course, for instance, in deciding on course objectives, course books or curriculum because instructors and curriculum designers are clearly more knowledgeable and experienced in that. However, it is useful to involve them in daily decision making processes, for example, choosing the kinds of tasks, how to end that day's lesson, or maybe, classroom rules....."*

By looking at the responses of the instructors, it can be concluded that a great majority of them share the same idea of not allowing the students to be involved in decision making process for course objectives, materials and curriculum. The reason is that, they do not think their learners are proficient enough to decide on these subjects. Thus, they state that to decide on these subjects by taking learners' needs and levels into consideration are instructors' responsibility. However, most of them think that involving learners into the decision-making process helps them to be more active and responsible. They generally prefer them to be involved in choosing the tasks and the activities that are used in the classes. Furthermore, some of them allow their students to put the classroom rules according to their needs.

#### **4.4 Research Question IV: To what extent do instructors feel their learners are autonomous? How do they describe autonomous language learner?**

In the questionnaire teachers were asked about the extent to which they feel their students are autonomous and in the open-ended part of this question they were asked to comment on why they felt in the way they did. As a last step, in the interviews the researcher wanted them to describe autonomous language learner. As table 23 demonstrates the responses of the instructors were divided into three nearly equally. 22 of the instructors thought their students were autonomous. In contrast,

almost the same number (N=20) of them thought the opposite and 22 of them were unsure.

**Table 23 Students have a fair degree of autonomy**

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Strongly Disagree	5	7.8
Disagree	15	23.4
Unsure	22	34.4
Agree	20	31.3
Strongly Agree	2	3.1
<b>Total</b>	<b>64</b>	<b>100.0</b>

These findings suggest that the instructors had different expectations of what autonomous learners were able to do and there was also some evidence of this in the open-ended part of the question.

As noted above, nearly 35 percent of the instructors thought their students had a fair degree of autonomy. Here are some examples of how they explained their views:

*"...., they are aware of their weaknesses and strengths. They mostly know how to learn."*

*"Most of them seem to be autonomous learners because they know they have the right to comment on/ make suggestions about their own learning."*

*"They have a fair level of autonomy because they search about things which connect language learning to outer world and daily life."*

*"They are pretty aware of the process and their own learning."*

*"We offer the learners opportunities to study in the lab, in the resource center, at home, and on the internet."*



*"They start to work with their classmates they are encouraged to work with pair and group works. They are encouraged to correct their own mistakes. (writing assignments)."*

The responses indicate that the reasons of the instructors why they thought their students were autonomous were various. Being aware of the weaknesses, strengths, and their own learning, having a right to comment on the learning process, making connections with language learning and outer world, studying not only in the classroom but also in the language lab, in the resource center and at home, and lastly working with groups and pairs and correcting their own mistakes are some of the reasons which show that their students' have a fair degree of autonomy.

However, the results in table 23 indicated that almost 31 percent of the instructors did not feel their learners had a fair degree of autonomy. The examples below indicate their reasons:

*"Unfortunately, they don't have any learner autonomy. Because most of them don't know how to study. I think it's because of that they come from teacher-centered education system and they are used to it. So they generally don't do anything autonomously if their teachers don't give them any tasks or homework."*

*"It is because of their learning experience. Unfortunately, they have no idea of what kind of a learner they are..."*

*"I think most of our students don't have the ability to monitor themselves, identify their needs, strength, weaknesses. They don't want to take the responsibility to learn independently. They are usually unaware of what is going on around them..."*

*"Since the students don't seem to have a real need for learning a language, they aren't motivated. So, lack of motivation paves way to lack of autonomy."*

*"They depend on their teachers and feel lost when they are supposed to deal with self-tasks."*

*"I can't do anything because of weekly curriculum."*

Lack of motivation, too much dependence on teachers, never wanting to take responsibility, being unaware of their weaknesses, strengths and their own learning, prior educational experience, and curricular constraints were some of the factors which instructors felt contributed to what they saw as a lack of autonomy in the students.

Furthermore, nearly 35 percent of the instructors were unsure about whether their students had a fair degree of autonomy or not. They stated their reasons as follows:

*"It's not an easy quality to achieve. They need some more time."*

*"It depends on the students' profile."*

*"I'm not sure because they can't make choices about how they learn. However, some students can do it."*

*"Some of the students can evaluate their own learning process and become aware of their progress. However, some of them have no idea about what they are doing."*

*"They're not interested in English at all."*

*"Some of the students can evaluate their own learning process and become aware of their progress. However, some of them have no idea about what they are doing."*

The results reveal that some of the instructors think that being autonomous is in the hands of the students themselves. While some of the students are autonomous some of them are not. It is because of their different profiles and backgrounds. Lack of interest to learn a foreign language is one of the reasons that prevents learners to be autonomous.

As a last step, the instructors were asked to tell the key characteristics of an autonomous language learner for them in the interviews. Their answers varied as in the examples:

*"Autonomous learners are highly independent and they have the control over their own learning. They can make decisions about their learning process and do not need*

*to be told what to do all the time. Although they need mentoring, they have the ability of self-regulation, self-management and self-evaluation."*

*"An autonomous language learner knows how to study, when to study and he can monitor, and evaluate his progress."*

*"An autonomous learner differs from the others with their continuous motivation to learn and enthusiasm to find new ways to improve themselves."*

*"An autonomous learner is the one who can control his/her own learning, read extra books, do research, ask questions, create new ideas, have critical thinking, be willing-motivated-encouraged to learn or do something on his/her own."*

*"They constantly watch their own development. They actively think about their learning progress. They try to understand the purpose of the learning activities they do in a class. They try to assess their needs and then they work on those needs. They don't complete assignments just because they were assigned. They know that those assignments serve a purpose. They also ask for feedback from their teacher about their learning, they reflect on it."*

*"A language learner is generally alert for the language s/he is learning, any encounter can be a conscious or unconscious way for input and/or output."*

The responses of the instructors revealed that autonomous learners are independent and they have the control over their learning. They know how to study and when to study. Autonomous learners are generally motivated, thus they are always ready to learn. As a result, in the learning process they can manage and evaluate their own learning.

#### **4.5 Research Question V: To what extent do teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?**

Instructors were also asked about the extent to which they feel they promote learner autonomy in their work. Instructors who felt they did promote learner autonomy were also asked in the open-ended part of the questionnaire to receive examples of the kind of strategies they used to do so. As table 24 demonstrates,

nearly % 80 of the instructors felt that they give their students opportunities to develop autonomy in teaching English, % 17.2 of them were unsure and only % 3.1 disagreed.

**Table 24 Developing learner autonomy**

	<i>f</i>	<i>%</i>
Disagree	2	3.1
Unsure	11	17.2
Agree	48	75.0
Strongly Agree	3	4.7
<i>Total</i>	<i>64</i>	<i>100.0</i>

In open-ended part of the questions the instructors made comments on how they promote learner autonomy. Some examples from their comments are as follows:

*"....They use the school lab to promote their learning autonomy. I encourage them to listen to English CDs or watch English films to develop learning autonomy."*

*"I give my students some tasks to be done out of class such as making music videos, clips etc..."*

*"Face to face individual talk with students."*

*"I try to involve them in the teaching and learning process. Also, I conduct some activities and tasks that promote learning out of the classroom."*

*"I suggest different methods to promote learner autonomy."*

Apart from this section of the questionnaire, to get more detailed responses the instructors' opinions were asked through the interviews. Here are some examples from their responses:

*"I assign them some tasks to do out of class and I promote group/ pair works and I guide them how to improve their language skills on their own."*

*"I show my students ideas from my own learning. I suggest websites, books, various resources which they can use outside the class. I encourage them to set their own goals. Ask feedback about the materials and methods I use."*

*"I ask my students their preferences about the teaching methods or activities. I try to make them be aware of their best learning techniques. I try to make them evaluate their own progress."*

*"I provide tasks both in class and out of class, make use of technology, give enough chance to my students to make their own decisions on various activities and tasks."*

*"I usually remind and explain them the importance and benefits of being autonomous. Apart from this, I try to give positive feedback whenever I observe an autonomous behaviour."*

Responses from the open-ended part of the questionnaire and the interviews indicate that there are many different strategies that instructors use to promote learner autonomy. Setting activities out of class which promote autonomy, involving them in teaching and learning process by asking their preferences, encouraging them to engage in autonomous behaviors by leading them to use language labs and self access centers in the school after the class, using activities in class which promote autonomy, making them aware of their strengths and weaknesses and talking to them about autonomy and its importance are mostly remarkable strategies that they used with their learners. Overall, both the percentage of instructors who felt they promoted learner autonomy in their work and the range of examples they gave of how they sought to do so demonstrates that the instructors have favorable impression on autonomy and they try hard to promote it to have more successful language learners.

## CHAPTER 5

### 5 CONCLUSION

The results of the study were presented and findings were discussed in the previous chapter. In this chapter, the summary of the study, implications and suggestions based on the significant findings of the study, limitations and suggestions for future research will be presented.

#### 5.1 The Summary of the Study

The aim of this study was to explore in an elaborative way what "learner autonomy" means to language instructors who work at Gazi University School of Foreign Languages and their practices with their students. The study aimed to reveal different perceptions of learner autonomy raised from the classroom experiences by the teachers. The study also aimed to find out the underlying reasons of these perceptions about learner autonomy. In order to reach these aims the following research questions were asked:

1. What does 'learner autonomy' mean to English language instructors?
2. To what extent, according to the instructors, does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?
3. How desirable and feasible do teachers feel it is to promote learner autonomy?
4. To what extent do instructors feel their learners are autonomous? How do they describe autonomous language learner?
5. To what extent do teachers say they actually promote learner autonomy?

Participants of the study were 64 EFL instructors working at Gazi University School of Foreign Languages. The data of the study were collected by means of a learner autonomy questionnaire that was developed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2013). The qualitative data were gathered through the interviews. To find out the views of

teachers in relation to learner autonomy, quantitative data of the study were analyzed by calculating descriptive statistics including frequencies, percentages and means for each question in the questionnaire. Qualitative data of the study were categorized in terms of research questions and used for answering them in collaboration with the quantitative data in the discussion of the results.

## **5.2 Implications and Suggestions for Practise**

The findings of this study about language teachers' beliefs and reported practices regarding learner autonomy are a valuable addition to the literature. It might be useful to refer back to the research questions in order to be able to link the findings to them and to draw overall conclusions.

The first research question asked about the general perspectives of the instructors on learner autonomy. As it is mentioned by Cotterall (2000) and Benson (2001) learners should be given opportunities to promote autonomy. It can be said that participants of the study shared similar views with these researchers. All in all, the results revealed that the teachers were positive to the concept of autonomy and its advantages for language learners. They are all in favor of promoting autonomy by giving learners a chance of telling their ideas during the learning process and taking the responsibility of their own learning. Their definitions of learner autonomy with the recurring concepts as responsibility, control, self-observation, choice, motivation and decision reflected the definitions of Holec (1981), Benson (2001), Little (1991), Littlewood (1999).

The instructors' views on the contribution of learner autonomy to second language learning were taken by means of second research question. According to Scharle and Szabo (2000), "some degree of autonomy is essential for successful language learning. No matter how much students learn through lessons, there is always plenty more they will need to learn by practise, on their own" (p. 4). The results showed that the instructors shared the same idea with Scharle and Szabo. They believe that learner autonomy has a positive effect on success of language learners and autonomous learners learn more effectively. As in the studies of Chan (2001) and Al-Shaqsi (2009) the main characteristics of autonomous learners

identified by the instructors were responsible, controller, active, motivated, and efficient.

The third research question was "How desirable and feasible do teachers feel it is to promote learner autonomy?" . There are parallels here with the findings of Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012) and Durmus's (2006) studies. There was a remarkable gap between the extent to which teachers felt it was desirable to involve learners in a range of decisions about their learning and teachers' beliefs about the feasibility of doing so, especially in relation to objectives, assessment, teaching methods and classroom management. Similarly, there was again a considerable gap between the extent to which teachers felt it was desirable for their learners to develop a range of abilities associated with autonomy and their beliefs about the feasibility of doing so particularly in relation to evaluating their own learning, identifying needs and weaknesses.

After all, it can be said that the instructors who participated in the study shared similar views to a degree with Dam (1995), Esch (1997), Cotterall (2000) and Benson (2001) who stated that learners should be given opportunities to set goals and objectives for their learning process. Teachers supported the idea of giving learners responsibilities to choose the topics and activities, but they considered choosing the materials, determining the objectives and assessing as professional tasks. Learners were not regarded as competent to decide these tasks because they did not have pedagogical knowledge. The teachers did not want to let learners engage in subjects which they felt required professional and pedagogical knowledge. Their ideas contradict with Fenner and Newby (2000) who suggested that learners take charge of all kinds of materials in an autonomous learning environment.

The instructors' opinions about the extent to which they feel their learners are autonomous were given under the fourth research question. They had different views about the extent to which their learners were autonomous. The teachers who thought their students autonomous listed the conceptions as being aware of the weaknesses, strengths, and their own learning, having a right to comment on the learning process, making connections with language learning and outer world, studying not only in the classroom but also in the language lab, in the resource center and at home, and lastly working with groups and pairs and correcting their own mistakes.



On the other hand, lack of motivation, too much dependence on teachers, never wanting to take responsibility, being unaware of their weaknesses, strengths and their own learning, prior educational experience, and curricular constraints were some of the factors which instructors felt contributed to what they saw as a lack of autonomy in the students.

As Dam (1995) suggests developing autonomy and responsibility demands a capacity and willingness of the learners themselves to act independently and in cooperation with others as responsible people. Similarly, as the results indicated some of the instructors think that being autonomous is at learners' sole discretion. Different levels of autonomy in learners may be the result of different profiles and backgrounds and also lack of interest to learn a foreign language.

According to Zou (2011) successful autonomous learning is the ability to learn and work individually and collaboratively in autonomous learning contexts. Likewise, the responses of the instructors revealed that they had the same idea. They described autonomous learner as the one who knows how to study independently and has the control over their own learning.

The results of the fifth research question revealed most of the instructors believed that they promoted learner autonomy in their teaching. To promote autonomy, learners should be given chance to take part in interactions where they can give their opinions (Phyak, 2010). Their descriptions of how they did so overlapped with the idea of Phyak (2010). They give their learners many opportunities which help them to develop autonomy. Scharle and Szabo (2000) emphasized the changing role of teachers as facilitator or counselor in the process of developing autonomous attitudes of learners. As Scharle and Szabo (2000) stated the instructors remarked to behave their learners as a facilitator or counselor in the learning process.

All in all, the findings of this study have revealed that English language teachers were mostly positive about the learner autonomy and aware of its importance for language learning. In relation to their working context, though, these teachers are much less positive about the extent to which autonomy can be productively promoted with their learners. They provide opportunities for learners to

develop autonomy both inside and outside the classroom; however, most of them lack the capacity and desire to take advantage of these opportunities.

### **5.3 Implications and Suggestions for Future Research**

The present study was conducted with the instructors working at Gazi University School of Foreign Languages. A further study can also be conducted at other universities of Turkey, and different variables of teachers that might have relations with learner autonomy such as age, gender, and years of experience could be taken into account.

Furthermore, a further study can be conducted also with the students to determine the opinions of students towards the promotion of learner autonomy in the same setting. This way, the opinions of teachers and students can be compared.

In addition, the present study focused on what learner autonomy means to teachers and their practices. However, a further study can be conducted to determine the practices of teachers to promote learner autonomy by observing their classroom applications. A comparison of their opinions and applications might provide beneficial insights for the promotion of learner autonomy.

Furthermore, as an empirical phase of the study, an in-service training or professional development workshops on learner autonomy for the teachers might contribute to the promotion of learner autonomy.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX 1

#### THE QUESTIONNAIRE

##### Section 1: Learner Autonomy

Please give your opinion about the statements below by ticking ONE answer for each. The statements are not just about your current job and in answering you should consider your experience as a language teacher more generally.

		strongly disagree	disagree	unsure	agree	strongly agree
1	Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.					
2	Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.					
3	Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.					
4	Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.					
5	Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.					
6	Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.					
7	Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.					
8	Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.					
9	It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.					
10	It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.					
11	Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.					
12	Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.					
13	Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.					

14	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.					
15	Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centred classrooms.					
16	Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.					
17	Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.					
18	Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.					
19	Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.					
20	Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners.					
21	Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access centre.					
22	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.					
23	Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.					
24	Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.					
25	Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.					
26	Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.					
27	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.					
28	Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.					
29	Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.					
30	Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.					
31	Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy.					
32	The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.					
33	Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.					
34	The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.					
35	The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.					

36	Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner.					
37	To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.					

## Section 2: Desirability and Feasibility of Learner Autonomy

Below there are two sets of statements. The first gives examples of decisions LEARNERS might be involved in; the second lists abilities that learners might have. For each statement:

- First say how desirable (i.e. ideally), you feel it is.
- Then say how feasible (i.e. realistically achievable) you think it is for *the learners you currently teach most often*.

You should tick TWO boxes for each statement – one for desirability and one for feasibility.

		Desirability				Feasibility			
		Undesirable	Slightly desirable	Quite desirable	Very desirable	Unfeasible	Slightly feasible	Quite feasible	Very feasible
	<b>Learners are involved in decisions about:</b>								
1	The objectives of a course								
2	The materials used								
3	The kinds of tasks and activities they do								
4	The topics discussed								
5	How learning is assessed								
6	The teaching methods used								
7	Classroom management								
	<b>Learners have the ability to:</b>								
1	Identify their own needs								
2	Identify their own strengths								
3	Identify their own weaknesses								
4	Monitor their progress								
5	Evaluate their own learning								
6	Learn co-operatively								
7	Learn independently								

## Section 3: Your Learners and Your Teaching

This section contains two open-ended questions. These are an important part of the questionnaire and give you the opportunity to comment more specifically on your work at Gazi University The School of Foreign Languages.

- To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Choose ONE answer:

*In general, the students I teach English most often to at Gazi University The School of Foreign Languages have a fair degree of learner autonomy.*

Strongly disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly agree	
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Please comment on why you feel the way you do about your students' general degree of autonomy:

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2. To what extent do you agree with the following statement? Choose ONE answer:

*In general, in teaching English at Gazi University The School of Foreign Languages I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy.*

Strongly disagree		Disagree		Unsure		Agree		Strongly agree	
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Please comment. You may want to explain why and how you promote autonomy, if you do, or to explain why developing learner autonomy is not an issue you focus on in your work:

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## Section 4: About Yourself

Please tell us about your background.

3. Years of experience as an English language teacher (Tick ONE):

0-4		5-9		10-14		15-19		20-24		25+	
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4. Highest qualification (Tick ONE):

Certificate		Diploma		Bachelor's		Master's		Doctorate		Other	
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5. Gender (Tick ONE):

Male		Female	
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## Section 5: Further Participation

6. In the next stage of the study we would like to talk to individual teachers to learn more about their views on learner autonomy. Would you be interested in discussing this issue further with us?

Yes		No	
-----	--	----	--

If you answered YES to question 1 above, please write your name and phone number here.

Name	
Phone Number	

## APPENDIX 2

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

#### 1. How would you sum up your views on what learner autonomy is?

1. Only if a student can take the responsibility of his own learning and manage the learning process himself, he can be regarded as an autonomous learner.
2. Learner autonomy means taking charge of one's own learning. Autonomous learners can make decisions regarding their own learning. Autonomy can be described as showing responsibility for and having control over one's own learning.
3. Learner autonomy, in my opinion, is the students' taking responsibility in their learning, being able to motivate themselves, organizing themselves, and not expecting everything from the teacher.
4. Learner autonomy is learners' knowing the responsibility of their own learning.
5. Learner autonomy is a combination of the self-observation of one's own learning process and deeds that are done to carry out necessary effort including establishing motivational reasons and undergoing all kinds activities for the target itself.
6. Learner autonomy is the ability to be responsible for one's own learning. When you say learner autonomy, decisions, choices, options, responsibility come to my mind.
7. I believe, it is to make learners take responsibility of their own learning.
8. It is the ability to determine their own needs and ways to learn.
9. It's the moment when the student starts to perceive learning as a process which is never limited within the classroom.
10. Learner autonomy refers to an ability of learners that they take the responsibility of their own learning. I think autonomy covers learners' individual studies, personal research, group works independent of teacher, doing tasks that are not compulsory, or other things they do without an outside control but with an inner motivation.
11. Learner autonomy is learner's taking part in the learning process directly or indirectly by means of stating their decisions regarding to materials, activities

or any other learning related subjects which are traditionally up to teacher in the first place.

12. Learner autonomy is the ability of making decisions by learners during the learning process without seeking any major help, but guidance.
13. It is a learner's ability to monitor his or her own learning. It is the learner's actively questioning herself about the learning process, trying to find her weak and strong points.

## **2. What for you are the key characteristics of an autonomous language learner?**

1. Determined, aware, motivated, and usually hardworking.
2. Autonomous learners are highly independent and they have the control over their own learning. They can make decisions about their learning process and do not need to be told what to do all the time. Although they need mentoring, they have the ability of self-regulation, self-management and self-evaluation.
3. Is responsible, interested, organized, motivated, self-conscious, has self-esteem and self-respect
4. An autonomous language learner knows how to study, when to study and he can monitor, and evaluate his progress.
5. Establishing one's own learning reasons and acting according to those principles including the observation and evaluation of one's own language learning are two key characteristics of an autonomous language learner .
6. Find their own way, taking charge of their learning.
7. An autonomous learner differs from the others with their continuous motivation to learn and enthusiasm to find new ways to improve themselves.
8. S/he can decide on the methods to follow and s/he can decide on the materials to be used.
9. A language leader is generally alert for the language s/he is learning, any encounter can be a conscious or unconscious way for input and/or output.
10. An autonomous learner is the one who can control his/her own learning, read extra books, do research, ask questions, create new ideas, have critical thinking, be willing-motivated-encouraged to learn or do something on his/her own.

11. To determine needs and find necessary ways to answer those requirements. To find effective ways to learn. Through these two, to internalize what is taught.
12. Decision-making, extensive studies, goal-setting nature of the learner.
13. They constantly watch their own development. They actively think about their learning progress. They try to understand the purpose of the learning activities they do in a class. They try to assess their needs and then they work on those needs. They don't complete assignments just because they were assigned. They know that those assignments serve a purpose. They also ask for feedback from their teacher about their learning, they reflect on it.

**3. "Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner"- If you agree with this statement can you tell me a little more about how you see the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning?**

1. If a learner is autonomous, he is more likely to be successful since he knows how to study effectively, what to do in certain circumstances, where to find necessary sources, when to ask for help etc.
2. I hold the belief that learner autonomy has a positive effect on success. Autonomous learners can decide when and how to study, which promotes life-long learning. They do not always need to be guided and they can control everything regarding their own learning. For autonomous learners, learning is not detached from real life, which brings success into their life.
3. I agree with this statement as every individual is responsible from himself. As well as behaviour, it includes education and learning process. If a person knows himself and his abilities, he can arrange his study system according to this. He can notice his strengths and weaknesses, and behaves accordingly. He doesn't expect the input from the teacher only; he struggles to learn and can activate and direct the learning process.
4. An autonomous language learner knows his responsibility in learning and he is aware of his progress in language learning. He knows how he learns better. He studies his lessons using the techniques that are suitable for his learning style.



5. Learning is strongly related to the reason why you learn something , so it is exactly the same procedure with language learning except for the times when students are obliged to participate in learning process such as compulsory preparatory classes . If you have your own reasons to learn ,which means that you are %90 an autonomous learner , you can easily organize your learning atmosphere and observe outcomes of learning process and act or take precautions if necessary like extensive reading ,writing activities.
6. If students develop their own autonomy, they will be more efficient learners because they can find their own way. For example, what to look for, how to look at information about language, be aware of their talents.
7. In my opinion, it certainly has a positive effect on language learning. An autonomous student takes learning serious and does not get frustrated easily. Instead, they learn from their mistakes. Also, autonomy fosters motivation to learn which is the key element for the learning process.
8. They are closely related to each other. Learner autonomy creates a chance for learner to decide on his/her needs.
9. Learner autonomy helps the student to proceed more in the direction that the student desires, which boosts the motivation, and relatively the success.
10. Autonomous learners can take responsibility of their own learning so they can be more motivated to study harder and more outside the class. therefore, autonomy can bring success as well. On the other hand, an autonomous students in his/her life may not be successful in his schoolwork. I have a student who searches the things he is interested in and does incredible work on them, yet he is not successful in English.
11. For effective learning, learner autonomy is a must. Otherwise, learners will always be in need of teachers' spoon-fed style. Language learning is not limited to a period of time but it is a lifelong learning process. Hence, language learners should be provided with necessary equipment. That is to say "how to learn" "how to maintain learning" are important questions must be answered by students for achieving autonomy.
12. When the learners are autonomous, they are the ones controlling their language development process. Their learning is not limited to the class, but anywhere is an opportunity for the learner to learn. Thus, learners develop their language skills faster than those depending on only teachers.

13. In my opinion, autonomy definitely helps a language learner to be successful. Since language learning is a process that requires the learner to be constantly active, autonomous learners are one step forward in that aspect. They always evaluate themselves and look for ways to improve their language skills. They are usually good at internalising the target language points they are studying. So, autonomy and language learning are closely connected.

**4. To what extent should learners be involved in decision making process? Which decisions do you allow your students take in the classroom? Please give some examples. (objectives of a course, the materials used, the kinds of tasks and activities, the topics discussed, assessment, teaching methods, classroom management, other...)**

1. since most of the students are not fully autonomous I believe we cannot involve them in important decision making processes. however I personally give them the chance to decide on the pre and post activities within the courses (shall we play a game or have a short discussion?) (would you like to do this written or oral?)etc. sometimes I want them to reflect on their own progress and from time to time I let them choose a topic for free writing activities.
2. I strongly believe that the more the students are involved in the teaching/learning process, the more they will be eager to learn. They can actively take part in language learning process. I try to give my students opportunities to participate in decision making process. The objectives of the course are identified well in advance. However, I give them a chance to choose the tasks or activities that are used in the classes. Also, I try to create room for self-evaluation or peer evaluation.
3. I don't think students should be involved in decision making process for objectives or materials. They have right to give their opinions about the style, the type of the materials and the method and the teacher can organize them accordingly, but that's it. The classroom management is their responsibility, and they should be autonomous in that area; they should know what they are responsible for, how they should behave in the classroom and what is expected. And the students are responsible for their methods of studying.

4. Learners should be involved in making decisions about classroom rules, the materials used, activities and maybe topics. Their opinions can be asked about these topics so that they can feel more motivated and interested in the lesson.
5. Our class activities are student centred, so methods , activities , tasks and techniques are well designed according to their needs and actions . The point is that the reason why they are learning language designs not only our courses but also our syllabus and, of course, assessment. Although our courses are student centred , unfortunately ,we cannot always engage students in decision making processes of materials or objectives of them . I can easily conclude that the process of planning language learning is based on their needs and interests ,but their active participation is not possible at this stage. However, I can allow my students to make their decisions on class rules and organise course according to their need .For example, If they're in need of speaking practice, I can focus on the practice of it rather than focusing on other skills .
6. They are encouraged to participate in class activities or tasks. They are free to ask questions or express their own ideas. They are treated with respect. I'm aware of my students' needs so I can change the materials or the tasks easily.
7. I think, how much learners should be involved in the decision making process is strongly related to the institution you work for (its size, its general approach to learning, its curriculum...etc). For example, if you have a very tight schedule to cover too much material, as a teacher you cannot let your students choose most of the things, like materials, assessment tools and types. Since I work at a large state school which has predetermined rules, personally I can only allow my students choose from the tasks in my daily plan. In addition, we decide on the basic classroom rules together at the very beginning of the term. I also get student feedback regularly which helps me to shape my teaching techniques.
8. The kinds of tasks and activities, the topics discussed and teaching methods.
9. I find it useful to include the students into task and material selection. In addition, especially in the speaking tasks, the topic of discussion moves towards the experiences and interests of the students, which makes the students feel free to speak and look for more details when they get outside.

10. Learners should not be involved in overall objectives and curriculum design, yet within a class they can be involved in decision making on the objectives of the lesson. for example, I ask the expectations of the students in the first week on a written form. Next day, I gather their answers together and tell them that this is what they want and set as rules. I also add some expectations and all these rule-like things become our class objectives. Later on it is complicated to involve students in materials design. Even the teachers are not involved. But what we can do is this: we can involve the students in deciding the project topics, designing tasks based on their needs, etc. In terms of assessment, yes they should be involved because we should test the process not the product therefore they should not only assess themselves but also their peers. finally, about the classroom management, I think it is mostly the concern of the teacher, yet students, if autonomous, do take part naturally. For instance, they guide or encourage their peers when to do group work, be silent, and so on.
11. First of all, teachers should be aware of the very essence of education. Students are the centre of education. Their needs cannot be ignored. So, starting with the right question matters most. What are their needs? Deciding education related things is a matter of pedagogy so it is not always wise to let learners call the shots. My basic method is to understand what they need and present them with alternatives rather than one single path to take. To be specific, I never let them interfere with objectives of a course directly. I just take what they say into consideration. However, I always provide them with different classroom activities so that they can choose among those.
12. Actually, as we have a definite schedule, I try to build this autonomy by letting them choose the skill to be over studied every month through mini questionnaires in class. According to their needs, we have a mini talk on their questionnaire results and set the skill of the month in a way.
13. I believe that students don't need to take part in the process of designing the course, for instance, in deciding on course objectives, course books or curriculum because instructors and curriculum designers are clearly more knowledgeable and experienced in that. However, it is useful to involve them in daily decision making processes, for example, choosing the kinds of tasks,

how to end that day's lesson, or maybe, classroom rules. Involving learners in those simple decisions makes them feel more active and responsible, so it helps to increase their productivity. That's why, in my classes, I try to ask their opinions about which tasks they would prefer to do in a specific day's lesson. I ask about their favourite activity types and try to have more of those tasks in lessons.

**5. Can you tell me what you generally do to encourage autonomy in your learners?**

1. I usually remind and explain them the importance and benefits of being autonomous. Apart from this, I try to give positive feedback whenever I observe an autonomous behaviour.
2. I try to foster learner autonomy in the classroom and make my learners involved in the decision-making process. Sometimes I give tasks on which they have total control. I ask about and welcome their ideas about the teaching process. Generally, they have a chance to evaluate their own or peers' works. When there is a problem in the classroom, I want them to discuss it and find a solution to that problem. I make them reflect on their own learning experiences.
3. I say they are adults, and they are responsible for themselves; the idea of being addressed as adults motivates them. I tell them how important the subject is; and that they should study. I say they should be organized. I also tell them about the importance of speaking a language, but for academic and social reasons.
4. We can ask them about their learning style ( e.g. if they like studying alone or in groups, in what ways they learn better, about their studying time during the day etc.), their opinions about their learning progress.
5. It is exactly related to the role of teacher in each class. The more responsibility you share with students, the more they are autonomous. I really don't believe in "homework check" or "participation notes" . Although students have a traditional tendency towards "spoon feeding" , they can learn to be autonomous step by step. It doesn't necessarily mean that teachers

wouldn't take responsibility of teaching or learning process. On the contrary, they have a "leading " role to organize a positive atmosphere.

6. Help them accomplish their goals by using some effective learning strategies. Ask them to work collectively. Ask them to work with pairs or groups so they can learn from each other.
7. Apart from the decisions I mentioned in the previous question, I basically do two things: 1. I try to explain why language learning is so important and why they will need to speak a foreign language as an adult. 2. I try language learning strategy training in my classes.
8. I let them use our wiki page and some on-line sources.
9. I think it's a good idea to give some hints from my own learning process and emphasize that it never ends. Also realia such as popular songs, interesting videos and pictures catch the attention of students and lead them to find similar things for their own pleasure.
10. I show them some examples from their peers out of the school and try to motivate them to do such things on their own. I also give them some extra tasks that they can do out of the school. They are not always graded for them, so only the autonomous and responsible ones do it. They even come to me with a new idea and I encourage them to go for it.
11. To my mind, motivation comes first. If learners feel that they need something, they look for ways to get it. In order to motivate them, I give them a clear reason why they need to learn the language. When they are motivated, I show them different ways to learn English. Using the internet for this purpose is one of my favourite ways. Another is finding little pieces of time to learn such as writing vocabulary on mini notebooks and reading them on bus.
12. I try to tell them fun websites they can use, particularly to learn American teenager talk in their free time without getting bored, but having a lot of fun. In such websites, they can get a lot of written or spoken input and as they are interested in teenage life and talk, they try to use what they learn in their social lives. I think this is a way to achieve the first step of building a learner autonomy.
13. I try to make them evaluate themselves. At the end of a chapter/topic, I sometimes use short self-evaluation checklists. They don't share their

answers with anyone, so I ask them to give honest, sincere and careful answers. I try to encourage them to do extensive reading. In classes, I sometimes ask them which books they are reading. I also recommend some useful websites, materials, or books. Of course, not all of my students actively make use of these suggestions, but at least, some of them are interested.

## ÖZGEÇMİŞ

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