

**T.C.  
ISTANBUL AYDIN UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GRADUATE STUDIES**



**TEACHER EDUCATORS' AND MASTER'S DEGREE STUDENTS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY REGARDING LANGUAGE  
LEARNING IN ELT DEPARTMENT**

**MASTER'S THESIS**

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**Department of English Language Teaching  
English Language Teaching Program**

**January, 2022**



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English Language Teaching Program**

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**January, 2022**

## ONAY FORMU



## **DECLARATION**

I hereby declare that the submitted research paper “Teacher Educators’ And Master’s Degree Students’ Perceptions Of Learner Autonomy Regarding Language Learning In Elt Department”, is written without any assistance in violation of scientific ethics and traditions in all the processes from the Project phase to the conclusion of the thesis and that the woks I have benefited are all mentioned in the bibliography.  
(25/11/2021)

**Nouhaila EL-KHAYATY**



## **FOREWORD**

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere regards to my thesis advisor, Assist. Prof. Dr. Osman Sabuncuoğlu for his patience, support, and excellent guidance during this process.

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**January 2022**

**Nouhaila El-Khayaty**

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>CALL</b>	: Computer Assisted Language Learning
<b>CLT</b>	: Communicative Language Teaching
<b>EFL</b>	: English as a Foreign Language
<b>ELT</b>	: English Language Teaching
<b>ESL</b>	: English as a second Language
<b>IAU</b>	: Istanbul Aydin University
<b>LA</b>	: Learner Autonomy
<b>LLS</b>	: Language Learning Strategies
<b>PPP</b>	: Presentation Practice Production
<b>SPSS</b>	: Statistical Package for Social Sciences
<b>TBLT</b>	: Task-Based Language Teaching

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**TEACHER EDUCATORS' AND MASTER'S DEGREE STUDENTS'  
PERCEPTIONS OF LEARNER AUTONOMY REGARDING LANGUAGE  
LEARNING IN ELT DEPARTMENT**

**ABSTRACT**

Learner autonomy has been a major topic of interest in foreign language teaching and learning. Many experts in the field have considered it as an essential part of the language learning process as it places a great deal of emphasis on being independent, self-directed and feeling a sense of ownership. This study aims to explore ELT master's degree students' and teacher educators' perceptions of learner autonomy as well as their understandings of autonomous learning regarding language learning. To achieve the objectives, mixed-methods research combining elements of qualitative and quantitative data was undertaken with a view to collecting and analysing them. A questionnaire in which 100 master's degree students were the participants and an interview with four ELT teacher educators was administered by the researcher. The findings of the study reveal that despite the master's degree students' positive attitudes towards their abilities and their awareness of their responsibilities, they still prefer to hold their academics responsible for the learning process. This research has also found that the academics have positive attitudes towards promoting learner autonomy and are aware of its importance of enhancing the role of students in the learning process. Due to the significant role of learner autonomy in a successful learning process, suggestions and recommendations for a further study to promote learner autonomy have been made.

**Key Words:** *Learner Autonomy- Responsibility- Ability- Activity- Language Learning*

# İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLİĞİ BÖLÜMÜ YÜKSEK LİSANS ÖĞRENCİLERİ VE AKADEMİSYENLERİNİN DİL ÖĞRENİMİNDE ÖZERK ÖĞRENMEYLE İLGİLİ TUTUMLARI

## ÖZET

Özerk öğrenme, yabancı dil öğretimi ve öğreniminde önemli bir araştırma konusu olmuştur. Öğretmeden bağımsız çalışmayı, öğrenme sürecini yönetmeyi ve öğrenmeden sorumlu olmayı kapsamından dolayı, bu alanda birçok uzman özerk öğrenmeyi dil öğrenim sürecinin önemli bir parçası olarak görmektedir. Bu çalışma, İngilizce öğretmenliği alanında yüksek lisans yapan öğrencilerin ve bölüm akademisyenlerinin yabancı dil öğreniminde özerk öğrenme üzerine tutumlarını ve onların özerk öğrenme uygulamalarından ne anladıklarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu hedefleri gerçekleştirmek amacıyla nicel ve nitel bilgi toplama araçlarını içeren karma yöntemle bilgi toplama süreci gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma, 100 İngilizce öğretmenliği bölümü yüksek lisans öğrencisinin katılımcı olduğu anket ve 4 öğretmen eğitimcisi akademisyenin katılımcı olduğu mülakattan oluşmaktadır. Araştırmanın bulguları, öğrencilerin yeteneklerine yönelik olumlu tutumlarına ve sorumluluklarının farkında olmalarına rağmen yine de öğrenme sürecinden akademisyeni sorumlu tutmayı tercih ettiklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu araştırma aynı zamanda akademisyenlerin özerk öğrenmeyi geliştirmeye yönelik olumlu tutumlara sahip olduklarını ve öğrencilerin öğrenme sürecini geliştirmedeki önemini farkında olduklarını ortaya koymuştur. Başarılı bir öğrenme sürecinde özerk öğrenmenin önemli bir rol oynamasından dolayı, özerk öğrenmeyi teşvik etmek üzerine daha fazla çalışma yapılmasıyla ilgili öneriler ve tavsiyeler sunulmuştur.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Özerk Öğrenme - Sorumluluk- Yetenek- Etkinlik- Dil Öğrenme*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Learner autonomy has been a key topic in the field of foreign language learning and teaching. Much has been written about what learner autonomy means, the rationale for developing it and its implications for teaching and learning languages. With regard to rationale, learner autonomy develops the quality of language learning, assists learners in becoming successful and prepares them for the future. However, master's degree students' and teacher educators' voices are not available in the literature and little is known about master's degree students' perceptions of learner autonomy and teacher educators' attitudes towards the encouragement and application of learner autonomy in the classroom.

Although constructivist and humanistic approaches to learning emphasize the active role of learners in the achievement of the learning process, transmission model prioritises the teacher. Humanistic and constructivist views of education focus on the active learner involvement and active knowledge construction, but transmission model focuses on the teacher who traditionally has much control over the learning process involving what to teach, how to teach and how to assess learning in class.

Learner autonomy has emerged as a principle of learner-centred instruction in parallel with humanistic learning theory. The main justification for learner-centred instruction is pedagogical and based on the argument that it leads to more effective language learning. It is impossible to teach learners everything they need to know of a language in class. They need to learn how to learn so that they can effectively manage or regulate the language learning process. As result, there is a close relationship between personal relevance and proficiency in English. While some students succeed in learning English and reaching a good proficiency level, others fail to master English because they still rely on their teacher. Students will be more successful and effective if they are conscious and aware of their learning process involving setting goals, monitoring progress and evaluating the progress (Little, 2001).

The researcher has chosen this research topic as she has noticed that master's degree students have problems relying on their academics a lot. This problem has led the researcher to decide to explore this research topic in great detail. As she researches the topic, she has seen that there is no or little research on master's degree students' perceptions or attitudes towards becoming self-directed learners and the academics' understanding and application of learner autonomy in their master's classes. The researcher has conducted research involving a questionnaire in which the sampling was over 100 master's degree students and an interview with their academics in the English Language Teaching (ELT) department at Istanbul Aydin University (IAU) in Istanbul, Turkey.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

The meaning of learner autonomy (LA) has been discussed by many theorists and researchers. Since the concept has been defined by Holec as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (1981, p.3), many different definitions which came out emphasize the importance of active learner involvement in their learning process as a way to increase their motivation and improve their learning skills. In 2013 for example, Benson mentions in his book 'Teaching and Researching Autonomy' that the notion of this concept has been gradually incorporated into the field of second language learning since the early 1980s. Little et al. have clarified that autonomy is a 'universal human capacity and drive and it is the teachers' role to channel this pre-existing capacity to benefit learning' (2001, p.10).

In formal learning environment, the development of learner autonomy is very important because it not only teaches them how to take responsibility for their own learning or choices, but it also enables learners to apply the school knowledge and skills to situations in the outside world (Little, 2001). To put it another way, learners can transfer knowledge and skills to a new context. Furthermore, the growth of learner autonomy depends on the development of learners' understanding of what they are learning, how they are learning, how successful they are in learning and why they are learning (Little, 1999). However, a large number of learners in Turkey learn English through traditional methods such as PPP. Therefore, becoming an effective and successful learner

is a challenging process in Turkish classroom. That is to say, becoming a more effective language learner depends on becoming an autonomous learner who is able to take responsibility for his/ her own learning.

Scholars and theorists in the field of language learning present a great wealth of theoretical interpretations and understandings of the importance of learner autonomy in this field. The capacity of learner autonomy in improving language learning skills is seen as an important process that needs to be improved. Holec (1981) says, “Learners will not only be autonomous, but they are also involved in the process of acquiring the ability to assume the responsibility for their learning” (pp. 25-26). However, other scholars like Boud believe that learner autonomy is an interdependent process. He points out “Autonomous learning does not occur in a vacuum” (1988, p. 29). In other words, the process of autonomy happens in isolation from the opinions, ideas and experience of the others. However, the shared opinion between theorists and scholars is that learner autonomy is a process, ability and capacity that need to grow and develop through practice and nurture (Benson, 2011).

## **1.2 Statement of Problem & Purpose**

In order to take responsibility and become autonomous, learners must be provided with a share in the control according to certain aspects of their learning processes (Little, 2001; Dam, 1995; Wenden, 1991; Benson, 2001). The focus in English language classrooms in Turkey is still on teachers who play an important effect on students because they believe that the success of their learning depends on their teacher. As Yumuk (2002) states, “Teachers are the main authority in the classroom and it might be difficult for them to change their teaching” (p.152). Thus, students find it hard to regulate their learning and take different decisions concerning their education.

The first purpose of this research paper is to contribute to the literature in order to identify the general aspects of learner autonomy which language teachers find most effective for both teaching and learning in English classrooms in Turkish context. The second purpose of this study is to prove or disapprove the hypothesis that ELT academics are ready to promote learner autonomy in their classes by investigating the perceptions and attitudes towards learning

autonomy among ELT students and instructors, as well as evaluating its relationship with the success of language learning.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

Learner autonomy has become one of the most interesting and critical topics since the 1980s. It presents a great shift from teacher-centred instruction to student-centred learning. However, in some traditional classes, the teacher is still the centre of attention in these traditional classrooms in which the process of autonomous learning does not take place. Therefore, in formal learning environment, the development of learner autonomy is very important because it not only teaches them how to take responsibility for their own learning, but it also enables learners to apply or transfer the school knowledge and skills to situations in the outside world (Little, 2001). Furthermore, the growth of learner autonomy depends on the development of learners' understanding of what they are learning, how they are learning, how successful they are in learning and why they are learning it (Little, 1999). However, a large number of learners in Turkey learn through traditional educational methods, such as transmission model and Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP), so it is difficult to become successful in the language learning process in the language classrooms. That is, becoming a more successful language learner depends on becoming an autonomous learner who is able to take responsibility for the learning process. Therefore, this study first aims to explore what the concept "learner autonomy" means to ELT academics or teacher educators, identify their perceptions of learner autonomy, how it can be realized and how it can be promoted or developed in the language classroom. The purpose of the study is also to investigate ELT master's degree students' perceptions of learner autonomy and find out to what extent they are autonomous. The last purpose of this research paper is to explore the relationship between learner autonomy and a successful language learning process.

## 1.4 Research Questions

The questions that will be addressed in this research are as follows:

1. How do master's degree students view the responsibilities for learning English?
2. How do master's degree students view their ability to make decisions to learn English?
3. What different learning activities have they utilised and how often have they done them?
4. To what extent are ELT instructors ready to promote learner autonomy?
5. What are the challenges ELT instructors face to help their students to become autonomous? What are teacher educators' suggestions for promoting autonomy in their classes?
6. What is the relationship between demographic variables (age, gender, length of programme) and learner autonomy?

## 1.5 Definition of key words

**Learner autonomy:** is an important concept in educational fields which is defined as the ability to be fully responsible for own's learning (Holec,1981). These abilities consist of identifying and setting goals, planning and executing learning activities, evaluating the learning process and understanding its purpose.

**ELT Department:** stands for English Language Teaching Department. It aims to provide future language teachers with the necessary contemporary knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to become English language teachers.

**Responsibility:** is the duty that learners should perform when they are engaged in learning.

**Ability:** is a talent or skill that an individual has in a different or particular area.

**Activity:** is a task students can do inside or outside the classroom.

**Language learning:** is “the conscious knowledge of a second language, knowing the rules, being aware of them, and being able to talk about them.” (Krashen, 1982, p.10)

## **1.6 Outline of the Thesis**

This research paper consists of five chapters. The first chapter is the introduction in which the purpose, rationale, the research questions of the study are presented. The second chapter is the Literature Review. This chapter reviews the literature of the topic of this study: the definition and history of learner autonomy, the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning, the approaches to learner autonomy, language learning strategies, engaging learner autonomy in language classroom, and finally reviewing the perceptions of learner autonomy in language learning classroom. The third chapter describes the methodology, research design, data collection tools and data analysis. The fourth chapter presents the findings and their data analysis. The conclusion and recommendations are presented in the fifth chapter, in which the researcher provides a well-rounded discussion by referring back to the research questions and the problem represented in the introduction. It also focuses on the summary of the findings, limitations of the study, pedagogical implications and finally recommendations for further research.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, the review of literature on learner autonomy is elaborated. First, several definitions of learner autonomy, a brief historical background, autonomous learner characteristics, teacher and student roles are presented. Then, the relationship between language learning and learner autonomy is explored. Moreover, approaches to learner autonomy and the importance of language learning strategies are covered. Furthermore, activities and strategies in order to implement learner autonomy in language learning classroom are demonstrated. The role of technology in promoting learner autonomy is also emphasised. Finally, students' and instructors' perceptions of learner autonomy are reviewed and discussed.

### **2.2 Learner Autonomy**

#### **2.2.1 Definition of Learner Autonomy**

The meaning of learner autonomy remains controversial among researchers and theorists as it has different definitions and a wide range of implications for language teaching and learning. Learner autonomy was first defined by Holec (1981) as the “ability that enables learners to become responsible for their own learning. According to him, learner autonomy is ‘the ability to take charge of one’s own learning’ (1981, p.3). He also defines this concept in details as the ability “... to have, and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, for example:

- determining the objectives,
- defining the content or materials,
- selecting the appropriate methods, activities and techniques to be used,

- monitoring the progress or procedure of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc.),
- evaluating what has been acquired” (Holec, 1981, p.3).

The concept of learner autonomy is also defined as the capacity for self-management in learning which means that learners have to set their learning goals, monitor progress and evaluate their own learning process. As Little states, 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 learning. The capacity for learner autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learn and, in the way, he or transfers what has been learner to wider contexts.” (Little, 1991, p. 4)

There is a close relationship between student achievement and learner autonomy. Little (1995) suggests that learners who are willing to take responsibility for their own learning and try to be independent are more likely to realize their goals and achieve their learning targets. Similarly, Dickinson (1993, p.38) mentions that the concept of learner autonomy is defined as “a situation in which learners are totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with their learning and the implementation of those decisions.” When they plan the learning process, monitor and evaluate it, they are likely to achieve success.

Some educators approach learner autonomy differently because they emphasise the importance of being self-directed. For instance, Richards (1992) in his article entitled *Learner Autonomy in Language Teaching* has stated that this term refers to the maximum amount of responsibility that learners take regarding what and how they learn. Learners need to be good at selecting the content or materials and also the way how they learn. They can take the necessary decisions to help them to succeed in the process.

Similarly, there is a close relationship between managing the learning process and learner autonomy. Learners need to make decisions about the learning process. As Nunan (2000) points out, learner autonomy is the capability to

govern one's thoughts, feelings and actions responsibly. It helps students set their own goals and find their learning styles that fit their needs and believe in themselves.

On the other hand, good language learners also need to study on their own as the teacher may not provide assistance and guidance and monitor learning at all times. Littlewood (1999) thinks autonomy is very important to learners so that they can learn to study independently:

“If we define autonomy in educational terms as involving students' capacity to use their learning independently of teachers, then autonomy would appear to be an incontrovertible goal for learners everywhere, since it is obvious that no students, anywhere, will have their teachers to accompany them throughout life” (p.73).

Autonomy takes a variety of different forms according to the learning context, learner characteristics as well as the learning process. For example, Thanasoulas (2000) suggests the term of autonomy for different situations. The first one is for situations where learners study on their own. The second one is for situations that have a number of skills that can be learned and used in self-directed learning. The third one is represented for situations that aim to help learners to become responsible for their own learning process. The last one is for those situations that represent the rights of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

These definitions imply that learners can manage the language learning process in which they are able to take control and be responsible for their own learning in terms of what and how they learn. Thus, learner autonomy can help learners solve their problems with motivation, metacognition, independent learning, responsibility and developing skills.

### **2.2.2 The emerge of Learner Autonomy**

The concept of “learner autonomy” has been an area of interest in foreign language teaching and learning for the past 30 years. The concept itself in language learning is related to the communicative approach, both theoretically and historically. In 1995, Gremmo and Riley stated “the rise of autonomy in language learning and in the 1970s and 1980s was connected to a rejection of

behaviourist assumptions about the nature of second language acquisition'' (pp. 152-153). Therefore, learner autonomy has become an important element in the field of education both in teaching and learning a foreign language. According to Gremmo and Riley (1995), a number of factors have in fact influenced the emergence and spread of learner autonomy in the history. Gremmo and Riley have also mentioned that the most influential reasons for the emergence of the concept of learner autonomy are:

- the minority right movement,
- the reactions against behaviourism among philosophers, linguists and educators,
- the development of adult education,
- the increasing demand for foreign language learning,
- the commercialization of much language provision,
- the perception of language learner's role and,
- the development of technology (1995, p. 152).

In foreign language and teaching, learner autonomy has attracted attention since the late 1970s (Finch, 2001). Learner autonomy has become more and more important because it is based on learning to learn rather than learning the knowledge itself (Gremmo, 1995, as cited in Benson, 2001). Learner autonomy was first introduced by Holec in 1979 as the "ability to take charge of one's own learning." Holec prepared a report for the Council of Europe entitled "*Autonomy in Foreign Language Learning*" in which he states that the development of learner autonomy is the key to a better learning process in democratic societies. He points out "The need to develop the individual's freedom by developing those abilities will enable him to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which he lives" (Holec, 1981, p.1).

According to Benson (2001), the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project in 1971 focuses primarily on providing adults with opportunities for lifelong learning. Benson adds that Yves Châlon, who has founded the Center de recherches et d'Applications en Langue (CRAPEL) which is in fact part of the project, is considered as the father of learner autonomy. After the death of

Yves Châlon in 1972, Holec plays an important role in the field of foreign language learning concerning learner autonomy (Benson, 2001).

Some experts in the field consider Holec's report to be the turning point. According to (Little,1991; Benson, 2001), the report released in 1979 is the first to introduce learner autonomy in the field of foreign language learning. He focuses on the importance of individual freedom development in becoming more responsible for the affairs related to society (Benson, 2001). In other words, the aim is to make people the producers of society, not the product of society'' (Holec, 1981).

Studies in the 1980s emphasise the relationship between learner autonomy and learner-centred instruction. Learner autonomy emerged as a result of learner-centred instruction. Finch (2000) feels that both learner independence and learner autonomy present the importance of learner-centred approaches to language education that includes learner-centred curriculum, learner training, learning strategies, cooperative and collaborative learning and learner-based teaching. The purpose of all these approaches is to enable learners to become more independent and more responsible in terms of how they behave, how they think, as well as how they learn.

### **2.2.3 Autonomous Learner Characteristics**

There has been a shift from teacher-centred instruction to student-centred instruction since the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). As a result of this shift, both the teacher's roles and learners' roles in traditional classrooms have gradually changed in modern classrooms. Thus, students can assume a number of new roles in the language classroom like active learner involvement, which is a very important principle of learner centeredness.

Autonomous learners have the qualities good language learners own. Firstly, autonomous learners should be self-directed. In other words, autonomous learners should train themselves to be self-directed in terms of acting independently of the teacher without waiting to be told what to do. Dickinson (1993) says that learners can identify what is being taught because they are fully aware of what is going on in the classroom. He also mentions that autonomous

learners are the ones who can set their learning goals in collaboration with what their teacher offers in the classroom.

Secondly, there is also a relationship between affective factors and autonomous learners. Motivation, self- confidence, attitude and willingness to communicate are some of the most important emotional factors. They can all play an important role in language learning and can influence the learning process positively and negatively. Wenden (1991) has defined autonomous learners as those who are motivated to learn, make and reject hypothesis, willing to take risks and become good guessers. They can select the suitable and appropriate strategies which they are able to implement (Breen & Mann, 1997; Dickinson, 1993; Wenden, 1991). Thanasoulas (2000) emphasises the importance of willingness to study hard and characterizes an autonomous learner as a learner who can take risks, complete assignments that are compulsory and activate his or her prior knowledge while studying. Hedge (2000) describes autonomous learners as those who:

- learn both inside and outside the classroom,
- know how to use resources,
- work productively and know their needs,
- think critically,
- adjust their learning strategies in order to improve their learning,
- manage time and
- do not rely on the teacher for further information.

According to Breen and Mann (1997), autonomous learners must have a great passion for learning a language. Similarly, Candy (1991) feels that autonomous learners must be curious and motivated enough to learn the language. Thus, autonomous learners are self-directed learners who can develop their critical thinking skills, receive constructive criticism and manage their own learning. In other words, learners have to work within and beyond the classroom to develop their skills.

### **2.3 Learner Autonomy and Language Learning**

Developing learner autonomy plays an important role in the success of the learning process. In fact, learning a foreign language is not only an interactive process but also a social process in which learners become independent. According to Dam et. al (1990), the social aspects of learning a language require learners to have a great capacity to be independent and co-operate with others. Independent language learning involves increasing learner choice opportunities and decision making. There are some abilities that should be developed by the learners who are not given and mediated by the teacher like deriving benefits from learning environments (Benson & Voller, 1997; Wright, 2005).

There are three basic pedagogical aspects that emphasize autonomy in language learning. The first one is learner involvement which focuses on engaging and encouraging learners to take responsibility for the learning process. The second aspect is learner reflection. Learner reflection is based on developing learners' critical thinking while planning, monitoring and evaluating learning. The last aspect is the appropriate use of the target language. This aspect focuses on using the target language as the principal medium of language learning. According to Holec (1981), Allwright (1990) and Little (1991), autonomous learners are those who are willing to collaborate with others and also able to reflect on their own learning process through the use of knowledge. These learners are able to accept responsibility, take the initiative, review their learning and evaluate effectively.

Due to several benefits that learner autonomy offers, researchers have supported the development of this approach regarding language learning. Vygotsky (1991) believes that learning supports performance and highlights the importance of social-interactive dimensions for the progress of the learning process. Swain (2000) mentions that the use of the target language in cooperation with others "may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production" (p.99). Little (1996) asserts that language learners should use every offered opportunity to produce the target language in order to increase their communicative competence. He believes that learner autonomy is important because successful learners are those who "have

developed a high degree of autonomy’’ (20). Benson (2004) also views that language learners who are able to use the target language to improve their communicative skills are considered to be successful. Therefore, learners will be more motivated to practice in a language classroom if they find an appropriate and comfortable learning environment. This means that students are more likely to try different learning strategies as well as asking for assistance if necessary.

### **2.3.1 Teacher Roles in Learner Autonomy**

It is a misconception that the teachers are no longer a part in an autonomous language learning classroom. However, EFL instructors can play a significant role in helping students learn the language properly as well as attracting their attention through creating interest among them. They can fulfil different roles in language instruction by providing students with the necessary guidance and tools to learn and acquire the language.

Teachers can assume some significant roles in the enhancement of learner autonomy. Voller (1997) distinguishes three different teacher roles in promoting learner autonomy. According to him, teachers play the role of a facilitator who offers support and advice when needed, develop students’ self-confidence and arouse their interests in learning. He adds that a facilitator monitors the progress and helps the learner to plan, set goals and objectives, and select materials needed. Dornyei (2001) believes that teachers should shift their role to a facilitator if their purpose is to promote and encourage their learners’ autonomy. Chiu (2005) mentions that when teachers shift their role to a facilitator, it means that they want to be considered as a helper who can make the learning process easier to happen. Harmer (2007) suggests that a facilitator provides psycho-social support by helping learners to overcome obstacles that they may face and raise awareness of the importance of autonomous learning.

Another role the teacher adopts is to act as a counsellor who aims to encourage students to use the target language to talk about achievements, problems and ways to solve these problems (Kongchan, 2008). Voller (1997) believes that counselling involves providing advice and offering reasonable suggestions in order to help students find the appropriate learning strategies that fit their

learning needs. As Richards and Rodgers (1986, p.78) states, “A counsellor is expected to exemplify an effective communicator seeking to maximize the meshing of speaker intention and hearer interpretation, through the use of paraphrase, confirmation, and feedback.” Figure1 shows the roles teachers can adopt while teaching and counselling (Riley, 1997).

TEACHING	COUNSELING
1. Setting objectives	1. Eliciting information about aims, needs and wishes
2. Determining course content	Why, what for, how, how long: giving information, clarifying
3. Selecting materials	3. Suggesting materials, suggesting other sources
4. Deciding on time, place and pace	4. Suggesting organization procedures
5. Deciding on learning tasks	5. Suggesting methodology
6. Managing classroom interaction, initiating	6. Listening, responding
7. Monitoring the learning situation	7. Interpreting information
8. Keeping records, setting homework	8. Suggesting record-keeping and planning procedures
9. Presenting vocabulary and grammar	9. Presenting materials
10. Explaining	10. Analyzing techniques
11. Answering questions	11. Offering alternative procedures
12. Marking, grading	12. Suggesting self-assessment tools and techniques
13. Testing	13. Giving feedback on self-assessment
14. Motivating	14. Being positive
15. Rewarding, punishing	15. Supporting

**Figure 2.1:** The Role of the Teacher in Teaching and Counselling

**Source:** (Riley, 1997, p.20)

The role of a resource compared to the role of a facilitator and counsellor; it corresponds more to the teachers’ identity in the classroom. According to Benson and Voller (1997), when teachers act as a resource, they are perceived as “a source of knowledge and expertise.” Moreover, a teacher as a resource provides ample knowledge, materials, and information to satisfy learners’ needs and to promote their learning autonomy. Ravet and Laye (1997) believe that in order to foster learner autonomy, students need to get appropriate resource materials to use either individually or in groups.

A modern teacher can assume different roles from a traditional teacher. In fact, learners can learn a lot from the way their language teacher walks into the classroom at the start of that first lesson (Senior, 2006). Traditionally most

teachers believe that the purpose of teaching a foreign language is to bring about changes in learners. When learner-centred instruction emerges, the role of the traditional teacher who provides all the information has changed to a modern teacher who encourages his/her students to be autonomous and take control of their own learning process. Actually, the teacher plays an important role in promoting learner autonomy by creating a supportive learning environment conducive to learning in which the teacher considers learner needs, goals, preferences and previous learning experiences (Al Asmari, 2013).

The teacher should train his or her learners about how to learn. As Huang (2006) puts it, the teacher's role is to mediate between the learners' right to autonomy and the constraints that inhibit the exercise of this right by discussing these constraints with learners. She or he can guide them to learn how to learn by suggesting ways to study on their own. The teacher can also act as a resource. As Yasmin and Sohail (2018) put it, the teacher as a resource can help students "to select appropriate materials and do activities" (p. 154). Actually, learners have the responsibility to make their own decisions and self-direct or manage their own learning. Learners will succeed in becoming good language learners if the teacher supervises them.

In addition to becoming a guide, a lot of researchers and theorists see that fostering learner autonomy is important to achieve a successful language process. Therefore, the teacher can adopt a number of roles. For instance, Knowles (1975) sees that the teacher is a facilitator, helper and prompter who encourages his/her students to participate and develop critical thinking skills. There is also a close relationship between effective classroom management and learner autonomy. Higgs (1988) believes that the teacher plays the role of a manager who supports and creates a good learning environment for the learners. Moreover, learner autonomy gives learners freedom to make their own choices and set their own learning objectives (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012). Nunan (1993) mentions that the teacher plays an important role in helping the students to develop techniques and strategies and also encouraging them to interact and use language. Holec (1995) asserts that the teacher's role is to develop learner autonomy, thinking about their needs and preferences for learning and setting course goals together.

Moreover, in order to promote learner autonomy, the teacher should act as a catalyst, consultant, observer, analyst, facilitators and counsellor (Little, 1991). In other words, the teacher should be tolerant, open-minded and non-judgmental so that he or she can guide students, help them pick up the appropriate learning strategy needed, encourage them to use language in their pairs as well as motivate them to develop self-confidence and commitment to learning.

### **2.3.2 Students Roles in Learner autonomy**

Learners including adults, young adults like to promote learner autonomy and they all play an active role in learning. Learning is a continuing process and an important process to learners. As Jacobs and Farrell (2001) point out, “The concept of learner autonomy ... emphasizes the role of the learner rather than the role of the teacher. It focuses on the process rather than the product and encourages learners to develop their own purposes for learning and to see learning as a lifelong process” (p.7). Basically, autonomous learners are those who take an increasing amount of responsibility and have control over their learning. They are fully aware of their needs and can set goals and objectives. They can also choose the appropriate learning strategy and take individual decisions according to their needs and preferences for learning. Candy (1991) believes that learners should first have a positive self-concept, become independent and seek information. Moreover, learners have a great capacity to develop their critical thinking, evaluate themselves, monitor and work both independently of the teacher and cooperatively (Little, 1991; Benson, 2001; Scharle & Szabo, 2000). In contrast with adults and young adults, Nunan (1997) believes that young learners are not expected to be autonomous at all. Instead they need gradual help to become autonomous learners. He mentions that learners are fully aware of the pedagogical objectives and involved in selecting their own goals.

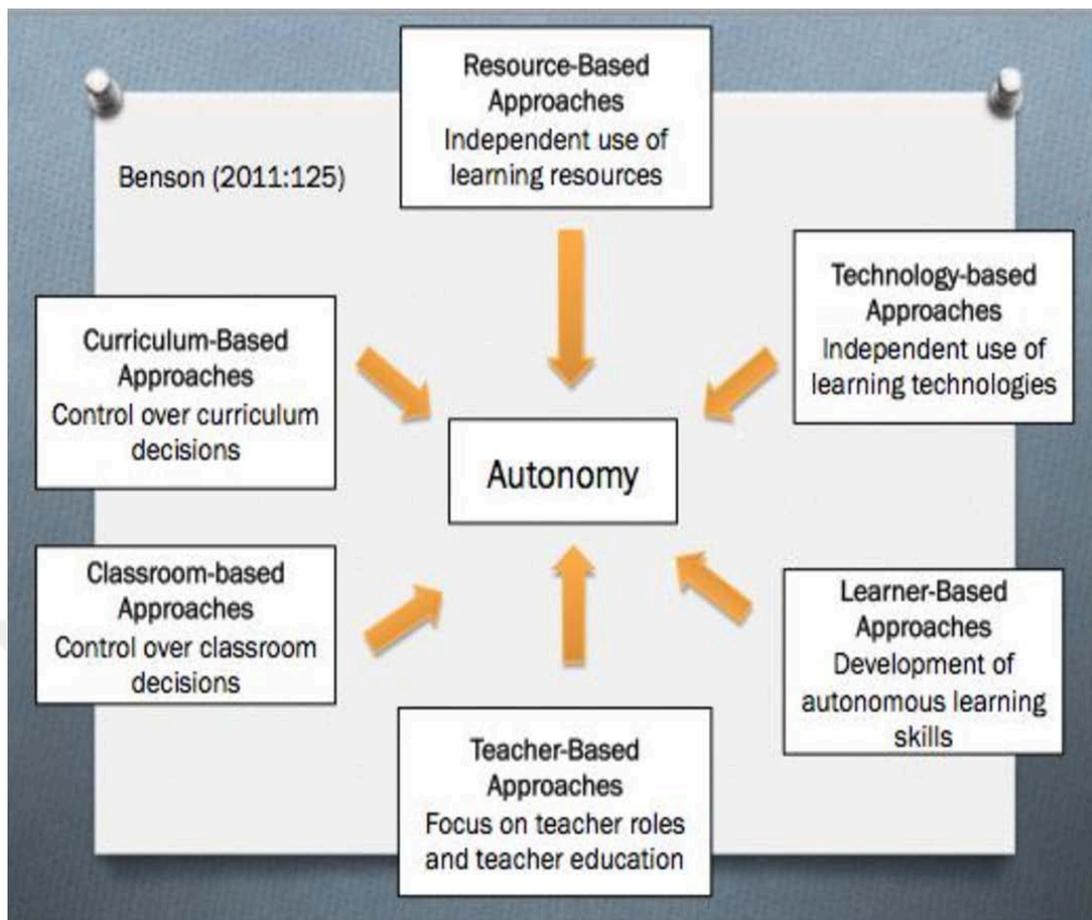
Concerning the roles autonomous learners assume, Littlewood (1999) states that there are two main features of learner autonomy. The first characteristic is that learners should take full responsibility for their own learning process and need to develop the ability to continue learning, following their formal education. The second characteristic is that learners should how to set objectives and goals, select appropriate learning methods and evaluate their learning process.

Cotterall (1995) states that learners have full knowledge about their roles and the role of their teacher, and this knowledge affects their receptiveness to ideas and activities in their language classroom. Besides that, learners should have knowledge about how the language system works and are aware of their needs for an effective learning process. According to (Holec, 1981; Little, 2004), awareness learners “are able to set up goals and objectives, plan and practice useful activities, select learning strategies, monitor their progress, evaluate themselves and actively get engaged in the learning process.” Furthermore, learners attempt “to acquire skills, knowledge, and self-insight through educational experiences that they are responsible for arranging” (Brookfield, 1986, p.149). In other \*words, learners are responsible for the tasks and assignments given by their teacher and those of the proficient learner.

In language learning classroom, Little (2010) thinks that the learner must use the target language and learn to take various roles like responding and initiating a conversation. He adds that learners should develop their abilities from both internal and external language use. Also, students should be involved in decision-making and problem-solving process in relation to classroom management, selecting materials and going through homework and tasks (Balçikanli, 2010). Illes (2012) claims that autonomous learners in language learning classroom should try to look for solutions to various problems either on their own or collaboratively in groups or pairs. She specifies “presenting learners with problems that have no ready-made answers forces them to activate their problem-solving capacity and to work out solutions for themselves” (p.509).

#### **2.4 Approaches to Learner Autonomy in Language Learning**

Learner autonomy plays an important role in the development of students’ learning abilities and decision making. There are several practices that are concerned with the development of learner autonomy in language learning. Benson (2011) has discussed these practices through *Approaches to Development of Learner autonomy*. He has classified them into six approaches as it is shown in Figure 2.



**Figure 2.2:** Autonomy in language learning and related areas of practice

**Source:** (Benson, 2011, p. 125)

Firstly, a technology-based approach to learner autonomy is based on the use of technology to promote learner autonomy independently of the teacher. This approach makes learning more motivating and inspiring. There are many good examples of technology-based approach: computer simulations and videos produced by learners, interactive videos and electronic writing environments. This approach is quite effective for developing learner autonomy since it provides students with several motivational opportunities to control their own learning (Robbins, 2002; Raya & Fernandez, 2002; Benson, 2001; Schwienhorst, 1997; Schwienhorst, 2003).

Secondly, a learner-based approach to learner autonomy is based on working on the psychology and the behaviour of learners that will absolutely help them to take control of their learning. It focuses directly on developing students' learning strategies and techniques because it is said that the students who use

these strategies and techniques properly are able to be responsible for their own learning (Finch, 2000; Benson, 2001).

Thirdly, a classroom-based approach to learner autonomy is based on keeping students motivated and engaged and enables learners to make decisions on their own. Through this approach, learners are able to see how their classwork relates to real-life situations. Thus, they develop their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, their ability to direct their own learning, their ability to set goals and monitor their own progress and finally they gain a growth mind-set in which they can believe that their hard work will pay off regarding obstacles they may face.

Fourthly, a curriculum-based approach to learner autonomy gives students the opportunity to control the curriculum which includes what to teach, how to teach and how to assess. Learners can develop the ability and capacity to control their own learning (Finch, 2000; Benson, 2001; Littlejohn, 1985). They can make decisions about content creation including materials development, organisation of syllabus, and conceptualisation of content. They can also make decisions about how to learn or teach with their teacher. They can also play an active role in assessment.

Fifthly, a resource-based approach to learner autonomy is based on the learning opportunities provided to direct students' self-study and self-access. Researchers and theorists have found that learners are more active and creative (Littlejohn, 1997; Sheerin 1997; Sturtridge, 1997), and use authentic materials productively (Lee, 1996; McGarry, 1995). Resource-based approaches focus on learners' independent interaction regarding the resources provided by offering them opportunities to practice their control over their learning process. Furthermore, in a resource-based approach, students are supposed to develop their autonomy by error and experiments.

Finally, a teacher-based approach to learner autonomy emphasizes the role of the teacher in fostering learner autonomy among learners. The teachers' role here is to help students to learn how to set goals and objectives, assess and evaluate themselves and select materials. The purpose is to develop students' effectiveness of independent study, control their learning, offer learners choices and develop their learning skills both inside and outside of the classroom.

## **2.5 Language Learning Strategies LLS and Learner autonomy**

### **2.5.1 Definition of LLS**

The term 'learning strategy' has so far been defined by many researchers and theorists. Rigeney (1978) defines language learning strategies as "the often-conscious behaviour that a language learner uses to enhance the acquisition and use of information. It is defined by Tarone (1983) as 'an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language-to integrate these competences into learner's interlanguage competence' (p. 67). Brown (1981) simply defines the term as those processes which directly contribute to an effective learning process. Moreover, Weden and Rubin (1987, p.19). come up with a different definition. They say that learning strategies are 'any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information.'" Oxford (1992) has made a more comprehensive definition:

"Language learning strategies – specific actions, behaviours, steps, or techniques students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability (p.18).

O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p: 1) define language learning strategies as "all those special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information." Richards and Platt (1992, p.45) describe learning strategy as "an intentional behaviour or thought that is used by language learners to help them to understand, learn, or remember new information.' Furthermore, the term is defined by Rubin (1987) as the techniques and steps that language learners use and follow to improve and facilitate language learning.

### **2.5.2 The importance of LLS**

Language learning strategies play a significant role in facilitating language learning. According to Oxford (1989), they are tools for active and self-directed

learning which can enhance learner autonomy. They tend to make language learning easier, faster, more enjoyable and effective.

Learning strategies offer several advantages. Firstly, they can help learners to be aware of the learning process. Oxford (1989) states that language learning strategies can benefit language learners because they “encourage learners to become more responsible for their own learning” (pp. 235-247). Secondly, they can make the learning process meaningful. Wenden (1987, p.74) mentions that “learning strategies are the various operations that learners use in order to make sense in their learning.” Thirdly, they can develop critical thinking skills. Williams and Burden (1997) state that learning strategies improve learners’ problem-solving skills, Therefore, learners should learn how to apply learning strategies according to what actually work for them. Finally, learning strategies help students to be more confident. Therefore, they automatically improve and enhance their ability to learn language and succeed in language learning.

There is a close relationship between learning strategies and learner-centred instruction. A shift from teacher-centeredness to student-centeredness has made a great focus on the students themselves as learners are varied and unique with different needs, goals and preferences for learning. Language learning strategies have been an important part of this shift. Regarding the role of learner in language learning, Oxford (1990) points out that improving “students’ awareness and self-control” rely on language learning strategies that absolutely reinforce learner autonomy” (p.1). Therefore, learners learn how to take control of their learning process and are able to make their own choices.

### **2.5.3 Classifications of LLS**

The research on language learning strategies started in the 1970s and since then Language learning strategies have been classified by many language researchers and scholars like O’Malley and Chamot (1985), Rubin (1987), and Oxford (1990). According to O’Malley and Chamot (1985), language learning strategies are differentiated into three main categories: cognitive, social/affective and meta-cognitive strategies. The first category is that cognitive strategies are limited to some specific tasks and they involve mental manipulation of materials or tasks which intend to enhance comprehension and acquisition, such as

repetition, note taking, summarizing, auditory presentation, imagery, translation and recombination. The second category is that social/affective strategies are mainly related to social-mediating activities. They involve the use of social interactions in order to assist in comprehension activities, such as cooperating and collaborating with peers in problem-solving tasks. The third category is the metacognitive strategies. These strategies require learners to express executive functions which involve:

- thinking about the learning process,
- planning which includes directed attention, functional planning and self-management,
- monitoring like checking, correcting one's comprehension and verifying and
- evaluating learning tasks, such as checking the outcomes.

Moreover, language learning strategies can function as techniques and devices. Rubin (1987) sees that language learning strategies are techniques or devices which language learners use to acquire a second language. He adds that those strategies are a set of operations, plans and routines that learners follow in order to facilitate the use of information and regulate learning. Rubin's taxonomy of language learning strategies is divided into two main categories: cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Rubin's cognitive strategies include clarification, guessing, deductive reasoning, practice (like repetition, rehearsal, experimentation, and imitation), memorizing, and monitoring while the meta-cognitive strategies include planning, prioritizing, setting goals, and self-management.

In addition to Rubin's category, Oxford (1990) mentions that language learning strategies are important tools towards effective communicative competence. According to her, language learning strategies are 'specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, and more transferable to new situations (Oxford, 2002).

Oxford divides language learning strategies into two main groups: direct and indirect. The first group is that direct strategies include memory, cognitive and compensation strategies. Indirect strategies which are based on powerful

learning are subdivided into three groups: meta-cognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social Strategies. Firstly, memory strategies are based on the use of visuals (e.g., formula, imagery, etc.) in order to make a strong association between both the old and the new information that will be recorded in the long-term memory. Secondly, cognitive strategies work on analysing, synthesizing as well as evaluating to make connection between the old and the new information. Thirdly, compensation strategies are used by language learners to work on their incompetence in the target language, for example, guessing unknown while listening or reading (Oxford, 1990). The second group is that indirect strategies include metacognitive, affective social strategies. Firstly, meta-cognitive strategies help language learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate new information. Secondly, affective strategies aim to decrease anxiety, motivate, and control feelings. Thirdly, social strategies involve asking questions, cooperating with peers and empathizing with them (Oxford ,1990).

## **2.6 Implementing Learner Autonomy in Language Classroom**

There is a great concern with fostering learner autonomy involving individual, gradual, never-ending progress. Both teachers and learners can collaborate with each other and go hand in hand in the implementation of learner autonomy in many respects. Firstly, teachers can help their learners to set goals and select appropriate materials. Cotterell (2000) believes that in order to promote learner autonomy in language classroom, instructors should “raise learners’ awareness of identifying goals, and learning how to use resources” which will help them achieve success. (pp. 111-112). Secondly, the way how they study is of great importance i.e., methodology. Benson (2001) emphasizes the necessity to promote learner autonomy through certain activities so that learners can take charge of their own learning progress. Thirdly, the teacher must also become autonomous to act as a guide. Benson (2001) believes that teachers’ role is a key factor that assists learners in developing learner autonomy. He mentions that “in order to foster learner autonomy, teachers themselves must display a degree of autonomy in their approaches to teaching and learning” (p.185). In other words, implementing learner autonomy in the language classroom does not mean that the teacher stops teaching, but in fact a learning community

should be created (Little, 2004). This means that the promotion of learner autonomy cannot be accomplished without a supportive learning environment. To be able to enhance learner autonomy, Ustunloughlu (2009) claims that teachers should guide their learners to learn how to learn by teaching them some strategies or doing activities which give them a chance to study independently.

In addition to the roles of teachers and students in the enhancement of learner autonomy, A positive and supportive language learning classroom environment contributes to the implementation of learner autonomy a lot. A stress-free environment with a low affective filter and a supportive learning environment based on trust and respect can promote learner autonomy by encouraging students to become confident through interaction, partnership, collaboration and cooperation. Therefore, their learning process will become more effective and purposeful because they will be provided with different learning opportunities to practise, use and produce language through several activities which can reflect their learning goals and interests (Little, 2003; Dam, 1995; Wenden, 1991; Brown, 2001).

### **2.6.1 Pair work and group work**

There is a close relationship between interactive language learning and learner autonomy. To implement learner autonomy in the language classroom, teachers organise various patterns of interaction: individual, pair work or group work. They can choose which pattern of interaction they will use according to the types of activities. Teachers usually prefer to organise the class into pairs and groups to develop learner fluency and communication skills. When students study in pairs and groups, they can construct knowledge collaboratively. Collaboration or cooperation allows teachers to implement learner autonomy in the language classroom. Pair work or group work is a good example of communicative language teaching (CLT) and task-based language teaching (TBLT) in ELT.

Studying in a pair or in a group can offer learners many benefits. Firstly, learners can be given opportunities to produce language. As Little (1994) remarks, learner autonomy highly recommends working in pairs or in groups rather than working individually because they develop learners' capacity to use

the target language, communicate freely and share opinions. Secondly, learners become motivated to negotiate meaning, set up goals and make conscious decisions which improve not only their proficiency level but also their social skills and abilities (Little, 2004; Brown, 2001; van Lier, 1996). Thirdly, by collaborating with their peers, students become less dependent on the teacher because they are allowed to communicate with each other and take decisions freely based on their interests. Moreover, pair work or group work can help learners develop their cognitive and critical thinking skills. For instance, Tuan (2010) believes that working in groups and pairs enhances learners' cognitive growth and motivation and increases learners' linguistic and problem-solving skills. Furthermore, group work or pair work allows students to work and interact independently without any guidance from their teacher. Scharle and Szabo (2000) believe:

Promoting cooperation in the classroom affects the learner attitudes in several ways. It encourages the learners to rely on each other (and consequently, themselves as well) and not only on the teacher. Pair work and group work helps them get a higher promotion of actively being involved in completing a task.... These then are building blocks of responsible attitudes on the part of the learner. (p.8)

Finally, when treating the class as a whole group and underestimating their abilities to work in pairs or small groups, students become more likely to be independent, responsible, motivated and confident. In creating such cooperation, the classroom become more relaxed and students are able to take steps towards taking their own decision. Furthermore, students learn how to help, discuss, argue, assess each other's current knowledge and fill in the gaps in each other's understanding as well as addressing any misconceptions. Thus, these activities are an essential methodological paradigm in the constructivism of learner autonomy.

There are different collaborative activities that promote learner autonomy like:

- *Brainstorming meetings*: Brainstorming is a collaborative activity based on developing learners' thinking skills (Houston, 2006). It is used for the purpose of intensive discussion to generate ideas or solve problems.

Brainstorming meeting which are held in groups is a great way to encourage and build unity among students. It helps students flesh out ideas in a non-judgmental environment. In other words, it brings learners together where they can manifest and contribute to a creative process. Rao (2007) mentions that brainstorming sessions, suggestions and ideas are not either ignored or judged; but in fact, they are valuable and taken into consideration to solve the problems.

- *Dialog writing*: the purpose of doing this activity in groups is to communicate and use the language through exchanging ideas and information. According to Abdolmanafi Rokni and Seifi (2013), writing a dialog in groups is an alternative process for students to construct knowledge, use the language and interact more. Sun and Chang (2012) claim that doing this activity in pairs or in groups helps learners to foster reflective learning and use different resources.
- *Group investigation*: is a collaborative activity which is related to collecting, analysing, and creating information. The purpose of this activity is to work collaboratively in order to solve a multi-task problem. The students here can use a variety of resources (Slavin, 2008). Moreover, this activity requires elaborative researching, planning and developing language skills (Holm, 2016).
- *Jigsaw*: is an alternative collaborative learning activity that requires learners' effort to achieve an objective. This activity requires dividing the class into groups who are given some specific information and instructions they need to follow in which they then become experts. Jigsaw is used by language learners to increase learners' cognitive skills like critical thinking in a collaborative learning environment (Mengduo & Xiaoling, 2010).
- *Roundtable*: is a good collaborative activity and interactive method to practice vocabulary, grammar or even content. Learners share ideas and opinions with the other members of the group in which they improve their problem-solving abilities and develop their speaking and even writing skills in a collaborative learning environment.

- *Think/pair/share TPS*: TPS is a learning activity in which students work collaboratively to answer some questions or solve problems about an assigned reading. In other words, students work together to solve problems. According to Tuan (2010, p.64) in this activity, “Learners have the opportunity to share their language input with the other students and benefit from the feedback they receive from various resources.”

Tasks can be good for the development of learner autonomy. Students can both collaborate with each other and become autonomous. As Vygotsky (1991) claims, group work is a key variable to promote learner autonomy because students will have to perform different tasks in which they will depend on each other rather than depending on the teacher from the beginning and they will also support each other in task performance. Lacey (2007, p.7) supports Vygotsky by saying:

“The class unity is lost in the many small groups but weak students are, just like strong students, working on their self-assigned tasks, and thus are no longer segregated in the class, but are a part of the class.”

Therefore, both pair work and group work help to implement a different atmosphere in the classroom and boost learner autonomy.

### **2.6.2 Authenticity**

Authenticity is another key feature in promoting learner autonomy. It not only includes authentic materials, but it also involves creating an authentic learning environment and providing students with authentic tasks. Authentic materials can play an important role in helping students not only to become genuine users of the target language, but also to prepare them for real communication that is related to situations they may face in real life.

Authentic materials can offer several advantages. Hopkins (1998) believes that authentic materials can provide learners with input or exposure in a task-based lesson and therefore, they can utilise language texts to get meaning-focused input which is key to successful language learning. For instance, students find

authentic texts (reading or listening) more interesting, challenging and motivational than created texts aiming to illustrate only some aspects and features of the target language. Moreover, through authentic materials learners start to learn the language to satisfy their educational, personal and social needs. Thus, they become successful in becoming autonomous and achieving self-management. Authentic texts can also be motivating for learners. King (1990) states that authentic materials can provide them with a realistic situation that definitely attracts their attention and makes them curious and motivated to learn about the language and the culture of that language. Using challenging authentic materials can also develop both student autonomy in terms of learning how to learn. According to Rixon (1986), “Challenging texts allow learners to make more discoveries than created materials” (p. 56).

On the other hand, although authentic materials have a lot of advantages, there are some researchers like Besse (1981), Underwood (1983), and Williams (1983) who argue that authentic materials are not designed to use in language learning. They believe that the language used in authentic materials can be too hard for learners at lower levels to understand, so they can affect learner motivation if they are inappropriately used. Therefore, authentic materials may not be suitable for inexperienced teachers and slow learners.

## **2.7 Learner Autonomy and Use of Technology in Language Learning Classroom**

It is no wonder that the use of technology in the language classroom has a great impact on student life. Teaching English via technology has attracted language learners’ attention. Many EFL instructors choose to utilise technology in order to stimulate students’ intrinsic motivation. Ahmadi (2017) mentions that the use of technology is one of the most important elements that enhances and facilitates the language learning process. Brown (2001) remarks the importance of technology in the life of learners and teachers: “Computer technology has been a part of our daily routines (p. 143). Becker (2000) states that computers are seen as an important instructional tool for the development of the learning process.

The adoption of advanced technologies provides students with several opportunities. To begin with, use of technology allows learners to practise the target language, develop their learning skills and make the activities in the classroom authentic (Fitriah, 2018). Moreover, the use of technology in language classroom not only improves learners' proficiency in English, but it also promotes their autonomous learning skills (Ahmadi & Reza, 2018; Costley, 2014). Thirdly, Benson (2001) mentions that technology provides students with different opportunities to take ownership of their own learning process, have self-access to learning and enhance intrinsic motivation. In other words, technology has a great potential to foster the autonomous behaviour of language learners. Finally, the use of technology can be very motivating for learners. As Pellerin (2017) points out, learner autonomy can grow when students are involved in technological environment which highly reinforces their motivation. Learners become more independent of their teachers when they are working on the computer.

There are two methods focusing on the use of technology in the language classroom. The first method which allows teachers to teach the language is Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). CALL can be an effective way to teach languages as it can help learners formulate their own tasks without looking for further instructions from their teachers (Toyoda, 2001). Collentine (2011) believes that CALL affects student learning positively and fosters autonomous learning as the teacher can "help learners to modify the input, gauge learning and monitor progress" (p.51). Another method based on the use of technology is Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). CMC provides learners with different features of being autonomous like being able to evaluate their own learning and to make their own decisions. Concerning the relationship between CALL and CMC, Blin (2004) states that CMC naturally allows learners to have control over interaction in language learning while CALL provides learners with a potential to take control of some aspects of their learning.

Technology is a significant variable in promoting learner autonomy through the use of different tools like computer programs which are tailored to their learning needs, goals and preferences for learning. The development of these technologies provides language learners with practical needs in which they can

determine their own objectives and goals. In other words, learners become more interested in sustainable learning, becoming more independent and more able to control it when using technology for instructional purposes.

## **2.8 Perceptions of Learner Autonomy in Language Learning Classroom**

The development of learner autonomy in language classroom apparently has been a research interest of many researchers and theorists for over 40 years (Dam, 1995). There are different studies that have focused on students' and teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy around the world.

### **2.8.1 Students' perceptions of learner autonomy**

It is the learner-centred instruction which makes language learning classroom more interesting. No one can deny the fact that language teachers do their best in their classroom, hoping that their students learn the language properly. Therefore, they can use it to serve communicative purposes effectively. But unfortunately, many students learn only for exams more than learning to learn. Chan (2001) has worked on Hong Kong Poly Technic University students' perceptions of language learning. She has found that they should try to make some efforts to be autonomous learners, but they haven't reached that level of autonomy because they still depend on their teacher to guide them. Likewise, Wiriyachitra (2002) has conducted a research study at Thai University and as a result of this research, she has found that language learners are passive, they lack confidence and they often rely on their teacher.

There are some studies on the relationship between metacognitive skills and learner autonomy. In 2003, Koçak conducted a questionnaire at English language preparatory school at Baskant University in Ankara. He states that learners still rely on their teacher when it comes to self-monitoring and self-evaluation. Another study was administered in Japan by Mineishi (2010) in which he dealt with 219 first year EFL students. Mineishi finds that students are interested in becoming autonomous learners. In other words, he has noticed that students are able to activate their prior knowledge and make suggestions to their teachers about what to learn and how to learn.

Yıldırım published an article in 2008 in which he dealt with Turkish EFL learners' readiness for learner autonomy. His results indicate that there is a significant relationship between the students' perceptions of learner autonomy and their teacher responsibility in the classroom. Students believe that they have a sense of sharing responsibility with the teacher, but they claim that there are some instructional aspects the teacher should have more responsibility than students.

Another research which was conducted by Farahi (2015) aimed to investigate the ELT students' and instructors' perceptions of learner autonomy in ELT department at Eastern Mediterranean University. The results of the study reveal that ELT students have a positive attitude towards learner autonomy and that these learners have the potential to become autonomous learners.

Patcharee Scheb-Buener (2019) conducted a study in a private international college in Thailand. She has found that the students may not have a comprehensive understanding of autonomy. Students still assume passive roles because according to these students learning autonomy means studying outside the classroom or making use of their free time.

### **2.8.2 Teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy**

Teachers play an important part in promoting learner autonomy. Therefore, their perceptions and beliefs are important as long as they have an impact on their practices. There are only few studies that have focused on teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy. Borg and Busaidi (2012a) claim that despite the importance of the role of learner autonomy in language classroom and the studies that have been conducted so far concerning this issue, there are only few studies that have dealt with teachers' perceptions and beliefs about learner autonomy. They have conducted a study in Oman with 61 English language teachers to investigate their perceptions of learner autonomy in language learning classroom. They have found that teachers have a positive view on learner autonomy. However, they have noticed that students are unfamiliar with learner autonomy at all and lack enthusiasm of autonomy which makes the fact of encouraging autonomy much more difficult for them.

Other studies conducted by Asmari (2013) and Duong (2014) in which they have explored EFL instructors' practices and perceptions of learner autonomy. According to them, language learners should have full responsibility for their own learning and must learn to make their own decisions even if they find it difficult to promote autonomy in their classes. Asmari (2013) has also administered a study himself which focuses on English language student-teachers' attitudes towards learner autonomy at Taif University. The purpose of the study is to find out to what extent prospective English language teachers promote learner autonomy in their classroom. The results show that teachers highly favour the concept of autonomous learning and get ready to promote and encourage learner autonomy in their future classes.

Moreover, Shahsavari (2014) has conducted a study in Gooyesh Language Institute in Isfahan, Iran. Her goal is to find out both students' and teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy. The result of her mixed-method design study suggests that the teachers' attitudes towards the concept is positive. She has noticed that the teachers even use practices to promote autonomous learning among their students.

In 2015, Najmeh et al. have conducted research in Iranian schools in which he has interviewed and observed the practices of English language instructors. The result of this study indicates that the participants have positive attitudes towards learner autonomy. The following year, Alhaysony (2016) has examined EFL teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy in a mixed-method design study. He has found that teachers are fully aware of the importance of learner autonomy and also their students should normally be responsible for their learning. However, they are not ready to promote autonomous learning in their classroom.

Finally, Arfae (2017) has undertaken research at the University of Ontario and explored both ESL instructors and teacher trainers' viewpoints about learner autonomy and to what extent they are ready to enhance it in their classrooms. The respondents who have participated in this study show positive attitudes to the concept, but unfortunately they are not sure about the feasibility of autonomy because of some institutional barriers.

In conclusion, these studies about both students' and teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy differ from each other in many respects. However, studies

show that language teachers have a great interest in promoting learner autonomy among their students regardless of the boundaries or the difficulties they may face.

## **2.9 Assessment in Learner Autonomy**

Within the field of language teaching-learning education, assessment is an important feature for a successful learner process. Actually, it is an important feature as well in promoting learner autonomy if it is used properly. In other words, assessment should be used not only to evaluate students' achievement, but also to motivate students to learn. There are two different types of assessment that absolutely differ from each other in terms of promoting learner autonomy; alternative and traditional assessment.

Traditional assessment is a method that has been used for a long time. It is generally based on the utilization of a pen, paper or a computer-based examination which consists of simple patterns like matching, true false or multiple-choice questions. Alternative assessment, on the other hand, is based on authenticity and it is more practical and experimental. It generally requires students to be involved in a variety of tasks through showing what they are able to do and produce. Huerta-Marcias (1995, p.11) believes that alternative assessment is 'used to gather information about how students are approaching, processing, and carrying out real-life.' Moreover, the purpose of alternative assessment is to relate instructions given in the class to students' real-world experience (Simonson et al.) Winking (1997) also emphasizes the importance of authenticity and claims that alternative assessment requires students to develop their thinking skills in order to find solutions to real-life problems.

There are several alternative assessment techniques like open-ended questions, demonstrations, computer stimulation, hands-on execution of experiments and portfolios (Dietel et al., 1991). However, the most common and used alternative assessment techniques are portfolios, projects and self-assessment.

Self-assessment is technically a process used by students to plan, monitor, and evaluate their own learning. Through this process, students are able to revise their learning goals and objectives, determine the areas that need to be improved

and also check their work according to certain standards. Little (2003) and Brown (2001) claim that learners can relate their learning to their individual learning needs so that they can use it in the future.

Balciknali (2008) believes that self-assessment is crucial to learner autonomy. In other words, this process promotes learner autonomy because it develops learners' critical thinking, raise their awareness and reflect on their own competence (Kucuroglu, 1997). Besides that, self-assessment develops self-reflection, critique and judgment as well as reflective skills and abilities to identify the strengths and the weaknesses. Furthermore, students become more involved in the learning process and more encouraged to be involved and responsible for their own learning. Therefore, students should be trained to self-evaluate themselves (Egle, 2003) and teachers should be ready to offer help, support and guide their students when needed.

## **2.10 Summary**

This chapter has reviewed the literature of the topic for this research paper. It has given a detailed account of the overall concept and does it emerge, provide the characteristics of autonomous learners, presented the role of both the teacher and the students, explained the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning, approaches to learner autonomy in language learning, language learning strategies, promoting learner autonomy in language classroom, and it also presented the previous perceptions of both the teachers and the students towards learner autonomy.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This research paper has attempted to investigate ELT students' and teacher educators' perceptions of learner autonomy in the English Language Teaching (ELT) department at Istanbul Aydın University in Istanbul, Turkey and evaluate its relationship with language learning.

In this sense, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. How do master's degree students view the responsibilities for learning English?
2. How do master's degree students view their ability to make decisions to learn English?
3. What different learning activities have they utilised and how often have they done them?
4. To what extent are ELT instructors ready to promote learner autonomy?
5. What are the challenges ELT instructors face to help their students to become autonomous?
6. What are teacher educators' suggestions for promoting autonomy in their classes?
7. What is the relationship between the demographic variables (age, gender, length of programme) and learner autonomy?

This methodology chapter is composed of five sections. The first section deals with the research design of this study. In the second section, the setting and the participants are presented. The materials and instruments used in this study are explained in the third section. The fourth section deals with explaining step by step the data collection procedure. Finally, the last section describes how data analysis was analysed.

### **3.2 Research Design**

This research paper is based on a descriptive approach to investigating and exploring both ELT master's degree students' and teacher educators' perceptions of learner autonomy and finding out its relationship regarding language learning in the ELT department. This study has adopted a mixed methods design of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (2008), mixed-methods design are products of a pragmatist paradigm that combine both the quantitative and qualitative approaches in the same study. Crewell (2007) believes that a mixed-methods design is "research in which the researcher collects and analyses data, and integrates the findings, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches in a single study." In fact, it has grown in popularity among researchers in the last 20 years (Cohen et al., 2001, p.21). He has mentioned that the pragmatist paradigm in which mixed-methods research is situated is very "matter-of-fact", that works on integrating both quantitative and qualitative aspects of research.

In the first phase, a quantitative process method has been employed to reach a specific number of participants. Rovai et al (2014) believe that a quantitative research method is a deductive approach towards research. In other words, it is based on testing a theory, measured by numbers and analysed with statistical techniques and methods. Its purpose is to figure out whether the hypothesis predicted is true or not. Therefore, quantitative data have been collected through an online questionnaire measuring ELT students' perceptions of learner autonomy.

The second phase of this research has employed a qualitative approach through collecting and analysing non-numerical data, such as videos, audios or interviews in order to understand multiple concepts, experiences, ideas, and opinions. Patton (2001) sees that the purpose of the qualitative approach method is to understand a social or human problem from different perspectives. He claims that this method provides a naturalistic approach in a 'real world setting [where] the answers open many venues for a better understanding of ideas depending on the metaphors and the words being used, content order as well as body language" (as cited in Golafshani, 2003, p.600). Therefore, a semi-instructed interview has been used in order to investigate and understand the

ELT instructors' opinions on learner autonomy and find out how they promote it in their classroom.

Using both quantitative and qualitative approaches in the same study has been considered seen to be the most useful and fruitful way of research. Atieno (2009) believes that 'in order to do good research, we need to use both the quantitative and qualitative data.' Dörnyei (2007) also believes that the use of both quantitative and qualitative data in the same research helps the researcher evaluate the problem from different perspectives and the most important is that it provides deeper analysis ( p 313).

To conclude, a mixed-methods design is employed in this research paper which is based on 'collecting data first and then explaining the quantitative results in relation with the qualitative data' (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2001).

### **3.3 Setting and Participants**

This research was conducted in English Language Teaching (ELT) Department at Istanbul Aydin University (IAU), which is located on the European side of Istanbul, Turkey. Two different participants were selected for this study. A non-probability sampling technique was used in this study, which is based on the selection of participants according to the basis of availability, accessibility and convenience (Davis, 2015, p.199). The first participants were ELT master's degree students from different nationalities who agreed to participate in this research. The target group consisted of a total of 50 females and 50 males, aged 18-27. Students who participated in this research were varied. Participants have been attending this programme for 1-3 years. The demographic data on gender, age, and nationality were gathered in the online survey and were analysed statistically, using SPSS 25. Table 1 presents the information and the professional characteristics of the ELT master's degree students who participated in this study:

**Table 3.1:** Background information of the respondents

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Gender	Male	50	50.0
	Female	50	50.0
Nationality	Turkish	39	39.0
	Arab	39	39.0
	Other	22	22.0
Age	18-20	1	1.0
	21-23	23	23.0
	24-26	62	62.0
	+27	14	14.0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

As can be seen in Table 1, the females and males share an equal percentage of participation (50%). Concerning nationality, the majority of respondents are 39 Turkish students and 39 Arab students. However, 22 participants come from different nationalities, Concerning the age, the majority of the participants are between 24-26 (62%). This is followed by participants aged 21-23 (23%), +27 (14%) and 18-20 (1%).

The second participants are ELT master's degree teacher educators, who are selected and who have agreed to participate in this study. A total of 4 instructors (2 males and 2 females) have participated and have claimed that they have been generally teaching for more than 8 years and have been teaching courses in the ELT master's program at IAU for more than 4 years. The instructors who have participated in this study are actually from two different nationalities: Turkish and Iranians.

### **3.4 Data Collection Instruments**

In order to achieve the purpose of this research, this study adopts a mixed-methods design combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. To this end, two data collection tools including an online questionnaire and a semi-structured interview have been employed. Quantitative (QUAN) data are collected through an online questionnaire and the qualitative (QUAL) data are collected through a semi-structured interview. Dörneyi (2007) sees that combining the QUAN and QUAL methods helps increase the strengths and decrease the weaknesses of the study. Moreover, combining both QUAN and

QUAL provides methodological flexibility. In other words, mixed methods have great flexibility and most importantly, they are adaptable to many study designs (Sandelowski, 2003). Thus, this study has employed both the QUAN and QUAL respectively in order to achieve the objectives of the research.

#### **3.4.1 The questionnaire**

The first instrument used for this study is an online questionnaire prepared via (Google Forms) for ELT master's program students. The researcher has adopted a questionnaire from Evrim (2009). The questionnaire consists of two parts: The first part includes demographic questions (5 questions) on students' gender, age, nationality and the reason for choosing an ELT program for their master's degree in order to have a clear view about students' perceptions of being autonomous. The second part of the questionnaire used for this study (see Appendix 1) is made up of three sections, all of which are related to learner autonomy. The second part deals with students' perceptions of their responsibilities (10 items), abilities (10 items) and activities (10 items). In this part, ELT master's degree students state their opinions about who is responsible for the learning process: themselves or their teacher educators. They also state their opinions about their abilities in a five-point Likert scale. Likert scale is a type of rating scale used to measure attitudes of the participants. In this study participants are asked to rate the items on a level of agreement: very poor, poor, OK, good and very good. The last section of this questionnaire investigates students' perceptions of the activities in which they may engage both inside and outside the classroom. In this section, students are asked to rank 10 statements as never, rarely, sometimes, often and always.

#### **3.4.2 The semi-structured Interview**

In addition to administering a questionnaire, interviews have been conducted with the ELT department instructors in order to explore their attitudes and perceptions of learner autonomy regarding language learning. They have been asked nine open-ended questions adopted from prepared for ELT master's program instructors of Istanbul Aydin University. The purpose of this interview is to find out ELT master's degree teacher educators' attitudes and practices of learner autonomy, investigate to what extent they promote learner autonomy in

their classrooms and find out what kind of activities they use to motivate students to become autonomous learners. Therefore, the interview is divided into five sections. The first section includes 2 questions (Q1 – Q2), which deal with instructors' personal information concerning their experience of working as a teacher educator. The second section has 2 questions (Q3 – Q4), which are concerned with evaluating instructors' opinions about learner autonomy. The third section of this interview deals with promoting and engaging learner autonomy in instructors' classroom through motivation and activities and it covers 4 questions (Q5- Q6- Q7- Q8). The fourth section has only 1 question (Q9) that tries to find answers to the relationship between the learner and language learning according the ELT department instructors. The last section tries to find out the challenges that instructors face and suggestions for more effective promotion of learner autonomy in 3 questions (Q9- Q10- Q11).

### **3.5 Data collection procedure**

As quantitative data precede the qualitative data, the online questionnaire is first administered. After receiving an email of approval to use the questionnaire from the researcher, the necessary modifications on the questionnaire have been made to adjust it to the purpose and the objectives of this research paper and then sent to Istanbul Aydın University administration in order to get the permission to conduct it in the ELT department. After receiving the email of approval from the administration of the university, the questionnaire has been prepared online through 'Google Forms' and e-mailed to the 100 participants. The purpose of the study and the necessary explanations are provided in the introduction of the survey.

In fact, online questionnaires have many advantages. For instance, they are not time consuming and they can be easily transformed to Microsoft Excel and analysed via SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). Little (2001) claims that pen-and-paper requires human labour to review responses that have low confidence. In other words, they may have illegible handwriting, invalid responses, or responses which are not valid based on some sets of rules. The data acquired through the online questionnaire have been transferred to a Microsoft Excel sheet and then are statistically analysed through SPSS.

Concerning the qualitative data, a semi-structured interview has been adopted from Evrim (2009) for the ELT master's degree teacher educators. The questions are designed to elicit detailed answers from teacher educators. Normally the interview would have taken place in the ELT department at Istanbul Aydın University. However, because of the international pandemic Covid-19, the Turkish government has decided to cancel all face-to-face classes and has gone fully online. Therefore, the researcher has decided to email the interview questions to the participants after explaining to them the purpose of this research paper. ELT master's program instructors have done their best and have returned their feedback very quickly. Thus, after reading the participants' responses and examining them, they have been transferred to a table in a Word document with no changes in order to be compared and analysed.

### **3.6 Data-Analysis Procedure**

In order to provide a better understanding of both ELT master degree program students' and instructors' perceptions of learner autonomy, a mixed-methods design was employed which is itself based on both quantitative and qualitative approaches. Creswell & Creswell (2017) mention that "including only quantitative or qualitative methods falls short of the major approaches being used today in social sciences ". Therefore, the quantitative data were obtained through an online survey and the qualitative data were obtained through an interview.

As the quantitative data preceded the qualitative data, the questionnaire was first administered. The first part of the questionnaire has 5 questions concerning the participants' age, gender, nationality, the reason behind choosing an MA in ELT, and how long they have been a master degree students. The findings of these personal elements are represented with their frequencies and percentages. The second part of the questionnaire is divided into three sections; responsibilities, abilities, and activities. Each of these sections has 10 statements to be scored. In the first section, participants were asked to decide whose responsibility should it be when taking an English language class. In the second section, students were asked to score 10 statements on a five-point scale, ranging from "very good" to "very poor". In the last section, participants were

asked to score 10 statements on a five-point scale as well, but this time from 'always' to 'never'. After transferring all the data received into a Microsoft Excel sheet, this last was sent to be statically analyzed through SPSS Software (version 24). The descriptive statistics included frequencies, means, percentages, and standard deviations. Furthermore, an ANOVA and t-test was conducted in order to see the differences in demographic variables and the other autonomy Likert scales.

Concerning the qualitative data which is based on an interview with ELT master' program instructors. The responses of the participants were transferred to a table in a Word documents with no changes in order to be compared and analysed. Before the analysis, the responses were completely read twice and then examined.

### **3.7 Summary**

This chapter provides detailed explanation of the methodology used in this research paper. More specifically, it presented the research questions, gave further detailed information about the research design and data instruments used, demographic and professional characteristics about the participants, and data analysis procedure. The following chapter will present the finding and the analysis of the data collected.

## 4. FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

### 4.1 Introduction

This study aims to investigate ELT master's degree program students' and teacher educators' perceptions of learner autonomy. To this end, a questionnaire with the students and an interview with the instructors have been conducted. Thus, the result obtained from the questionnaire is represented first in the first section followed by the results obtained from the interview which is represented in the second section.

### 4.2 The results of The questionnaire

The questionnaire consists of two parts: The first part of the questionnaire consists of five demographic questions and its results are presented in Table 4.1. The following table presents the demographic information of the respondents as frequencies and percentages.

**Table 4.1:** Background information of the respondents

		<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Gender	Male	50	50.0
	Female	50	50.0
Nationality	Turkish	39	39.0
	Arab	39	39.0
	Other	22	22.0
Age	18-20	1	1.0
	21-23	23	23.0
	24-26	62	62.0
	+27	14	14.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Concerning the number of the participants, 100 students have participated in this research. In terms of the gender, there are 50 male and 50 female students from different nationalities. According to the table above, there are 39 Turkish students and 39 Arabs, whereas the rest of the students are from different nationalities. With respect to the age, the majority of the students are between

24-26 which represents (62%). This is followed by the ages between 21-23 that represents (23%), +27 that represents (14%), and finally 18-20 that represents only (1%). These demographic variables are more likely to influence students' level of autonomy.

Regarding the reasons for choosing to do an MA degree in ELT, Table.3 represents the frequency and percentage of both the reason why they are doing an MA degree and how long the participants have been master's degree students.

**Table 4.2:** The reason for choosing an MA in ELT and length of being master's degree students

			<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>
The reason behind the choice to do MA in ELT	For better career opportunities		79	79.0
	For professional Development		15	15.0
	For earning a better salary		2	2.0
	Other		4	4.0
How long they have been master students	1 year		21	21.0
	2 years		70	70.0
	3 years		8	8.0
	More than 3 years		1	1.0
	<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100.0</b>

It has been found that the majority of the respondents which represents 79% have chosen to do an MA in ELT in order to get better career opportunities. While 15% have done their MA to develop themselves professionally, only 2% of these participants confirm that they have done this program in order to develop their financial situation. Therefore, these results show that ELT students prefer to work for their future career and gain specialized knowledge and skills to advance in their field. Concerning how long the participants have been master's degree students, the majority of them which represents 70% have been doing a master's program for 2 years. However, the last three categories present low percentages. For example, a category with students that have been doing a master's degree for just 1 year represents 21% while those who have been master's degree students for 3 years represent 8%. Finally, the lowest category that presents 1% refers to the students that have been doing their master's degree for more than 3 years.

The second part of the questionnaire includes three sections: responsibility, abilities, and activities. The results of the first section ‘Responsibilities’ are presented in Table 4.3 and Table 4.4. Table 4.3 represents the descriptive statistics of ELT master’s degree students’ perceptions of their responsibilities inside and outside the classroom in terms of percentages while Table 4.4 represents the same results in terms of (N Valid, Mean, Missing, Median, Code, Std Deviation).

**Table 4.3:** Descriptive Statistics (Percentages) of Responsibilities

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Yours</b>	<b>Your teacher's</b>	<b>Both</b>	<b>Mean</b>
To ensure you make progress during your lessons	11%	24%	65%	2.54
To ensure you make progress outside the class	64%	2%	33%	1.69
To stimulate your interest in learning	14%	33%	52%	2.38
To identify your weakness in the lesson	7%	59%	33%	2.26
To decide the objectives of each course	3%	84%	12%	2.09
To decide what you should learn in the next session	4%	80%	16%	2.12
To choose what activities should be used outside to learn and make progress	27%	16%	57%	2.30
To decide how long to spend in each activity	7%	76%	16%	2.09
To choose what materials should be used for a successful lesson	2%	75%	68%	2.21
to evaluate your learning	2%	28%	68%	2.67

**Table 4.4:** Descriptive Statistics of Responsibilities

<b>Items</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Missing</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Code</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
	<b>Valid</b>					
To ensure you make progress during your lessons	100	0	2.54	3.00	3	0.688
To ensure you make progress outside the class	99	1	1.69	1.00	1	0.944

**Table 4.4:** (Con) Descriptive Statistics of Responsibilities

Items	N	Missing	Mean	Median	Code	Std. Deviation
To stimulate your interest in learning	99	1	2.38	3.00	3	0.724
To identify your weakness in the lesson	99	1	2.26	2.00	2	0.582
To decide the objectives of each course	99	1	2.09	2.00	2	0.380
To decide what you should learn in the next session]	100	0	2.12	2.00	2	0.433
To choose what activities should be used outside to learn and make progress]	100	0	2.30	3.00	3	0.870
To decide how long to spend on each activity	99	1	2.09	2.00	2	0.476
To choose what materials should be used for a successful lesson	99	1	2.09	2.00	2	0.476
To evaluate your Learning	99	0	2.12	2.00	2	0.433

According to Table 4.3, the majority of the students that presents almost 84% believe that it is certainly their teacher's role and responsibility to decide on the objectives of each course. They also think that it is not their responsibility to decide what they should learn in the next session, how long they can spend on each activity, or whether they can choose the perfect materials for each lesson. However, they see that it is their teacher's job to do so. They only see that they share the responsibility when it is related to ensuring their progress during the lesson and evaluating their learning process. On the other hand, it is worth noting that 64 % of the participants feel that they are responsible for making progress outside the classroom

In Table 4.4, the responsibilities are divided into students' responsibilities (coded 1) teachers' responsibilities (coded 2) and both (coded 3). According to the dataset above, the majority of the respondents have attributed the responsibility to teachers or both teachers and students when taking English classes at university. To ensure they make progress outside the class is ranked as the responsibility of students. The majority of students have ranked

(identifying their weakness in the lesson, deciding the objectives of each course, deciding what they should learn in the next session and, deciding how long to spend on each activity) as the responsibility of teachers. Furthermore, the results indicate that most of the participants believe ensuring they make progress during the lesson and stimulating their interest in learning are both the responsibility of them and their teachers.

The second section of the questionnaire deals with students' perceptions of their abilities. Thus, in order to gauge students' perceptions of their abilities inside and outside the classroom, 10 statements have been provided and have been ranked in a five Likert-scale from "Very poor" to "Very Good". The results of this section are provided in two different tables. The first table (Table 4.5) represents the descriptive statistics of students' abilities in terms of percentages as shown below while the second table (Table 4.6) represents students' abilities in terms of Mean, Median, Mode, and Std. Deviation.

**Table 4.5:** Descriptive Statistics on Abilities

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Very poor</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Ok</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Choosing learning activities in class]	2%	3%	23%	63%	6%	3.70
Choosing learning activities outside the class	0%	4%	24%	64%	7%	3.75
Choosing Learning objectives in class	1%	11%	60%	23%	5%	3.20
Choosing learning objectives outside the class]	2%	4%	67%	23%	4%	3.23
Choosing materials in class	1%	12%	24%	54%	8%	3.57
Choosing materials outside the class	0%	3%	34%	56%	7%	3.67
Deciding what you should learn next in your lessons]	5%	15%	36%	38%	6%	3.25
Deciding how long to spend in each activity	6%	14%	44%	28%	8%	3.18
Identifying your weaknesses in English	2%	6%	31%	51%	10%	3.61
Evaluating your learning and progress	0%	9%	20%	61%	10%	3.72

**Table 4.6:** Descriptive statistics of responsibilities

Items	N	Missing	Mean	Median	Cod e	Std. Deviation
	<b>Valid</b>					
Choosing learning activities in class	97	3	3.70	4.00	4	0.724
Choosing learning activities outside the class	99	1	3.75	4.00	4	0.644
Choosing Learning objectives in class	100	0	3.20	3.00	3	0.739
Choosing learning objectives outside the class	100	0	3.23	3.00	3	0.679
Choosing materials in the class	99	1	3.57	4.00	4	0.847
Choosing materials outside the class	100	0	3.67	4.00	4	0.652
Deciding what you should learn next in your lessons	100	0	3.25	3.00	4	0.957
To decide how long to spend in each activity	100	0	3.18	3.00	3	0.978
Identifying your weaknesses in English						
Evaluating your learning and progress	100	0	3.61	4.00	4	0.827
	100	0	3.72	4.00	4	0.766

According to the results of the second section of the questionnaire which is presented in the tables above, participants believe that they can be good actually at choosing learning materials inside and outside the class. Moreover, 61% of the students consider themselves to be good at evaluating their own learning process which seems to be interesting. Furthermore, almost half of the participants representing 51% think that they can be quite good at identifying their weaknesses in English. However, choosing activities outside the classroom seems to be more efficient and more convenient for the students; 67% of them think of themselves as good. On the other hand, 61% of see themselves as adequate with choosing these materials inside the classroom. The results also show that only 38% of the participants feel that they can be good at deciding what they should learn in the next session while 36% of them are OK with that. Concerning taking the decision about how much to spend on each activity, 44% are OK with that while 14% see themselves as poor at this point.

The last part of the questionnaire deals with ELT master's degree students' perceptions of the activities they have done so far in their English language classroom. Table 4.7 represents the percentages of the descriptive statistics on these activities while Table 4.8 represents the same results in terms of Mean, Median, Mode, and Std. Deviation.

**Table 4.7:** Descriptive Statistics on Activities

Statements	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always	Mean
Done assignments which are not compulsory	1%	32%	37%	21%	9%	3.05
Noted down new words and their meaning	2%	3%	14%	21%	60%	4.34
Read books or magazines in English	1%	3%	15%	19%	62%	4.38
Looked for extra-exercises on internet	7%	21%	43%	17%	12%	3.06
Done grammar exercises on your own	11%	44%	20%	13%	14.2%	2.71
made suggestions to your teacher	3%	11%	25%	53%	8%	3.52
Activated your prior knowledge while studying	2%	1%	12%	25%	60%	4.40
Made inferences about your lesson	2%	5%	22%	52%	19%	3.81
used resources while studying	1%	4%	10%	19%	66%	4.45
worked cooperatively with your friends	1%	2%	14%	12%	71%	4.50

**Table 4.8:** Descriptive Statistics on Activities

	<b>N Valid</b>	<b>Missing</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Done assignments which are not compulsory	100	0	3.05	3.00	3	0.968
Noted down new words and their meaning	100	0	4.34	5.00	5	0.966
In this academic year, how good have you [Read books or magazines in English]	100	0	4.38	5.00	5	0.919
Looked for extra-exercises on internet	100	0	3.06	3.00	3	1.071
Done grammar exercises on your own	100	0	2.71	2.00	2	1.192
Made suggestions to your teacher	100	0	3.52	4.00	4	0.904
Activated your prior knowledge while studying	100	0	4.40	5.00	5	0.888
Made inferences about your lesson	100	0	3.81	4.00	4	0.873
Used resources while studying	100	0	4.45	5.00	5	0.903
Worked cooperatively with your friends	100	0	4.50	5.00	5	0.882

As it is demonstrated in Table 4.7, 44% of the participants have rarely done grammar exercises on their own. 43% of them have sometimes looked for extra exercises on the Internet, and only 37% of the students have sometimes done assignments which are not compulsory in this academic year. When it comes to making suggestions to the teacher and making inferences about their own lessons, almost 51% have often done it. On the other hand, between 60% and 71% of the participants have always noted down new words, their meanings and

activated their prior knowledge, read books or magazines in English, used resources while studying cooperatively with friends. In other words, these results show that even if the participants are not really interested in doing grammar exercises on their own, they use different activities in order to promote their learning autonomy.

The next tables represent the differences between demographic variables and autonomy scales.

**Table 4.9:** Group Statistics of T-test

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Responsibilities	Male	50	2.1998	.23888	.03378
	Female	50	2.2684	.26497	.03747
Abilities	Male	50	3.4444	.65354	.09242
	Female	50	3.5236	.53197	.07523
Activities	Male	50	3.7880	.52824	.07470
	Female	50	3.8560	.57077	.08072

**Table 4.10:** Independent-Samples Mann-Whitney U Test Summary

Total N	100
2Mann-Whitney U	1506.500
Wilcoxon W	2781.500
Test Statistic	1506.500
Standard Error	142.935
Standardized Test Statistic	1.795
Asymptotic Sig. (2-sided test)	.073

The results of the independent samples T-test in Table 4.9 demonstrate that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of male and female students in terms of responsibilities, abilities, and activities,  $T(98) = -1.36, -.664, \text{ and } -.618, p = .17, .50 \text{ and } .53$ , respectively. Similarly, the non-parametric independent samples T-test in Table 4.10 show that there is no statistically significant difference in the mean scores of the two categorical groups.

**Table 4.11: ANOVA**

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Responsibilities	Between Groups	.904	2	.452	8.049	.001
	Within Groups	5.450	97	.056		
	Total	6.354	99			
Abilities	Between Groups	1.936	2	.968	2.844	.063
	Within Groups	33.015	97	.340		
	Total	34.952	99			
Activities	Between Groups	1.115	2	.558	1.889	.157
	Within Groups	28.636	97	.295		
	Total	29.752	99			

The results of the parametric one-way analysis of variables show that there is no statistically significant difference between learner autonomy, demographic variables and three Likert scales on autonomy. On the other hand, the results of the non-parametric one-way analysis of variable namely the Kruskal Wallis H Test shows that there is no statistically significant difference.

**Table 4.12: Correlations**

			Responsibilities	Abilities	Activities
Spearman's rho	Responsibilities	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.180	.143
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.072	.156
		N	100	100	100
	Abilities	Correlation Coefficient	.180	1.000	.083
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.072	.	.411
		N	100	100	100
	Activities	Correlation Coefficient	.143	.083	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.156	.411	.
		N	100	100	100

The results of Spearman correlation show that there is a slight positive correlation between responsibilities, abilities and activities,  $r(156) = .180, .143, p = .072, .156$ , respectively.

### 4.3 The Results of the Interview

The interview is the second instrument used for this research paper. It has been conducted with four ELT department teacher educators coded as (T1), (T2), (T3), and (T4) in order to evaluate their perceptions of learning autonomy and to find out how they promote it while teaching their students. According to the participants' answers, it has been confirmed that they have been teaching English language for more than 20 years.

Firstly, the participants have been asked about the meaning of learning autonomy. They have defined it in different ways. For example, two instructors (T1 and T4) have emphasized the fact that learner autonomy is all about taking full responsibility and control over the learning process. T1 mentions “*the learner takes the responsibility for the learning process and makes decisions about the strategies*”, and T4 agrees on the same idea, and defines learner autonomy as “*an individual process involving full control over the learning.*” On the other hand, the two other instructors have focused on the ability to set goals and become independent. T3 points out “*The learner sets goals, selects and decides on the learning materials by himself/herself.*” and T2 has given further explanations, saying that learner autonomy is “*being able to get gleaned from the formal education and learn independently of any formal instruction setting. This requires some coaching and training to make sure the learner is equipped with sufficient and efficient strategies to guide himself/herself through the process.*”

In response to the questions concerning the characteristics of an autonomous learner, the participants in general have reported that an autonomous learner should train himself/herself to be self-directed in terms of acting independently of the teacher and shows a great passion for learning. In other words, they see that an autonomous learner has to work within and beyond the classroom to develop skills. Here are some reports highlighting this:

**Teacher (1):** “*An autonomous learner is an individual who is responsible, independent, logical, and disciplined.*”

**Teacher (2):** “*They must have reached a certain level of knowledge which is called a threshold level.*”

**Teacher (3):** *“An autonomous learner knows how to set learning goals, take actions to achieve the goals s/he has set, monitor learning, know how to use resources, use out- of- class time to learn, and use language learning strategies.”*

**Teacher (4):** *“Autonomous learners are aware of their learning goals; they have the freedom to decide on the learning methodology and they have access to educational resources.”*

Regarding to what extent ELT educators think their students are autonomous, three of them have confirmed that only few students can be considered autonomous. T3 mentions *“Concerning the education at university level, the students are supposed to be independent of their teacher and the classroom. Unfortunately, very few students can be considered autonomous.”* On the other hand, T4 thinks that it is very hard to generalize. He/she believes that most of the students are autonomous or partly autonomous *“as far as I have observed, the level is average or above.”* He/she also believes that the most important point is that the students are interested and motivated to become autonomous: *“At least they are open to learning how to learn.”*

Concerning the question Q6 in which ELT instructors have been asked about the kind of activities they engage in order to promote learner autonomy among their students. They have responded differently. Each teacher educator engages in different activities. For instance, T1 focuses more on self-assessment activities in order to test their performance and evaluate the quality of their work: *‘I give them rubrics for self-assessment sometimes and I want them to reflect on what parts they need to work on and how to do that.’* While T2 and T3 give their students activities that help them discover their own learning styles and learning strategies: *‘The assignments/literature reviews/projects and homework are examples of the assignments that students are expected to do individually so that they can discover their own particular way of learning.’* Whereas T4 confirms that he/she uses different activities in order to promote autonomous learning among his/her students, she/he focuses on activities that help the students become more active and more involved in the learning process: *“Of course, I am using different kinds of activities. Some of them include performance tasks, projects, presentations and reports.”*

To respond to Q7 (How do you motivate your students to be autonomous?), all the participants insist on the fact that they do their best to motivate their students to become autonomous, but the way they do so differs from one teacher trainer to another. For example, T1 keeps reminding the students that the teacher is only a guide and they are fully responsible for their own learning process: *‘Besides the activities, I generally tell them that they are responsible for their own learning and I can only guide them.... but students are used to receiving everything from the teacher.’* On the other hand, T2 uses different tips to motivate students like using monolingual dictionaries, watching YouTube tutorials, encouraging students to take risks and work cooperatively: *‘In terms of improving their language proficiency I usually make them work with their peers, remind them to use monolingual dictionaries, encourage them to take risks, I also keep telling them to watch YouTube tutorial videos. That way they realize that not only the general competency but also the subject matter of their majors can be mastered when there is no one there to teach them.’* While T3 and T4 have almost similar ideas to motivate their students, they usually motivate them by giving them the chance to make choices on the topics they want to work on and create flexible tasks for themselves. T4 points out *‘I usually motivate my students through explicit training and follow-up tasks’* and T3 says *‘I always let them become flexible and free to decide on the project topics they would like to work on.’*

Regarding the following question (How feasible ‘i.e., realistically achievable’) is to promote learner autonomy among language learners?), all the instructors think that it is feasible. However, T1 and T2 believe that even if promoting learner autonomy is feasible, it should start from an early age. Otherwise, it becomes harder to be promoted: *‘This should start from the very early ages in the families and should be emphasized in the elementary school curriculum. At university level, it seems to be too late to make a change.’* T2 also points out *‘The potential of developing autonomous learners has got more to do with the children’s growth in general and educational culture in specific. There should be a scene set before inviting the learners to work autonomously and independently.’* Yet, the other participants think that as long as the teachers are aware of the importance of promoting learner autonomy among their students,

helping them develop their skills, provide them with different activities and give them the chance to take decisions, it is quite feasible to promote learner autonomy: *“As long as the teachers are well aware of the nature of learner autonomy, I believe, it is feasible.”*

When it comes to asking ELT instructors about how they see the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning, all of the instructors agree that there is an intimate relationship between learner autonomy and language learning. They believe that language learning is an essential component in students' lives, and the effectiveness of students' language proficiency is positively related to their autonomy. One of the ELT instructors mentions *“Language learning is a lifelong process. It has no final point—so only the ones who know how to be independent learners can be successful on this path.”* Moreover, other participants believe that working cooperatively, for example, not only develops students' skills to make choices and become responsible, but it also develops their language learning skills: *“Autonomous learning at the same time requires working smoothly and collaboratively in group activities. Therefore, enabling students' potential to collaborate actively with the other learners helps them to acquire the production language skills.”*

The participants have also been asked about the challenges they have faced in trying to promote learner autonomy in their language learning classroom. Three participants argue that some students are not ready to become autonomous. In other words, they do not want to take any responsibilities for their own learning: *“Actually, some students are not willing to become autonomous, they do not like to become autonomous, and more importantly they do not give themselves the chance to try to become autonomous.”* Moreover, they think that it may be related to the cultural and educational background as long as they have multicultural classes. T2 gives an example in order to support his/her idea: *“Most of the students have the habits of being dependent on the teacher all the time. Some even ask us to complete the task for them.”* According to T4, he/she has not faced any difficulties because they believe that most of the students are always open to take control over their learning and do different kind of activities like working in groups and pairs: *“I have not faced any difficulties so*

*far as I have always worked with adult learners who are ready to take responsibility for their own learning.’*

Regarding the last question which deals with the participants’ suggestions for more effective promotion of learner autonomy, all of them have confirmed that all the professors are fully aware of the importance of learner autonomy and do their best to promote it among their students: *‘I believe and I have observed that all the professors are well aware of the importance of learner autonomy and they do their best to promote it.’* Moreover, they see that engaging in more activities and providing them with more opportunities to make choices will be effective for the promotion of learner autonomy in language learning classrooms. T3 mentions *‘An effective sustained silent reading program and the provision of more opportunities for the language learners to access selected language materials that are appropriate for their proficiency and interests would be of importance for an effective promotion of learner autonomy in ELT.’* Furthermore, they see that they need to work more on persuading them to become autonomous by making them work cooperatively and giving them the chance to evaluate their own learning. T1 expresses his/her idea as follows: *‘No matter how they resist, we must persuade them to become autonomous learners as prospective teachers because soon they will have no teachers that will give them the answers. They need to learn how to search for the answers they need’*. Besides that, they believe that the administration should provide the instructors with the opportunity to organize both their teaching and learning in a way that autonomous learning is required.

#### **4.4 Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter has presented the results and data analysis of both the questionnaire which has been conducted with ELT master’s degree students and the interview which has been held with ELT teacher educators. The first section has presented the questionnaire results and data analysis which have been statically analysed through SPSS Software (version 24). The second section has presented a full analysis and explanation of the results that have been obtained from ELT department instructors’ interviews. In the following chapter, these

results will be discussed in relation to the relevant literature, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research will be presented as well.



## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a depth interpretation of the data collected and analyzed in the previous chapter. It is made up of four sections. The first section will discuss the main findings of the study in the light of the research questions and relevant literature on which this research paper is based. The second section will discuss the pedagogical implications based on the results. The third section will highlight the limitations of the study. The fourth section will involve suggestions for further research based on the limitations discussed in the third section.

### **5.2 Discussion of Findings**

In order to encourage students to become autonomous learners, Balçıkanlı (2010) believes that teacher educators should first understand their students' perceptions and attitudes towards learner autonomy. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore ELT academics' and students' perceptions of learner autonomy regarding language learning as well as to find out to what extent ELT teacher educators are ready to promote autonomy in their classrooms.

#### **5.2.1 ELT master's degree students' perceptions of their responsibilities-abilities- activities**

According to the findings obtained from the questionnaire, it has been found that the majority of the students hold their teachers responsible for nearly all the learning process whereas they see themselves as capable only in few areas. For instance, most of the participants agree that it is their teachers' responsibility to decide on the objectives of each course, to choose the appropriate materials, and to decide what should be learnt in the next session. They believe that they only share the responsibility when it is related to the evaluation of the learning

process. Even though it is good to note, students believe that they are responsible to ensure whether they make any progress outside the classroom or not. Thus, according to the students' responses concerning how they view their responsibility, it can be said that they may not value their capacity in learning by analysing and developing their weaknesses and strengths and may not see themselves as capable to create content, but it is clear that they have positive attitudes towards being responsible for their own learning. Balçıkanlı (2008) claims that in order for students to become autonomous, it is very important to be involved in decision-making activities. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) claim "Learners will not develop autonomy unless they are willing to take responsibility for their learning" (p.4).

ELT instructors believe that despite learners' awareness of their responsibilities, they are not fully responsible. They view that students have to spend more time and energy on learning about their responsibilities, and focus more on developing their understanding in order to develop autonomous learning skills. As Boud (1988) mentions, the main characteristic of being autonomous is that "students take significant responsibility for their own learning." Chan (2001) has found in his research that most of language learners do not fulfil any responsibilities for their learning because they still view the teacher as an instructor, a resource, and a facilitator (p. 510). Balçıkanlı (2010) has also figured out that students view their teachers as "an authority rather than a facilitator" (p. 99). It has been argued by Joshi (2011) that the teacher is perceived to be a main component of the success of their learning process. In other words, despite students' awareness of their responsibilities to develop their learning, they unfortunately still express feelings of dependence on the teacher in language classroom.

However, a large number of the students hold positive views about their learning abilities. The results obtained from the questionnaire show that ELT students have the desire to be actively involved in the learning process through the application of different learning abilities inside and outside the classroom. In other words, they believe that they can be good with the necessary abilities to develop their learning process. For instance, most of the students believe that if they are given the chance, they will be good at choosing the appropriate

learning activities. Moreover, they also view themselves as capable of deciding what should be learnt in the next lesson, recognize their own needs, identify their weaknesses and strengths and evaluate their own learning. According to a study conducted in Sweden, students generally develop their performance through self-assessment and evaluation on their learning process (Sullivan & Lindgren, 2002). However, unfortunately, the participants still view themselves as inadequate in terms of creating content like choosing the learning objectives, and managing the time for each activity. In fact, learners already have the necessary learning abilities that they can use to develop their autonomous learning skills; they just need to figure them out and improve them. Cotterall (1995) argues in his research paper that learners need to use their abilities to identify their learning goals and objectives, and evaluate their progress. Balçıkanlı (2010) has also found that learners have the ability to recognize or assess their own needs, and identify their weaknesses and strengths. Likewise, Chan (2001) believes “Learners should be actively involved in setting goals, defining content, and working out evaluation mechanism for assessing achievement and progress” (p.105). However, it is interesting to note that even though students consider themselves as capable to assess, evaluate, choose materials and activities, identify the weaknesses and strengths, they prefer to hold their teachers responsible for these issues.

ELT master’s degree students’ opinions and experience with the activities actually indicate that they have positive attitudes towards developing their language learning process themselves. According to the findings obtained from the last section of the questionnaire, the majority of the students have confirmed that they always try their best to take as many notes of the new words as they can, read English magazines, activate their prior knowledge, make inferences about the lesson, and use different resources. Furthermore, most of the participants confirm that they always try to work cooperatively with their classmates. Little (2004) indicates that learners become motivated to negotiate meaning, set goals and make conscious decisions when they work cooperatively with their classmates. In other words, by collaborating with peers, students become less dependent on the teacher because they are allowed to communicate and take decisions freely based on their interests and needs. In contrast, almost

half of the participants mention that they often make suggestions, and look for extra-exercises. However, it would be important to mention that despite the fact that students have no interests in doing extra exercises and making suggestions most of the time, they are active in different activities that will absolutely help them with their autonomous learning skills. Little (1999) believes “Learner autonomy is developed by working on different activities and strategies. Working in pairs or in groups enhances learner motivation and develops their problem-solving skills.”(p.45)

### **5.2.2 ELT instructors’ perceptions of learner autonomy, the challenges and the suggested solutions.**

The results obtained from the interview reveal that ELT instructors have positive attitudes towards promoting learner autonomy in language classroom. According to their answers, it can be concluded that they are fully aware of the concept of learner autonomy as well as the importance of fostering it among their students.

In parallel to what has been mentioned in the literature review (Holec, 1981; Little, 1991; Dickinson, 1993; Candy, 1988; Thomson, 1996; Nunan, 2000; Thanasoulas, 2000; Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012; Yıldırım, 2012), ELT instructors have focused in their definitions of the concept of “learner autonomy” on essential words like responsibility, control, decision making, freedom, independence, and curiosity for further information. Borg and Al Busaidi (2012), Loi (2016), Joshi (2011) and Yasmin and Sohail (2018) think that teachers have conceptualized learner autonomy as the ability to do different tasks and activities independently. For instance, autonomous learners should take full responsibility and have control over the learning process. They also believe that learners must work within and beyond the classroom to develop their learning skills.

It has been confirmed according to the participants’ answers that only few students can be considered autonomous. ELT teacher educators point out that despite the students’ willingness and interest in becoming independent in their learning, they are not motivated enough to become autonomous. Nunan (1997) argues that young learners may have some interests in becoming autonomous

and they just need some gradual help to become autonomous learners. In fact, the participants believe that students' interest is itself important, and it is considered to be an initiative step into becoming autonomous learners. Moreover, they ensure that learners in general have the potential to take their own decisions, find appropriate solutions to different tasks, and learn cooperatively as well as independently. Nevertheless, teachers' role is also important in promoting learner autonomy. AL Asmari (2013) points out in one of his studies "The teacher plays a significant role in promoting learner autonomy through creating an appropriate learning environment conducive to learning in which EFL teachers understand their learners' needs and previous learning experiences" (p.9). ELT instructors believe that the students need some gradual help to develop their autonomous learning, and that the teachers in general need to provide their students with different types of activities in which they can learn to become responsible, build self-confidence, make decisions, and find solutions to the problems provided. Some participants, for example, mention that they usually focus on activities that will help the students discover their own learning styles and strategies. Another group of instructors, on the other hand, confirm that they emphasize activities that will help students become more active and more involved in their learning process. While the rest of the participants have insisted on using self-assessment activities that would help the learners reflect on the parts they need to work on, and help them learn how to measure the quality of their performance. From literature, McDevitt (1997) suggests creating activities for students in which they can assess and evaluate themselves. Balçıkanlı has conducted a study in 2010 in which he finds that students benefit from working on decision-making and problem-solving activities. In general, most of the instructors feel that involving students in collaborative activities in which they can take decisions, manage time, and become responsible is useful to develop autonomous learning skills.

Promoting learner autonomy is a lengthy process that generally depends on teachers' motivation skills. ELT teacher educators believe that motivating students plays a significant role in promoting learner autonomy. Deci and Ryan (2000) mention that by triggering a high degree of motivation, students become more willing to work towards their ideal self and develop their skills and

learning strategies. The participants state that they motivate their students by offering them choices on the topics they would like to work on (explicit training and follow-up tasks). They have also mentioned that they usually provide them with tasks which are based on the use of monolingual dictionaries, and encourage them to work cooperatively and take risks. Nevertheless, the participants point out that promoting autonomous learning is not easy. They think that promoting learner autonomy has to do with the children's growth in general and education in particular. In other words, teaching learners to be autonomous should start from an early age at first among family members and then should be emphasized and developed in schools among their friends and teachers. Moreover, the fact that students lack enthusiasm of autonomy makes its encouragement difficult. A study conducted by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) has revealed that teachers are ready to promote learner autonomy; however, the lack of enthusiasm and understanding of independence are the greatest barriers to the development of learner autonomy. Actually, ELT educators think that it is feasible to promote learner autonomy as long as the teachers are aware of its importance and the students already have some understanding of the concept and ready to show their interest in it.

However, there are many challenges that teachers in general face while trying to promote learner autonomy. According to the teacher educators' answers, the greatest challenge is when students do not feel ready to become autonomous learners. They also think that this reason is generally related to the cultural and/or educational background. A study conducted by Al Asmari (2013) has revealed that passive learners are identified as students are more open to learn and control their own learning process. They may not participate in class discussion, but they will surely participate in cooperative or collaborative activities. Tuan (2010) believes that working in groups or pairs enhances learners' cognitive growth and motivation and increases learners' linguistic and problem-solving skills.

In terms of promoting greater learner autonomy, a wide range of suggestions have been made by ELT instructors. Most of them advise teachers to focus more on collaborative and cooperative activities. Moreover, they believe that motivating the students and providing them with more opportunities to take

decisions about their learning objectives will be effective enough to develop their autonomous skills. Besides that, the participants insist on providing the student with different types of classroom activities that focus on self-evaluation and self-assessment. Little et al. (2017) believe that learner self-assessment is a central feature in the promotion of learner autonomy. Nevertheless, the participants believe that it is not only their job to promote learner autonomy, but it is also the administration's responsibility to help the instructors by giving them the chance to organize their own teaching style in a way that autonomous learning is involved.

### **5.3 Limitations of the Study**

The present study has had some particular limitations which suggest that the findings should be interpreted with caution. The first limitation is related to the limited sample on which this research paper was based. In fact, due to the international pandemic, it has been difficult to reach a large number of participants. Thus, the results were limited somehow as well. Moreover, the interview conducted with the participants was planned first to be held face to face. However, because of the full lockdown the country, it was hard to reach the participants because of their online classes. Therefore, the only way to reach the participants and have an interview with them was through their emails. Thus, it can be said that face-to-face interview sessions could have been helpful in examining the participants' reactions and perceptions of learner autonomy. Furthermore, the data of the present study were collected only through students' questionnaires and teachers' interviews. In other words, another limitation of this study was the lack of classroom observation. I also think that this last limitation could have given this study the opportunity to refine and compare the results obtained from both the questionnaire and the interview. Another important limitation was that the elements of learner autonomy that were explored in this research paper were limited to the participants' perceptions of their responsibilities, abilities, and activities. However, Benson 2010 believes that the measurement of learner autonomy behaviours is not easy because of its multidimensionality. Therefore, only the study of these elements may limit the understanding of learner autonomy.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Further Research**

This research paper provides only a glimpse of a broad research area. Therefore, in lights of the findings obtained from this study, some suggestions can be made for further research. First of all, this study was limited in the questionnaire and the interview. Thus, a further study can consider employing other data collection instruments such as classroom observation in order to obtain more comprehensive results. Moreover, the current study has been conducted only at one university because of the conditions the country is experiencing. Therefore, a further study can also involve conducting in different settings, such as working on two or three different univeristies in Turkey. Furthermore, the same study can be conducted in different contexts, such as at secondary schools, at high schools or even at university preparatory schools.

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## **APPENDIX**

**Appendix A:** Online Questionnaire Questions

**Appendix B:** Semi-Structured Interview Questions

**Appendix C:** Ethics Committee Approval



## Appendix A: The Questionnaire

**Dear Participant,**

I am doing an MA in ELT at Istanbul Aydin University. I aim to collect data to conduct research on master's degree students' perceptions of learner autonomy. Please make sure that the information you will provide will be kept confidential. Thank you for your assistance and cooperation in advance.

### **Personal Information**

- 1- Sex:**  Male  Female
- 2- Nationality**  Turkish  Arab  Other
- 3- Age**  18-20  21-23  24-26   
+27

**4- Why did you choose to do an MA in ELT?**

- For better career opportunities  
 For professional development  
 For earning better salary  
 Other

**5- How long have you been a master's degree student ?**

- 1 year  
 2 years  
 3 years  
 More than 4 years

### **Section 1. RESPONSIBILITIES**

**When you are taking English classes at university, whose responsibility should it be?**

	<b>Yours</b>	<b>Your Teacher's</b>	<b>Both</b>
<b>1. To ensure you make progress during your lessons</b>			
<b>2. to ensure you make progress outside class</b>			
<b>3. to stimulate your interest in learning</b>			
<b>4. To identify your weaknesses in the lesson</b>			
<b>5. To decide the objectives of each course</b>			

<b>6. To decide what you should learn in your next session</b>			
<b>7. To choose what activities should be used outside to learn and make progress</b>			
<b>8. To decide how long to spend on each activity</b>			
<b>9. To choose what materials should be used for a successful lesson</b>			
<b>10. To evaluate your learning</b>			

## Section 2. ABILITIES

If you have the opportunity, how good do you think you would be at:

	<b>Very poor</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>OK</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
<b>1. Choosing learning activities in class</b>					
<b>2. Choosing learning activities outside class</b>					
<b>3. Choosing learning objectives in class</b>					
<b>4. Choosing learning objectives outside class</b>					
<b>5. Choosing learning materials in class</b>					
<b>6. Choosing learning materials</b>					

outside class					
7. Deciding what you should learn next in your lessons					
8. Deciding how long to spend on each activity					
9. Identifying your weaknesses in English					
10. Evaluating your learning and progress					

### Section 3. ACTIVITIES

In this academic year, how often have you:

	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	never
1. Done assignments which are not compulsory					
2. Noted down new words and their meaning					
3. Read books or magazines in English					
4. Looked for extra-exercises on your own					
5. Done grammar exercises on your own					
6. Made suggestions to your					

<b>teacher</b>					
<b>7. Activated your prior knowledge while studying</b>					
<b>8. Made inferences about your lesson</b>					
<b>9. Used resources while studying</b>					
<b>10. Worked cooperatively with your friends</b>					

## **Appendix B: Semi-Structured Interview Questions**

- 1-** How long have you been teaching English?
- 2-** How long have you been teaching at Istanbul Aydin University ELT department?
- 3-** What does learner autonomy mean to you?
- 4-** What are the characteristics of autonomous language learners?
- 5-** To what extent do you think that your students in ELT department are autonomous?
- 6-** Do you engage autonomous learning activities in your lessons? If yes, would you tell me please what kind activities you usually do or have done in the past?  
If Not, can you tell me the reasons why don't you engage such activities in your classroom?
- 7-** How do you motivate your students to be autonomous learners?
- 8-** How feasible (i.e. realistically achievable) is to promote learner autonomy among language learners?
- 9-** Can you tell me more about how you see the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning?
- 10-** What challenges have you faced so far when trying to promote learner autonomy in the language classroom?
- 11-** What are your suggestions for more effective promotion of learner autonomy in ELT department? What should the instructors do? What should the students do?

## Appendix C: Ethics Committee Approval

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 14.07.2021-18332

 T.C.  
İSTANBUL AYDIN ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ  
Lisansüstü Eğitim Enstitüsü Müdürlüğü

Sayı : E-88083623-020-18332 14.07.2021  
Konu : Etik Onayı Hk.

Sayın NOUHAILA EL -KHAYATY

Tez çalışmanızda kullanmak üzere yapmayı talep ettiğiniz anketiniz İstanbul Aydın Üniversitesi Etik Komisyonu'nun 09.07.2021 tarihli ve 2021/08 sayılı kararıyla uygun bulunmuştur. Bilgilerinize rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. Ragıp Kutay KARACA  
Müdür

Bu belge, güvenli elektronik imza ile intzalanmıştır.

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## **RESUME**

Name Surname: Nouhaila El-Khayaty

### **Education:**

2019-2022 ELT Master Degree, Istanbul Aydin University

2015-2018 BA degree in English Linguistics, University of Letters and Human Sciences Sais Fes/ Morocco

2016-2017 Advanced 6, American Language Center ALC

2011-2015 Baccalaureate Degree in Physics, Ibnu Haitham High School

### **Work Experience:**

2021- Present Executive Manager, First Avenue AVM

2020 English Teacher, English Time

2019 English Language Al-Fanar International School

2018-2020 Client Service Agent, Q-Tell Support Sollution

2017-2018 English Languge Teacher, Sprit Center o language and Communication/ Exagone High School

### **Languages:**

Moroccan Arabic : Native Language

Classical Arabic : Advanced

French : Advanced

English : Advanced

Turkish : Intermediate

### **Skills:**

-Communication, Teamwork, Problem Solving, Flexibility, Creativity

- Computer skills (Word- Excel- Power Point)