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**The Notion of Learner Autonomy in the Algerian
EFL Classrooms: The Case of 4th Year Pupils in
Guettaf Mansour Middle School (El-Bayadh)**

**Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English as a Partial
Fulfillment for the Degree of “Magister” in Psychopedagogy**

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Academic Year: 2017– 2018

Dedications

I dedicate this research work to my parents who switch candles of hope around me, and devoted their lives to see me succeed

To my beloved husband **Slimane** who gave me support and help when I was really in need of them.

To my lovely families **KADI** and **DJOUDI**

To all my teachers from the primary school to the university and to all my pupils

Special dedication to my friends who stand by me in my hour of grief and give me belief, to my intimate friends **Zahra** and **Fatima**

Acknowledgments

First and foremost, I would like to express my deep recognition to Allah, for giving me ambition, determination, and strength to finish this work.

Sincere gratitude, deepest appreciation and heartfelt thanks to my supervisor **Pr. Fewzia BEDJAOU**I for her assistance, patience and guidance in the writing of this dissertation.

A deepest appreciation goes also to **Pr. MERBOUH**, **Pr. MELOUK**, **Pr. OUERRAD**, and **Dr. BENAISSI** for their valuable lectures during the theoretical year, beside all my teachers of the Department of English at the university of Sidi Bel Abbes and Saida.

Abstract

This research is concerned with learner autonomy in the Algerian EFL context in general and middle education in particular. Through this study, the researcher aims to discover to which extent the notion of learner autonomy exists in our middle schools. Therefore, a case study has been designed to investigate both teachers' and learners' perceptions and attitudes towards autonomous learning in EFL classroom. The current study contains four chapters: Chapter one is a literature review that covers general areas of learner autonomy; definitions, characteristics, principles and approaches. Chapter two provides an overview of ELT situation in Algeria, EFL status in the Algerian middle education and the newly introduced approach, i.e. the Competency- Based Approach with reference to the notion of learner autonomy in this approach. In addition, the second chapter deals with a methodological design in order to answer the research questions. A triangulation method is used in this work; it includes data collection from questionnaires that have been put to middle school teachers and pupils, a classroom observation and an interview with the inspector of English in the city of El-Bayadh. The data collected from these research instruments were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively in the third chapter where some general findings have been drawn. Chapter four provides suggestions and recommendations about how to promote learner autonomy in Algerian EFL classroom .In fact, the research findings show that the notion of learner autonomy is still considered as a challenge for learners as well as teachers in Algerian middle schools. Therefore, this work is an attempt to reveal the hindrances that impede our pupils from being autonomous in their learning process, and to provide practical implications for both EFL teachers and learners to overcome the barriers they commonly meet when trying to be involved in autonomous learning.

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KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AM: Année Moyenne

BEM : Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen

BTS: Brevet de Technicien Supérieur

CALL: Computer-Assisted Language Learning

CBA: Competency-Based Approach

CRAPEL : Centre de Recherche et d'Application en Langues

DEUA : Diplôme des Etudes Universitaire Appliquées

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

ELT: English Language Teaching

ICT: Information and Communication Technology

ITE : Institut Techniques de l'Enseignement

L1: First Language

L2: Second Language

LA: Learner Autonomy

LLS: Language Learning Strategies

LMD: Licence Master Doctorate

MS: Middle School

PEM: Professeur d'Enseignement Moyen

SBI: Strategy- Based Instruction

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TEFL: Teaching English as a Foreign Language

TL: Target Language

UFC : Université de la Formation Continue

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Today, the world is considered as a knowledge society that creates, shares, and uses knowledge for the prosperity and well-being of its people who contribute to this knowledge in order to ameliorate human conditions. The social and cultural characteristics of a knowledge society require adaptive and confident persons who have access to education, capacity to learn, communication and collaboration in knowledge. In terms of education, lack of independency in learning has been a serious problem; indeed, most of students do not have the capacity to manage their own learning in order to be active participants and self-reliant language learners who can continue the process of learning efficiently outside the classroom.

Therefore, a great interest was done in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and various views have been carried out by eminent researchers who put a great emphasis on the role of learners. Since then, the focus has shifted from the teacher to the learner. Consequently, a great deal of concern has been put on the learner as an individual in order to involve him in the process of learning and to equip him with strategies which help him take part in and become responsible of his own learning by giving him the chance to find answers to questions related to his everyday life experience, to do further research in real life situations and to adopt more autonomous behaviours so as to improve his level in language learning.

Hence, learner autonomy as a new field of study has gradually come into existence since the 1970's as a consequence of various studies on language learning; other terms are related to the theme to make reference to the autonomy of the language learner such as :self-management, auto-gestion, self-learning, self-directed learning, individualization, self-access learning and self-instruction.

An autonomous learner is that sort of learner who continues learning when teaching stops. In fact, this is one of the fundamental objectives of the new approaches in language teaching. In this context, and in order to make the

educational system more developed and more fruitful, Algeria, as other countries, has implemented certain reforms in the field of education. The last Algerian educational reform during the academic year 2002-2003 has already predicted changes in curricula and methodologies and advocated the autonomy of learners together with the shift from a teacher-centered classroom to a learner-centered approach. As a result, the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) was implemented in Algerian schools. This approach has become a privileged topic in curriculum discourses as it claims that learners should mobilize their values, knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours in a personal and independent way to address challenges successfully. It is supposed that the CBA has reshaped teachers' and learners' roles and their responsibilities in the language classroom.

Thus, it aims at producing responsible and autonomous learners who are expected to take charge of their learning. This does not mean that learner autonomy aims at marginalizing the teacher's role; on the contrary, his role is essential in setting a suitable atmosphere that encourages and facilitates the process of language acquisition. We can also say that the teacher in the classroom is a researcher; an important aspect of his job is watching, listening and asking questions in order to learn more about how they learn so that teachers may be more helpful to learners to be gradually autonomous in their learning.

In this context, the researcher devotes special attention to evaluate the existence of learner autonomy in fourth year EFL classrooms at Guettaf Mansour Middle School in El-Bayadh, and to see whether EFL teachers in Algerian middle schools pave the way for learners to be more autonomous in their learning and how they comprehend this autonomy and deal with. Hence, the present investigation is carried out under three main research questions:

- 1- Is the notion of learner autonomy well respected and implemented in Algerian middle schools?
- 2- Are the Algerian EFL teachers ready to make their learners more autonomous?

- 3- What are the main hindrances that impede both EFL teachers and learners while implementing and fostering the notion of learner autonomy in Algerian EFL classrooms?

The above questions investigate whether or not the concept of learner autonomy is widely introduced and understood in our educational system and more particularly in middle education. The answer to these questions concerns two levels: the first one is concerned with Algerian EFL teachers and their roles and attitudes towards learner autonomy. The second is related to middle school learners in Algeria and the way they see and comprehend their autonomy in learning. These two elements govern the general layout of this dissertation in which the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- 1- Learner autonomy is still considered as a new concept in the Algerian educational context, therefore its implementation is still difficult for both teachers and learners in middle education.
- 2- The Algerian EFL teachers often find themselves confused about the strategies which make their learners more autonomous.
- 3- Both teachers and learners are facing various difficulties in implementing and promoting learner autonomy.

To follow up this study, the researcher divides his work into four main chapters: The first chapter presents the literature review of the field that relates to learner autonomy; definitions, its historical background and appearance in the educational context, theories and the main areas that provide the core of this research.

The second chapter, it is mainly twofold: the first section provides an overview of ELT situation in Algeria and describes the notion of learner autonomy in the Algerian educational context in general and in the middle education in particular with reference to the CBA and the ELT textbook for fourth year pupils. The second section deals with the research methodology, procedures and tools used in collecting data through a questionnaire addressed to EFL teachers and fourth year

pupils at Guettaf Mansour middle school, and a classroom observation of both teachers and pupils' practices. In addition to these research instruments, the researcher takes an interview with the inspector of English in a seminar held in El-Bayadh. As to chapter three, it seeks to treat, analyze and interpret the collected data and some findings have been drawn.

Finally, after analyzing and interpreting data, some practical implications and recommendations have been suggested in the fourth chapter and the research is closed by a general conclusion where other questions have been raised considered as a future research in the field of learner autonomy.

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1.1 Introduction

The learning process is one of the main issues that have been tackled by eminent researchers and scholars who have discovered that children and adults learn in different ways and this truth uncovered many problems. The transition from childhood to adulthood is the hardest part concerning the learners' life and even learning. During this stage, they are supposed to move from total depending on the teacher as the only source of knowledge to the level where they can depend on themselves to take charge of their own learning. Thus, many EFL teachers nowadays are encouraging autonomy to enable their learners to be engaged in autonomous learning to improve their language acquisition.

Over the last two decades, the notion of learner autonomy has gained a great attention and it has been brought to the field of education as a whole, and in teaching languages in particular. In the early 20th century, it was consistently studied due to the development in the field of adult learning and based on the work of Yves Chàlon (1970), and Holec (1981). For more understanding to this field, its main principles, and its contributions to the learning process, we will provide a whole chapter which will cover the autonomy process starting from its origins to the state of this field in the present time. In the first chapter of this work, the researcher provides an overview of learner autonomy including its background, definitions, theories, philosophies, strategies and tips to foster it.

1.2 The Historical Background of the Term “Autonomy”

For more understanding to the field of autonomy, it is better to have a deep look into its origins and historical background. The term autonomy is derived from ancient Greek “Autonomia” from “Autos” which means self, and “nomos” which means law, and has gradually developed to refer to several meanings such as; self-legislation, self-governance, self-determination, self-ownership, and personal sovereignty. However, the term was mainly used by Ancient Greek writers to speak

about the right of city-states to self-governance and freedom from the interference of foreign powers.

In the 17th and 18th centuries, this term was used in the political context and legal texts, in Europe, to denote the individual's ability to manage his own affairs by contract. However, at the end of the 19th century, many legal writers considered the notion of autonomy as an old-fashioned concept which traced back to the Dark Ages. At the beginning of the 20th century, the term "autonomy" was widely used in philosophy and various social sciences, and since education is one of these sciences, many scholars and educationalists focused on the concept of autonomy and claimed that education should be independent by itself.

Hence, autonomy seems to be an indispensable condition for education, it plays a vital role in creating a sense of pedagogical freedom which contributes effectively to successful teaching and learning. As Eduard Spranger put it: *"Learning and education will only be successful if teachers and students come together in freedom and the schools themselves are free."* (Spranger, 1928:273)

1.3 Autonomy in the Educational Context

In order to understand the meaning of the term learner autonomy, it is important to understand its background and its emergence as a pedagogical concept. As it was mentioned above, the idea of autonomy was first emerged as a legal and political concept which moved rapidly to be used in other fields such as education.

In the late 1960s, Europe witnessed a wave of political troubles which led to social and ideological radical changes. Hence, the concept of autonomy within the field of education gained an increasing interest in Europe over the past twenty years or so, and it has been seen as an important tool for both teaching and learning. (Boud, 1988)

After the Second World War, a great number of minority rights movements used the concept to express their ideas about the right to freedom of choice. They

regarded education as an empowering tool that would instill in people an awareness of these issues. As Jane says:

“Adult education should become an instrument for arousing an increasing sense of awareness and liberation in man, and in some cases, an instrument for changing the environment itself. From the idea of man product of his society, one moves to the idea of man as producer of his society.” (Jane, 1977:3)

Hence, the demand for foreign and second languages increased sharply and the changes in the ways people work, learn and live, have led to the need for life-long learning skills, or the ability to direct one’s own learning and to respond to changes in one’s situation by choosing and managing future learning in the most appropriate way. Thus, education must provide the necessary skills for this process.

In 1971, the Council of Europe’s Modern Languages Project was established to stimulate researches in this area. A year later, this council gave birth to the Centre de Recherche et d’Application en Langues (CRAPEL) which was founded by Yves Chàlon at the University of Nancy in France. After his death, the leadership was passed to Henri Holec. In fact, these projects paved the way to many researchers and educationalists to make researches and studies about the concept of autonomy in language teaching and learning. In 1981, Holec was the pioneer who began preparing a project report to the Council of Europe. In his research, Holec introduced a detailed description of the social and ideological context within which the notion of autonomy appeared. Thus, Holec’s project is considered as the first and the most important document through which the concept of autonomy entered the field of education from 1970 to the present day.

In the 1980’s, some researchers started looking at language as a tool for communication since people learn it to express themselves and communicate with each other. Therefore, the concept of autonomy in language learning is tightly related to the communicative approach which focuses on the communication functions of language, individuals’ needs, social norms and even autonomy.

In the 1990's, by doing several researches on autonomy in language learning, many educationalists and psychologists agreed that the idea of autonomy is beneficial in general and to language learning in particular. Similarly, Little argues that:

“Over the past twenty years or so, the concept of autonomy ... has become increasingly important in the educational literature, where it has been viewed as both a desirable goal of education and a constituent element of good teaching and learning.” (Little, 1991:4)

In the same context, Benson (2007) states that autonomy has also gained a great importance in the area of foreign language education, therefore more than twenty books length publications have been published since the turn of the century.

1.4 Definitions of Learner Autonomy

One of the most well-known definitions of the term “Learner Autonomy” dated back to 1981 when Henri Holec began his report to the European Council. According to him: *“Autonomy is the ability to take charge of one’s own learning.” (Holec, 1981:3)*, noting that this ability is not inborn but must be acquired either by natural means or by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic deliberate way, and pointing out that: *“To take charge of one’s learning is to have the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning.” (Holec, 1981:3)*. In addition, Holec, as a prominent figure within the field of autonomy, suggested the theoretical basis and pedagogical implications of learner autonomy, and thus he was called “The father of learner autonomy.” Since then, the notion of learner autonomy has been tackled by many researchers and educationalists who gave different definitions to the term. However, some of them do not agree with Holec’s definition such as Little who says that:

“Autonomy is a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action. It entails that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning.” (Little, 1991:3-4)

Little's interpretation had provided a new significant dimension that was not mentioned in previous definitions of autonomy. This ignored dimension is related to the field of psychology; it consists of psychological characteristics which are represented in learner autonomy as key concepts.

On the other hand, Dickenson considers learner autonomy as decision making in learning context. He views that:

“Autonomy is a situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions. In full autonomy there is no involvement of a ‘teacher’ or an institution. And the learner is also independent of specially prepared materials.” (Dickenson, 1987:11)

In the same context, another definition was brought to the scene by Jeffries who sees it as:

“Learning in which an individual or a group of learners study on their own possibly for a part or parts of a course, without direct intervention from a tutor, so that to take a greater responsibility for what they learn.” (Jeffries, 1990:35)

Whereas for Benson ***“Autonomy is the capacity to take control of one's own learning.” (Benson, 2001:47)***. In the same context, Benson (2001) adds that there are three principles which describe the process of autonomy in learning. First, autonomy is a natural capacity which can be acquired by any learner. Second, this capacity can be promoted if learners provide the suitable learning environment. Third, an effective learning can be realized through an autonomous learning.

As a result, we can deduce that the field of autonomy is a social and mental system which includes many different walks of life. In addition to the educational process, it is open to different changes, developments and various stages.

1.5 Characteristics of Autonomous Learner

Many researchers as Holec, Little and Benson have shared the same view of autonomous learners and expect them to manage their own affairs. In other words, they see them as independent individuals entirely able to take charge of their own learning. Holec defines the autonomous learner; in his famous book Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning, as:

“To say of a learner that he is autonomous is to say that he is capable of taking charge of his own learning and nothing more... to take charge of one’s learning is to bear responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning.” (Holec, 1981:3)

To support his definition, Holec (1981) adds that autonomous learner is supposed to be able to determine the objectives, define the content, select the strategies to be used and assess what has been acquired. According to him, learners can be autonomous if they are responsible for their own learning through being involved in the different aspects of the learning process. In the same context, Holec (1988) mentions that:

“...the autonomous learner is not automatically obliged to self-direct his learning either totally or even partially. The learner will make use of his ability to do this only if he so wishes and if he is permitted to do so by the material, social and psychological constraints to which he is subjected.” (Holec, 1988:8)

However, Little has a different point of view about autonomous learners he says that:

“Autonomous learners can understand the purpose of their learning program, unequivocally recognize the conscientiousness for their learning; divide the set of learning objectives, take initiatives in planning and implementing learning activities, and regularly review their learning and evaluate its effectiveness.” (Little, 1991:11)

Moreover, Kumaravadivelu is for Little's definition and argues that: *“supporting learners to be autonomous means providing them with more opportunities to be successful.”* (Kumaravadivelu, 2003:131). Whereas for Nunan, he sees that: *“Learners who have reached a point where they are able to define their own goals and create their own learning opportunities have, by definition, become autonomous.”* (Nunan, 1995:145). Arguing that autonomous learner is the one who is able to find the best strategy to learn and to be successful. For Huttunen: *“A learner is fully autonomous when he is working individually or in a group, taking responsibility for the planning, monitoring and evaluating of his studies.”* (Huttunen, 1986:95). In the same context, Candy (1991) views that autonomous learners have some competencies. These competencies make them characterized by particular features such as; methodical, logical, reflective, flexible, self-aware, creative, responsible, self-sufficient, etc.

On the other hand, Benson suggests that: *“Autonomous learners are more educated individuals who have the ability to take the charge and contribute not only to their learning process, but also in their social life.”* (Benson, 2001: 01) However, Thanasoulas (2000) defines the autonomous learner like somebody whose life has a consistency that drives from a coherent set of beliefs, values and principles and also who engages in a still-continuing process of criticism and reevaluation.

Therefore, autonomous learners do not confine themselves only to instructions, methods, or materials given by teachers inside classroom; instead, they take the charge and promote their learning process by themselves. They choose the appropriate tools and materials and decide whether it is effective for their learning or not.

1.6 Teacher Autonomy

Teaching and learning are two interrelated processes since teachers and learners are working with each other and sharing all what happens in the classroom. Hence, teacher autonomy is as important as learner autonomy. The notion of teacher

autonomy traced back to the beginning of the 1990's, when it was mentioned by Allwright (1990). Some years later, Little (1995) defined this concept as the *“Teachers’ capacity to engage in self-directed teaching.”* (Little, 1995:176), and in the same context, he adds:

“Genuinely successful teachers have always been autonomous in the sense of having a strong sense of personal responsibility for their teaching, exercising via continuous reflection and analysis the highest degree of affective and cognitive control of the teaching process, and exploring the freedom that this confers.” (Little, 1995:179)

After that, scholars have been trying to define teacher autonomy from different aspects. Benson argues that teacher autonomy can be seen as: *“A right to freedom from control (or an ability to exercise this right) as well as actual freedom from control.”* (Benson, 2000:111)

As to Aoki (2002), he argues that teacher's autonomy is mainly based on independency and responsibility for one's own teaching unlike learner's autonomy which emphasizes on self-reliance and responsibility for one's own learning. Besides, he offers an explicit definition of teacher autonomy, suggesting that this involves *“the capacity, freedom, and responsibility to make choices concerning one's own teaching.”* (Aoki, 2000:19)

According to Richard Smith, teacher autonomy refers to *“The ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes for oneself as a teacher, in cooperation with others.”* (Smith, 2000:89). In addition, Smith (2001) identifies three different dimensions of teacher autonomy. Teacher autonomy, first of all, is a capacity for self-directed professional action. Second, it is a capacity for self-directed professional development. Third, teacher autonomy is freedom from control by others in the professional action and development. However, Thavenius (1999) provides a different definition about teacher autonomy; he writes that an autonomous teacher is one who promotes learner autonomy:

“Teacher autonomy can be defined as the teacher’s ability and willingness to help learners take responsibility for their own learning. An autonomous teacher is thus a teacher who reflects on her teacher role and who can change it, who can help her learners become autonomous, and who is independent enough to let her learners become independent.” (Thavenius, 1999:160)

Lamb (2008), on the other hand, suggests that the capacity teachers have in determining the improvement of their teaching through their own effort and through research and reflective thinking shows one facet of teacher autonomy. He goes on to indicate that the freedom to be able to teach in the way that one desires is also a manifestation of autonomy.

According to Tort-Moloney, in order to develop teacher autonomy, teachers must:

“become autonomous regarding curricular demands, pedagogical material and discourses, as well as in research, by being able to acknowledge the virtues and limitations of these areas.”(Tort- Moloney, 1997:50)

Another definition about teacher autonomy is provided by De Vries and Kohlberg who give a picture of what an autonomous teacher looks like.

“...the autonomous teacher can think about how children are thinking and at the same time think about how to intervene to promote the constructive culture. Autonomous teachers do not just accept uncritically what curriculum specialists give them. They think about whether they agree with what is suggested. They take responsibility for the education they are offering children.” (De Vries and Kohlberg 1987:380)

In short, all of these definitions reveal that teacher autonomy is a kind of freedom through which teachers are able to practise their duty independently. As a result, they can carry out their teaching process in an autonomous way which suits them and meets the learning needs of their students.

1.6.1 Characteristics of Teacher Autonomy

After the widespread of learner autonomy in the educational field in general and in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in particular, the term teacher autonomy as a new concept has been given more attention and become the chief concern of many researchers who have been analyzing it from different dimensions. Smith (2001) illustrates the characteristics of teacher autonomy and summarizes them in six very comprehensive features as follows:

- Self-directed professional action.
- Capacity for self-directed professional action.
- Freedom from control over professional action.
- Self-directed professional development.
- Capacity for self-directed professional development.
- Freedom from control over professional development. (*Smith 2001:5*)

However, Little (1995) confirms that the use of the term “teacher autonomy” may have different dimensions, as it is mentioned in the following examples:

1-Self-directed professional action: teachers feel more autonomous when they take charge of their teaching process in a personal way and practise it through reflection, analysis and cognitive control of the teaching process. (Little, 1995)

2-Self-directed professional development: the autonomous teacher should be aware of why, when, where and how pedagogical skills can be acquired in the self-conscious awareness of teaching practice itself. (Little, 1995)

3-Freedom from control by others over professional action: In other words, teachers are free from any external control, and this is one of the main features of the term ‘teacher autonomy’ in the general educational literature. However, this autonomy cannot be absolute; teachers can choose their teaching techniques or

methods, but they have no choice in the content or the curriculum since they are imposed on them.

In the same regard, McGrath (2000) sees that the characteristics of teacher autonomy can be illustrated from only two dimensions, *“as self-directed action or development; as freedom from control by others.”* (McGrath, 2000:100-110). First, teachers can be autonomous in the sense of having the capacity to control their own development and behave independently in a self-directed manner. Second, autonomous teachers are free from any kind of constraints; they control their teaching process by themselves without accepting the others’ decisions or interference.

In order to understand more the notion of teacher autonomy, it is of great importance to shed light on the relation between the two concepts; learner autonomy and teacher autonomy.

1.6.2 Teacher Autonomy and Learner Autonomy

With the increasing interest of learner autonomy in recent years, the term of teacher autonomy has been introduced as a new concept in the pedagogical field. Hence, there has been a comprehensive discussion about the interrelationship between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy. In this regard, Little points out to this relation when he states that:

“... The development of learner autonomy depends on the development of teacher autonomy. By this I mean two things (i) that it is unreasonable to expect teachers to foster the growth of autonomy in their learners if they themselves do not know what it is to be an autonomous learner; and (ii) that in determining the initiatives they take in the classrooms, teachers must be able to exploit their professional skills autonomously.”
(Little 2000:45)

That is to say, teachers need to experience autonomy as learners first, because most of them do not know what learner autonomy is since they have never had the opportunity to learn autonomously. Therefore, it is not easy for them to accept this notion and adopt it as a teaching and learning approach in their classrooms.

However, Smith explains explicitly the relationship between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy.

“Teachers also need to constantly reflect on their own role in the classroom, monitoring the extent to which they constrain or scaffold students’ thinking and behavior, so as to engage students in autonomous and effective learning.”(Smith, 2001:43-4)

On this basis, many scholars focus on both the importance of developing teacher autonomy through adopting a reflective teaching and on the interrelationship between teacher and learner roles in enhancing learner autonomy. However, Thavenius has a different point of view concerning the relationship between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy. According to him:

“Teacher autonomy and learner autonomy happen simultaneously and reinforce each other because in order to promote learner autonomy, it is necessary for teachers to work autonomously with learners’ learning processes.” (Thavenius, 1999:160)

Similarly, Benson (2001) confirms that there is a strong connection between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy; if teachers themselves cannot experience a sense of autonomy or their own autonomy is restricted by several factors and boundaries, they will never be ready to promote their learners’ autonomy.

Learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interrelated, interactive and strongly connected. Therefore, it is of great necessity to comprehend and respect the relation between them; both teachers and learners have to understand their autonomy in order to help each other in fostering it and improving the teaching/ learning process.

1.7 The Autonomous Classroom

Autonomous classroom refers to a learning centered environment in which both teachers and learners feel comfortable and interact with each other constructively within a learning community. According to Leni Dam (2000), there are some essential conditions should be taken into consideration in order to build an autonomous classroom:

- A willingness on the part of the teacher to let go, and on the part of the learners to take hold.
- An understanding of what to do and why and how it should be done, this applies to teachers as well as learners.
- An experience-based insight into the learning process for both teachers and learners.
- An atmosphere of security, trust and respect. (Dam, 2000)

In the same regard, Nunan (1996) argues that the teachers' and learners' roles, in the classroom, have been changed. As Marguerite Fitch put it at the annual conference of the American Educational Research Association in New Orleans in April 1994, *"The teacher's role changes from the 'Sage on the Stage' to the Guide on the Side."*(Tella, 1996:6). Thus, he suggests some roles which may help both teachers and learners in creating an autonomous learning environment through comparing between autonomous and non-autonomous classrooms in this table:

Autonomous classrooms	Non-autonomous classrooms
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Decisions are made with much reference to students. - Teacher introduces range of activities by taking students 'needs and interests into consideration. - Students are allowed to reflect on, assess and evaluate their learning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teachers make all decisions about content and classroom norms. - Students are exposed to the activities they are expected to perform. - The assessment and evaluation part are structured in a traditional manner in a way that tests and exams are carried out.

Table 1.1 Comparison between Autonomous and Non-autonomous Classrooms. (Nunan, 1996:21)

* This table illustrates the roles of both learners and teachers in an autonomous classroom and non- autonomous one.

1.8 The Learner's Roles in Autonomous Classroom

Since the concept of autonomy focuses on learning rather than teaching, we must take a closer look at the learners' roles in autonomous classroom.

1.8.1 Responsible for Learning

In an autonomous classroom, learners are no longer passive receivers of information; they should be active producers of knowledge and real makers of their own learning. According to Lacey (2007): "*The students have responsibility for their learning but through scaffolding¹.*" (Lacey, 2007:8). Autonomous learners have to be able and willing to take charge of their learning process. As Scharle and Szabo state: "*success in learning very much depends on learners having a responsible attitude.*" (Scharle and Szabo, 2000:4). So, learners become successful if they take responsibility for their own learning. (Lowes and Target, 1999)

1.8.2 Involved in the Learning Process

Fostering learner autonomy requires independent learners who have the capability to be involved in all aspects of the learning process: planning, implementation and assessment. In addition, they can be involved in making decisions, modifying the content and setting the goals of the learning programme.

1.8.3 Being Aware

Learners should be aware of the pedagogical materials, strategies, methods and skills that they use in their learning process. Thus, they will identify their own preferred learning styles which suit them. In this context, Dam says: "*... An awareness which hopefully will help them come to an understanding of themselves and thus increase their self-esteem.*"(Dam, 2000:18)

¹ Scaffolding is the support given during the learning process with the intention of helping students achieve their learning goals.

1.8.4 Self-assessor

Learners have to reflect on their learning in order to evaluate their work and develop independence from the teacher as the sole judge of their weakness and strength. In autonomous classroom, students take the initiative in planning and executing learning activities and they are willing to assess their own learning and evaluate the results. (Little, 2002)

1.8.5 Creative

To create is to produce or make something new from oneself without depending on the others' ideas. Therefore, autonomous learners are supposed to be creative persons. According to Schell (2004): "***Creative persons give ideas the freedom to develop.***" (Schell, 2004:14). Such persons are able to think in an independent way, notice things that other people do not, and find solutions to solve unusual problems. At the same time, they are risk takers who want to try new things without being afraid of making mistakes while creating new ways of learning using new materials to improve their knowledge.

The idea of learner autonomy is basically found on the fact of considering the learner as the pillar of the learning process; without him no teaching can be occurred. Thus, in order to be autonomous, learners have to play some key roles which make them able to take charge of their own learning and turn the classroom into a motivating environment where they can learn autonomously.

1.9 Learning Strategies and Learner Autonomy

The main objective behind fostering learner autonomy is to equip learners with strategies and skills which help them to be able to behave independently, take initiatives, and assume responsibility for their own learning. These factors are important because learners need to keep on learning even when they are no longer in a formal classroom setting and to function effectively in their society in the future as independent citizens.

Rubin (1975) argues that learning strategies are: *“what learners do to learn and do to regulate their learning.”* (Rubin, 1987:19). Similarly he defines learning strategies as any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information. According to Bialystok, learning strategies are: *“... optimal means for exploiting available information to improve competence in a second language...”* (Bialystok, 1978:71). For O’Malley and Chamot, they agree that learning strategies are: *“The special thoughts or behaviours that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn or retain new information.”* (O’Malley and Chamot, 1990:1). On the other hand, Learning strategies are regarded by Oxford as: *“Specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, and more transferable to new situations.”* (Oxford, 1990:8). Whereas Wenden (1991) defines them as follows: *“Learning strategies are specific mental steps or operations learners implement to learn”* (Wenden, 1991:163). Stern mentions that:

“The concept of learning strategies is based on the assumption that learners consciously engage in activities to achieve certain goals, that they exercise a choice of procedure, and that they undertake.” (Stern, 1992:261)

Yet, Carter and Nunan define learning strategies as: *“Techniques used by learners to help make their learning be more effective and to increase their independence and autonomy as learners.”* (Carter and Nunan, 2001:223)

Basing on the above definitions, we notice that most of scholars and researchers focus on what learners do to improve their learning and make it more effective and independent. Consequently, learning strategies contribute directly in fostering learner autonomy since they provide learners with techniques and means which help them increase their independence and autonomy in learning.

1.10 Language Learning Strategies (LLS)

Since the late 1970s, there has been widespread research interest in the best strategies that help language learners acquire second or foreign language. Since

then, the term Language Learning Strategies (LLS) has been tackled and defined by many scholars. As Oxford 1990 states, language learning strategies:

“... are especially important for language learning because they are tools for active, self-directed movement, which is essential for developing communicative competence”. (Oxford, 1990:1)

Oxford (1990) divided language learning strategies into two main categories: direct and indirect strategies. This classification is provided in the diagram 1.1 below:

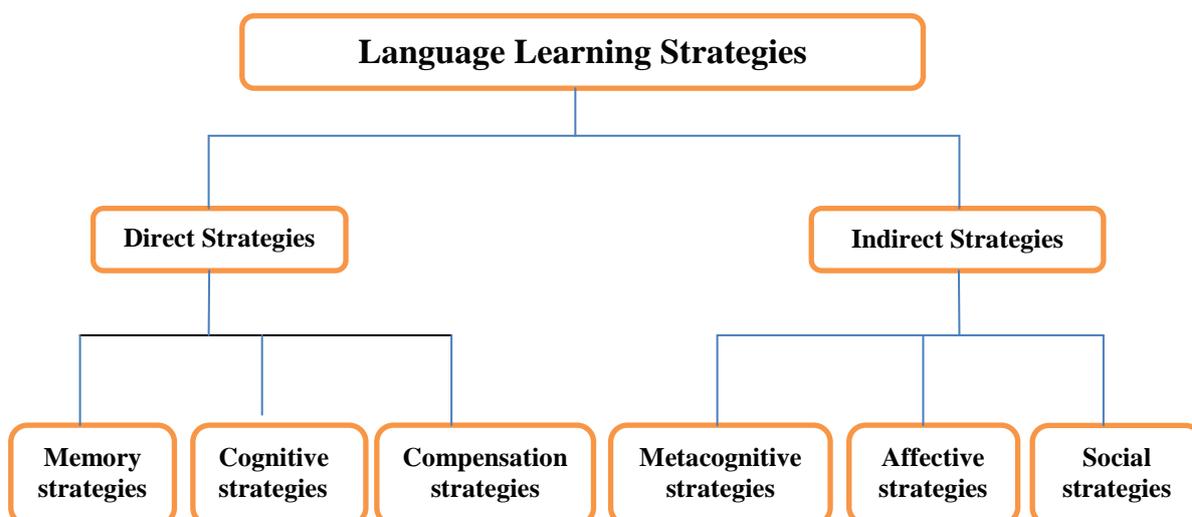


Diagram 1.1: A Summary of Oxford’s (1990) Classification of LLS

* This diagram summarizes the famous LLS classification given by Oxford (1990).

1.10.1 Direct Strategies

According to Oxford (1990), these strategies include attitudes and tasks which are directly related to language learning. They are divided into three sub-strategies: memory, cognitive, and compensation strategies. The Memory strategies *“... store and retrieve new information”*; Cognitive strategies *“... enable learners to understand and produce new language by many different means”* and Compensation strategies which *“... allow learners to use the language despite their often large gaps in knowledge.” (Oxford, 1990:37)*

1.10.2 Indirect Strategies

These strategies support and contribute in language learning but without involving the target language directly. They contain: affective, social and metacognitive strategies which:

“...allow learners to control their own cognition”; affective strategies “help to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes”; and social strategies “help students learn through interaction with others.”(Oxford, 1990:135)

According to Oxford (1990) there are certain factors that affect the choice of LLS used by learners such as: motivation, gender, age, cultural background, attitudes and beliefs.

In the same context, Chamot and O’Malley (1990) suggested another classification of LLS. They agreed about three main subcategories:

1.10.3 Metacognitive Strategies

They refer to the techniques and methods which help students think about their learning and understand the way they learn. Such strategies are used for planning, monitoring and evaluating the learning task such as: self-monitoring, self-evaluation.

1.10.4 Cognitive Strategies

This kind of strategy refers to the mental functions and processes that learners use in manipulating the materials to be learned. It includes repetition, visualisation, summarising, guessing, mind mapping, etc.

1.10.5 Social Affective Strategies

They are mainly based on cooperation and collaboration between learners in order to interact with each other and assist learning. At the same time, affective strategies can help learners in controlling their feelings, attitudes and motivation.

1.11 Language Learning Strategies for Learner Autonomy

According to Oxford (1990), successful language learners are those who use properly certain language learning strategies which make the learning process: “*easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferrable to new situations.*” (Oxford, 1990: 8). And thus, they can build up their autonomy and become responsible for their own learning.

In this regard, Wenden (1998) suggests five general strategies for language learners to help them become more successful and autonomous,

- ***Directed attention***; when deciding in advance to concentrate on general aspects of a task.
- ***Selective attention***; paying attention to specific aspects of a task.
- ***Self-monitoring***; checking one’s performance as one speaks.
- ***Self-evaluation***; appraising one’s performance in relation to one’s own standards.
- ***Self-reinforcement***; rewarding oneself for success. (Wenden, 1998:54)

Similarly, Rubin and Thompson (1982) have developed a set of strategies that help language learners enhance their autonomy:

- ***Self-management strategies***: they include the identification of one’s successful learning experiences and organizing one’s study approach.
- ***Planning strategies***: learners are provided with suggestions on how to plan and get a general idea of the content.
- ***Monitoring strategies***: learners are advised to use the second or foreign language with their own errors in order to identify their areas of weakness, correct themselves and evaluate their learning.

In short, the use of language learning strategies has an effective impact on the second or foreign language acquisition since they empower learners to become autonomous in some or all aspects of language learning.

1.12 Strategy Training

With the emergence of learner autonomy as a new concept in the educational field, second language teachers and researchers have been interested in the factors that contribute to foster this notion and implement it in language classrooms. However, educationalists tend to use other terms to refer “strategy training” such as; “learner training”, “learner development” and “learning to learn”. According to Wenden (1991), strategy training is a key factor in enhancing autonomous learning. It mainly aims to promote learner autonomy by making learners aware of the range of strategies available in foreign language learning and making them more responsible in the learning task. He offers a detailed definition of learner training:

“the learning activities organized to help language learners improve their skills as learners; includes learning to use strategies; knowledge about the language learning process; and attitude and development to support autonomous use of the strategies and knowledge; learner education.”
(Wenden, 1991: 163)

In other words, it is training learners on how to learn successfully and use specific strategies appropriately and independently in order to function effectively without depending totally on the teacher and become autonomous learners.

Moreover, Wenden (1991) focuses on some principles about how learner training could be:

- **Informed:** the purpose of training should be made explicit and value brought to the students’ attention.
- **Self-regulated:** students should be trained how to plan and regulate the use of the strategy, and also how to monitor the difficulties they may face in implementing it.
- **Contextualized:** training should be relevant to the context of the subject matter content .It should be directed to specific language learning problems related the learner’s experience.

- ***Interactive***: learners should not be merely told what to do and when to do it and then left on their own to practice rather, until they evidence some ability to regulate their use of the strategy, teachers are expected to continue to work with them. (*Wenden, 1991:105*)

Furthermore, Ellis and Sinclair (1989) see that strategy training is to make learners able to find out the convenient leaning strategies that suit them best. According to them, effective strategy training is based on the followings:

- Learners' attitude, beliefs and needs.
- It should fit learners' styles of learning.
- Affective issues such as: anxiety, motivation, self-esteem, etc. (*Ellis and Sinclair:1989:45*)

To sum up, autonomy requires self-reliant learners able to select their favourite learning strategies according to their level, needs and abilities. That is to say, the choice of these strategies is made by learners themselves, whereas the teacher's role is to help them develop such strategies through learner training and make them more skillful to apply it in different contexts. And thus, learners will be ready to foster their learning autonomy successfully.

1.13 Individual Autonomy and Group Autonomy

According to Dam (1995), learner autonomy is not only individual but also collaborative and entails some: "***Capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others.***" (*Dam, 1995:1*). Basing on this view, we can understand that autonomy is purely individual, but it can also be collective since cooperation, negotiation and interaction are necessary features in autonomous learning.

In this regard, Littlewood (1999) views that autonomy can be characterized by two main features; proactive and reactive. According to him proactive autonomy:

“... regulates the direction of activity as well as the activity itself... the key words are action words : learners are able to take charge of their own learning, determine their objectives, select methods and techniques and evaluate what has been acquired...”
(Littlewood, 1999:75)

Whereas reactive autonomy:

“... regulates the activity once the direction has been set... the kind of autonomy which does not create its own directions but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organize their resources autonomously in order to reach their goal.”
(Littlewood, 1999:75-76)

From the above definitions, this classification is very important since it allows learners to practise their autonomy in learning both individually and collaboratively. For example, they can practise their autonomy individually through expressing themselves, making decision or choosing the methods and strategies that suit them best. However, the collaborative autonomy can be shown in the project work in which learners negotiate with each other, share responsibility and work together within a group.

1.14 Fostering Learner Autonomy

With the increasing interest in foreign and second language learning, fostering learner autonomy as an important educational goal becomes the chief concern of many educators and language teachers. Therefore, a significant body of research has been conducted in the aim of fostering learner autonomy and finding the effective ways which help learners learn autonomously.

1.14.1 Definition of Fostering Learner Autonomy

According to Dam (2011), fostering learner autonomy is *“a move from teacher-directed teaching environment to a learner-directed learning environment.”*(Dam, 2011: 41). However, another definition was given by Esch who describes the promotion of learner autonomy as:

“... the provision of circumstances and contexts for language learners which will make it more likely that take charge -at least temporarily- of the whole or part of their language learning programme and which are more likely to help rather than prevent learners from exercising their autonomy.” (Esch, 2010: 37)

In simple terms, fostering learner autonomy is regarded as an attempt to help learners become more independent through training them on the effective use of the language learning strategies which make them responsible to take control, evaluate and monitor their language learning process.

1.14.2 Tips to Foster Learner Autonomy

Once the term “Learner Autonomy” has been emerged in the educational context, numerous scholars and researchers have produced literature on its definition, implementation and, especially, on the tips that help learners enhance their autonomy and take charge of their learning process. At a practical level, the development of autonomy requires learners to build up a skill set that allows them to direct their own learning. Most learners do not naturally have this skill set and need explicit training to develop it. In this context, Hurd argues that:

“...if learners are not trained for autonomy, no amount of surrounding them with resources will foster in them that capacity for active involvement and conscious choice, although it might appear to do so.” (Hurd, 1998: 72-73)

In addition, Gardner and Miller (1999) state that fostering learner autonomy is sometimes carried out through “learning training” which allows learners to come into contact with the idea of autonomy and to develop appropriate skills in the learning process. However, Crabbe notes,

“One important aspect in promoting learner autonomy is to negotiate with students the process that underline learning, such as problem identification, so that they become aware of their own needs and can set their own goals. (Crabbe 1993:446)

For Dickinson, the teacher plays a key role in fostering learner autonomy and has a major impact on students' development towards autonomy. He identifies six ways ***“in which the teacher can promote greater learner independence”***:

- Legitimizing independence in learning by showing that we, as teachers, approve, and by encouraging the students to be more independent;
- Convincing learners that they are capable of greater independence in learning-give them successful experiences of independent learning;
- Giving learners opportunities to exercise their independence;
- Helping learners to develop learning strategies so that they can exercise their independence;
- Helping learners to become more aware of language as a system so that they can understand many of the learning techniques available and learn sufficient grammar to understand simple reference books;
- Sharing with learners something of what we know about language learning so that they have a greater awareness of what to expect from the language learning task and how they should react to problems that erect barriers to learning.(*Dickinson 1992:330*)

In the same regard, Littlewood (1996) focuses on the teacher's role in promoting learner autonomy. According to him:

“... a teacher might, for example, concentrate on building up the learner's confidence in communication or on knowledge involved in learning and, more specifically, learning strategies.” (Littlewood, 1996:431-434)

Whereas Dam (2011) claims that the teacher's role in the enhancement of learner autonomy is ***“To make students both willing and capable to make over the responsibility of learning, i.e. planning, carrying out the plans, and evaluating the outcome.” (Dam 2011:41)***. However, Little (1995) sees that teachers need to be aware of their responsibilities in order to be successful in implementing and reinforcing learner autonomy. This requires the teachers' willingness to change, and

negotiate with their students in the classroom. In addition, he puts emphasis on the teachers' new roles to enhance autonomous learning:

“I believe that all truly effective learning entails the growth of autonomy in the learner as regards both the process and the content of learning; but I also believe that for most learners the growth of autonomy requires stimulus, insight and guidance of a good teacher.”
(Little, 2000:18)

Besides, Little suggests three basic pedagogical norms to foster learner autonomy especially in language classrooms:

- ***Learner involvement:*** is to make learners engaged in the learning process through sharing responsibility (affective and metacognitive dimensions);
- ***Learner reflection:*** helping learners to reflect on the process of planning, monitoring and assessing their learning (metacognitive dimension);
- ***Appropriate target language use:*** the target language can be used as a fundamental instrument for language learning (communicative and metacognitive dimensions).

According to Kohonen, ***“once they feel that they are appreciated and their abilities trusted, they can gain a feeling of ownership and responsibility of their own learning.”*** (Kohonen, 1992:32). In other words, learners need to be encouraged and stimulated by their teacher who should trust their capacities in order to give them a sense of self-confidence which contributes effectively in raising their autonomy.

Moreover, Lewis and Reinders (2008) agree about some practical tips which help teachers in promoting learner autonomy in language classroom. Firstly, they see that language teachers should support the collaborative learning through encouraging pair and group works, and making their learners aware of the importance of such learning in improving their language level and developing their learning skills. Secondly, teachers should offer more opportunities for their learners to let them assess their language learning by themselves through working

independently, but under the teacher's guidance and help. Thirdly, teachers have to provide their learners with the reflective tools for self-assessment such as; diaries and portfolios which make them reflect on their learning, and thus become more interested in. However, Kumaravadivelu (2003) states that there are certain tips by which learners can develop their independence and enhance their autonomy in formal language learning. These tips can be summarized in the following points:

- Think in a critical way, act independently and make decision concerning the learning process;
- Look for more knowledge about the learning process;
- Be responsible for learning and choose the appropriate strategies in order to attain the learning objectives;
- Develop self-control and self-discipline ,which lead to self-esteem and self-confidence ;
- Be more independent of the teacher and the educational system;
- Interact with one's self, the teacher, the task, and the educational environment. (*Kumaradivelu, 2003:133*)

As a conclusion, we notice that most of the above definitions and suggestions focus on the teacher's role in enhancing learner autonomy. Therefore, it is very important for teachers to understand and consider how learners perceive their autonomy and responsibilities in learning in order to become more aware of their own and their learner's beliefs and attitudes when they are attempting to broaden the horizon of learner autonomy in their classrooms.

1.14.3 Approaches to Foster Learner Autonomy

According to Benson (2001), there are six different approaches which can be adopted in order to foster learner autonomy: resource-based, learner-based, technology-based, classroom-based, curriculum-based and teacher-based approaches.

- **Resource-Based Approach:** this approach is mainly based on creating opportunities for learners to be responsible for their learning.
- **Learner-Based Approach:** it provides learners with capacities to assume this responsibility. The main objective of learner-based approach is to make learners more successful through training them on how to learn.
- **Technology-Based Approach:** the widespread of technology helps a lot in facilitating the second and foreign language acquisition. It becomes an important fact of today's language instruction that promoting learner autonomy.
- **Classroom-Based Approach:** aims at giving opportunities for learners to make decisions about their learning process, and so reinforcing their autonomy in learning.
- **Curriculum-Based Approach:** Benson (2001) uses the term "process syllabus" to refer to this approach. It relies primarily on the idea of allowing learners to take control over the language content which should be apparent in the classroom.
- **Teacher-Based Approach:** it depends on the teacher's readiness to change his traditional roles and accept the new ones. As Powell mentions: "***also the teacher needs to accept the change and be willing to share responsibility.***" (Powell, 1988:118). Thus, teachers have to work on their professional development which is a crucial aspect of this change, and to enhance their autonomy to lead learners to autonomous learning. According to Benson: "***In order to create spaces for learners to exercise their autonomy, teachers must recognize and assert their own***". (Benson, 2001:173)

Although, the above mentioned approaches are classified separately as provided in the diagram 1.2¹ below, Benson concludes that "***it seems likely that it (learner autonomy) will be fostered most effectively through a combination of approaches.***" (Benson, 2001:178)

¹<https://reflectiveteachingreflectivelearning.com/2016/03/>

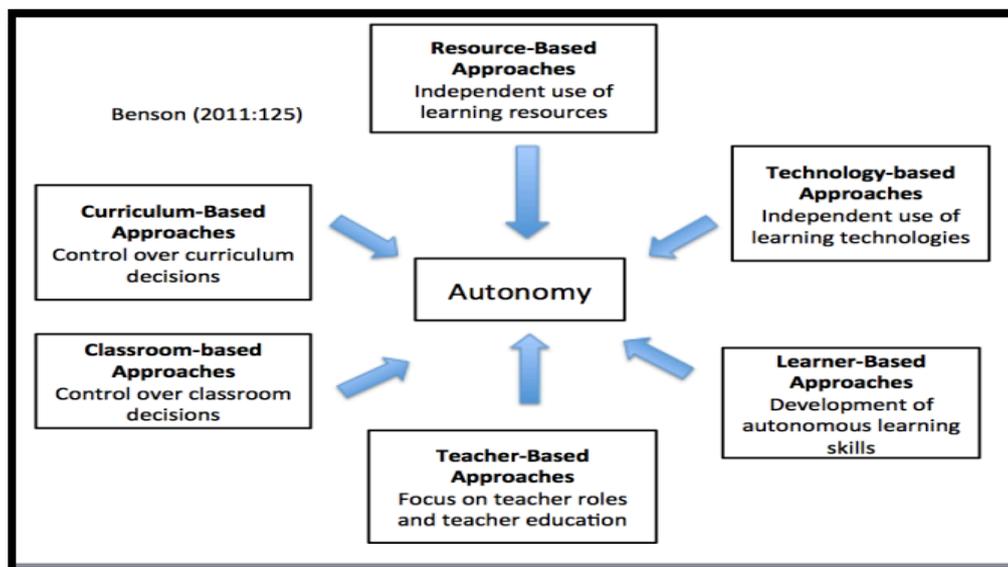


Diagram 1.2 Autonomy in Language Learning and Related Areas of Practice

* This diagram represents the different approaches suggested by Benson (2001) to foster learner autonomy.

1.14.4 Principles to Foster Learner Autonomy

In fact, most learners already possess some abilities which allow them to enhance their autonomy to certain degree. In this regard, Thomson (1996) sees that through these abilities, autonomy can be developed and fostered. Similarly, Benson agrees with this view and puts a set of principles:

- Learners routinely initiate and manage their own learning both outside and within the context of formal instruction.
- Learners receiving formal instruction tend rather to follow their own learning agendas rather than those of their teachers.
- Learners tend to exercise control over psychological factors influencing their learning, especially those concerned with motivation, affective state and beliefs or preferences. (*Benson, 2001:60*)

According to Dam (2011), there are some necessary principles which should be taken into account in the development of learner autonomy. Firstly, the notion of choice is very important. Dam sees that giving learners the opportunity to choose is a motivational strategy which enhances their reflection and develops their awareness of learning, besides, it shifts responsibility towards the learner and improves his self-esteem. Secondly, in order to be ready to take charge and responsibility of their own learning, learners need to feel more secure and safe; hence, clear guidelines and rules need to be established. Thirdly, instead of transferring knowledge to his learners, the teacher's key role is to make them actively involved in the learning process. The fourth principle, according to Dam, is the authenticity, that is to say; both teachers and learners should be themselves; they behave naturally and play the roles which suit them in the institutional learning environment. In the last principle, Dam makes emphasis on the importance of assessment in enhancing learner autonomy. He views that self-reflection and evaluation make learners aware of their learning level and so they become more motivated to improve it.

However, Cotterall (2000) claims that the shift of decision-making about learning from the teacher to learners is considered as the most difficult challenge in fostering autonomy. Additionally, he suggests five principles that help learners reinforce their control over learning and improve their language proficiency. Firstly, in order to be supportive for learner autonomy, the language course should reflect learners' goals, tasks and strategies. The second principle is to make a link between the course tasks and the language learning process. Thirdly, these tasks should be repeated or performed as drilling activities. The next principle focuses on the use of different learning strategies. Lastly, Cotterall views that curriculum-based approach is helpful in promoting learner autonomy.

1.14.5 Reasons for Fostering Learner Autonomy

For many teachers, autonomy becomes a desirable goal especially in language classroom because it proves its efficacy that has contributed positively to language learning. Dickinson (1994) says that:

“we see the achievement of independence in learning as desirable, allowing the student to pursue his own learning objectives in ways and at times which most suit him, and so we adopt the additional teaching objective to teach the student how to learn.”(Dickinson, 1994:2)

Another interesting reason for promoting learner autonomy is added by Dickinson (1987). She adds:

“...there is convincing evidence that people who take the initiative in learning (proactive learners) learn more things and learn better than do people who sit at the feet of teachers, passively waiting to be taught (reactive learners)...they enter into learning more purposefully and with greater motivation.” (Dickinson, 1987:14)

In other words, learners involved in the learning process are highly motivated. This makes them willing to learn and qualified for being successful language learners.

Whereas Candy mentions that: *“When learners are involved in making choices and decisions about the content and the mode of what they are studying, learning is more meaningful, and thus, effective.”(Candy, 1991:24)*. However, Dafei (2007) confirms in his study that there is a strong connection between learner autonomy and English proficiency. As he states: *“The results of the study indicate that the students’ English proficiency was significantly and positively related to their learner autonomy.” (Dafei, 2007:1)*. Furthermore, this connection is affirmed by Little who says:

“Precisely because autonomous learners are motivated and reflective learners, their learning is efficient and effective (conversely, all learning is likely to succeed to the extent that the learner is autonomous). And the efficiency and effectiveness of the autonomous learner means that the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom can be applied to situations that arise outside the classroom.”(Little, 2006:2)

In fact, there are many reasons behind introducing the notion of learner autonomy in language learning; psychological, social and practical. First, most psychologists and educationalists agree that excellent learners are necessarily motivated and independent individuals who are in charge of their own learning. As Little (2006) defines autonomy as *“a basic human need. It is nourished by, and in turn nourishes, our intrinsic motivation, our proactive interest in the world around us.” (Little 2006:2)*. Second, when taking the social factors into account, autonomy is an essential aspect of a democratic society which requires autonomous citizens able to make decisions and choices regarding their everyday life. In this context, Knowles (1975) asserts that when individuals are free to choose for themselves, their societies will be healthier and happier. Thus, it is important to prepare learners for autonomy from an early age since the conception of the individual in the society is no longer that of man as a product of his society *“but that of man as the producer of his society.” (Jane, 1977: 15)*. Third, autonomy allows learners to get the chance to be involved, and thus they can practise the acquired knowledge outside school and apply it in real life situations.

1.14.6 Benefits of Promoting Learner Autonomy in EFL Classroom

Autonomy in learning is considered as an undeniable factor in enhancing individuals' learning abilities which make learners more competent and skillful to be in charge of their learning process, achieve their goals and solve their learning problems. Hence, the primary purpose of autonomy is to prepare students to take an active role in order to gain the appropriate skills and attitudes they need in both academic and social participation.

Recently, in the field of second and foreign language, there has been a new change which shifts learning from teachers to learners, in focus from how to improve the teaching situation to how individual learners go through their learning. Hence, learner autonomy is very important idea in EFL class whether at the level of theory or empirically where both teachers and learners have the opportunity to be involved in the process of learning and teaching.

According to Little (2003), learning is seen as a spiral process where new levels of autonomy are acquired as the learners move through new phases of independence. The importance of learner autonomy is being on developing positive relation between the present and future learning targets. In addition to that, autonomy helps learners to be better language learners due to their intrinsic motivation and their reflective engagement with the learning process. Thus they are being a lifelong (continuing) learning of constantly developing awareness. In addition, Little (2004) demonstrates three beliefs that elucidate learner autonomy in the EFL classroom. Firstly, the learner is in total control of his or her own learning. Secondly, the capacity of the individual learner to work alone develops learning language skills in collaboration with the rest of the peers. Thirdly, both language learning and language use are maximized throughout the process. Whereas, Dam (1995) sees that promoting learner autonomy is a demanding task, according to him:

“Developing learner autonomy is a long, difficult and often painful process, not least for the teacher. It demands constant effort on the part of teacher and learners; not only as individuals but in collaboration with one another... it is an experience-based learning process for teachers and learners alike.” (Dam, 1995:6)

To conclude, implementing the notion of learner autonomy and making it a concrete reality in our schools is not an easy task to be achieved. However, its promotion seems to be the cornerstone of successful learning in which both teachers and learners have the opportunity to be involved.

1.15 Conclusion

Learning is a continuous process; it may take the learner's whole life without being ended. During this process, learners are taught and guided to become autonomous and take the responsibility for their learning so as to improve their language skills. Hence, learner autonomy has become a central theme in language teaching. It is part of a wider development in education to organize and direct their own learning inside and outside the school context. In general, there is now a broader awareness of the importance of developing language and autonomous learning skills in addition to language competencies.

The aim of this chapter was to give the general idea about the concept of learner autonomy in language learning. In fact, we have just scratched the surface of this concept. There are certainly many pieces of this puzzle termed learner autonomy missing. In the next chapter, we are going to shed light on the Algerian ELT situation, describe the notion of learner autonomy in middle education in Algeria and present the research design and methodology.

CHAPTER TWO

SITUATION ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

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2.1 Introduction

Today, English is considered the language of science, technology and globalization. Hence, mastering English and computing become indispensable conditions for keeping pace with this rapidly changing world. That is why teaching and learning English witnessed, throughout the twentieth century, many changes in methods, approaches and techniques that help improve the quality of teaching and learning English. These changes aim at providing learners with the most suitable teaching opportunities, and thus enhance their achievements towards autonomous learning.

Since the independence in 1962, the Ministry of Education in Algeria has changed its policy towards teaching and learning foreign languages, especially English. However, this change was not an easy task; it required intensive efforts from the decision-makers, the syllabus designers and the English teachers in order to apply the alternative policy and ensure its success.

As a result, the educational system has been reformed several times in the aim of making progress in teaching and learning the English language through offering opportunities to learn this language at an earlier age, providing EFL teachers with new curricular and textbooks and implementing optimal methods and approaches for ELT.

2.2 The Status of the English Language

The increasing use of English across the globe makes it the mother tongue of science, technology, trade, business, transport and tourism. In addition, it becomes the universal medium of high education. In this regard, Cook states: *“In recent years the growth of English has been further accelerated by starting expansion in the quantity and speed of international communication.”*(Cook, 2003: 25). Moreover, English serves as the globalization language since it is spoken in many countries around the world; and so Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) will soon become a necessity. As David Crystal states:

“English as a global language has proved itself to be taught and learned by people from all across the world. In many countries English is usually taught as a second language and there is a big demand for knowledge to speak.”(Crystal, 2003:22)

In fact, the widespread use of English as a first or second language has given it an important position among the spoken languages over the world. According to Crystal (2006), there are nearly 400 million native speakers of English and more than 400 million speakers of English as a second language. However, the recent statistics confirm that there are approximately 1.5 billion speakers of English globally, of whom only 375 million are native speakers.

2.3 Algerian Educational System

During the French colonization, Algeria had no schools or institutions to provide education for its people; therefore, only a small minority received this education, and since there were a great number of French children among this minority, they were forced to learn European languages, especially French and English. Algeria gained its independence in 1962, and thus a radical change occurred in many fields. However, education was still oriented towards a particular elite till 1963 when the Ministry of Education was founded. As a result, many schools and institutions were established to make education free to all the Algerian kids. Since then, the Algerian educational system witnessed various reforms. The actual school system in Algeria is made up of twelve years divided into three main cycles: primary education, middle education and secondary education.

2.3.1 Primary Education

At the age of six, Algerian children are obliged to go to school to receive their primary education for free. They are taught in their native language Arabic and French as the only foreign language introduced at this level from the third year. After studying five years, pupils take the Sixth Grade Exam which is a national final examination through which they can move to the Middle Cycle.

2.3.2 Middle Education

During this cycle, learners spend four years and study different subjects taught by several teachers. From their first year, pupils start learning English as the second foreign language after French. At the end of the fourth year, they have to pass the “Brevet d’Enseignement Moyen” (BEM), which refers to the national basic education certificate examination, in order to move to high school.

2.3.3 Secondary Education

In the secondary cycle, students can choose the stream which suits them, but according to their grades in the BEM exam. In the first year, there are three main streams: languages and social studies, sciences and technology. In the second year, other streams are offered such as; Philosophy and Literature, Literature and Foreign Languages, Sciences, Mathematics, Economy and Management, Civil Technology, Chemistry, etc. However, the second choice of the stream is based on three criteria; students’ personal preference, their teachers’ opinions and their first year results. At the end of the third year, students take a national exam called “Baccalaureate” in which they are tested in all the subjects studied in the third year. To pass this examination, students have to score an average of more than 10 on a 20 point scale.

2.3.4 Higher Education

The University of Algiers was established in 1909, it was considered as the first high education institution in Algeria. At that time, it offered very limited number of specialties such as; Law, Letters, Medicine, Pharmacy, and Sciences. After the independence, many universities and institutes have been established in all over the country, and thus various pedagogical specialties and modules are taught in different faculties.

The current Algerian system of university degrees is nearly the same, in its structure, to the European one. This new framework, known as the LMD (Licence-Master- Doctorate), is mainly based on the Canadian sample:

- The Licence, corresponding to three years of study beyond the Baccalaureate (BAC + 3).
- The Master, corresponding to two years further study beyond the Licence (BAC + 5).
- The Doctorate, corresponding to three years of research beyond the Master (BAC + 8).

2.3.5 Education Institutions

In addition to universities and faculties, there are other national specialized schools and institutes which are generally under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research or the Ministry of Professional Training and Education. These institutions offer specialized professional training programs in different field; agriculture, industry, health, etc. After two and a half year of theoretical and practical training, students get the award of the “Brevet de Technicien Supérieur” (BTS)¹.

Moreover, the non- baccalaureate holding students have the chance to carry on their studies in “l’Université de la Formation Continue” (UFC)². This institution was established since 1990; it provides courses and programmes through network study centres or by correspondence and via the internet. The trainees should accomplish three years of studies in order to obtain the “Diplôme des Etudes Universitaire Appliquées” (DEUA)³ degree.

Since its independence, Algeria has made great efforts to improve the quality of its educational system. Therefore, it has brought many changes at all the educational levels in order to find solutions for the difficulties found in the previous system. However, the change was not only in the academic years distribution or curricular, but also in the teaching methods and approaches.

¹Advanced Technician's Certificate.

²The University of Continuous Training.

³University Diploma of Applied Studies.

2.4 Algerian Educational Reforms

In fact, there was an educational system in Algeria during the colonization period, but it was purely French since it was founded and managed by the French authorities. Once it gained its independence in 1962, Algeria started making radical educational reforms. The first education reform was in 1971 to launch, for the first time, the nine-year fundamental education programme. Five years later, another amendment was added in the Algerian educational system to make education free for all children and compulsory from six to ten years. In the same reform during 1976, it was also confirmed that education is a public sector; it was the exclusive domain of the state. However, this resolution was cancelled in 2004 when an executive decree was promulgated to allow the foundation of private schools, but under the supervision of the Ministry of Education. By the beginning of the academic year 2002-2003, the education system in Algeria witnessed a series of reforms. The main change was in the teaching methodologies and approaches adopted in all the subjects and the school levels. Thus, the Competency- Based Approach (CBA) was introduced for the first time in the Algerian educational context. As a result, other changes were occurred regarding the textbooks, the curricular, and the study programmes.

2.5 English Language Teaching in Algeria

During the period of colonization, the French language was strongly implemented as the official and first language in Algeria, whereas English was introduced in the first year of the intermediate cycle as a first foreign language which the learners meet only in the classroom. Some years after the independence, English maintained its status as a first foreign language, but it was taught till the third year. Thus, pupils would have studied English for five years between the intermediate cycle the secondary one. During this period, English Language Teaching (ELT), in Algeria, has witnessed many changes regarding its objectives, syllabuses and teaching methodologies as well.

By the end of the 1960s, ELT has become more important and widespread in the Algerian schools, especially after founding the first English Department in the University of Algiers in 1964. As a result, the French language interference has been reduced. In this regard, Miliani states that:

“In a situation where the French language has lost much of its ground in the sociocultural and educational environments of the country; the introduction of English is being heralded as the magic solution to all possible ills-including economic, technological and educational ones.”(Miliani, 2000:13)

During the 1990s, after being introduced in optional schools in Algeria, English has gained a considerable recognition in the country and become an important part in the curriculum. Consequently, many TEFL institutes have been established throughout the country in order to provide specialized training for EFL teachers. However, these training schools were facing difficulties in transmitting the English culture to those who are supposed to teach English. Most of these difficulties were due to the lack of real contact with native speakers and to the rarity of authentic materials which help the trainees to enrich their cultural knowledge about the target language.

Through the last educational reform launched during the academic year 2002-2003, nothing is being said on the status of English as a second foreign language. It becomes an obligatory subject matter for the four years of middle school; it is taught since the learners' first year and they study it three or four times a week. They take two tests and one exam each trimester; that is to say, three times a year. In the secondary cycle, EFL is still compulsory for all learners, but it is more important for literary stream than scientific or technological ones.

While in Algerian universities, English is taught as a separate pedagogical speciality which requires four years of study to hold a “Licence” degree in the English language .But, with the new system of LMD, it is only three years. With such certificate, graduate students can get a job of EFL teacher in middle education.

In addition, after passing a regional access examination, the holders of “Licence” degree can carry on their postgraduate studies which last two years at least to obtain a “Magister” degree in English. With this qualification, students are able to teach at university and carry on their studies in order to get the “Doctorate” degree. Unlike, the traditional system, LMD system takes a total of eight years’ study between Licence, Master and Doctorate. Furthermore, the widespread use of English becomes quite apparent in different fields and scientific researches; it is introduced as an obligatory module in many specialities such as; Civil Engineering, Biology, Computing Science, etc.

In fact, the Algerian new policy towards ELT aims basically at attaining some underlined goals. First, due to its international status, English was given a special interest by the Algerian Ministry of Education in order to keep pace with the world development. Second, the main aim behind this policy is to improve English proficiency of Algerian learners, especially after being acquainted with French as the country’s second language, and provide them with all the necessary tools which help them become not only autonomous learners but independent future citizens able to set and realize their objectives, and satisfy their desirable intentions.

2.5.1 The Objectives of ELT in Algeria

Thanks to the globalization, English becomes a global language which meets the issues related to the rapid pace of technological advancement. Therefore, in the last Algerian educational reform in 2002-2003, there has been a great emphasis on English as a second foreign language. It was affirmed that ELT must take part in the learner’s development in all aspects. In addition, it must reinforce the national values, open-mindedness, tolerance and mutual respect with others. Thus, ELT in Algeria aims at reaching the following objectives:

2.5.1.1 General Objectives

Language is what we need to perform various transactions in life, and without it; as Rădulescu argues:

***“We could not think thoughts expressible to others nor could we engage in the activities that commonly take place in the societies we build for ourselves.”
(Rădulescu, 2013:408)***

Certainly, there are many reasons and objectives behind the teaching or learning of any language. In fact, these objectives are, to a certain extent, the same over the world. Generally, ELT has many objectives; they are of social, political, economic and cultural order. Socially, ELT aims at supplying learners with all the magnitudes which make them social beings who take part in the making of the world around them. This can be done through taking charge of their learning process, sharing and collaborating with each other and making decisions and choices regarding their learning. Politically, ELT makes learners more engaged in open conversations and communicative situations where they develop a democratic freedom of interaction and negotiation with others. At the economic level, English serves as the language of today's world markets and its functional use in economics makes it a means of common understanding between nations around the globe. Moreover, ELT plays a key role in keeping learners in touch with the English culture and even with other cultures of different countries. Thus, it contributes in developing their open-mindedness, enriching their knowledge and expanding their cultural background.

In short, the general objectives set to ELT in Algeria can be summarized in the official text in which the Ministry of Education affirms that:

“The second foreign language is covering seven years of study (four years in the middle education and three years in the secondary education). English language teaching aims at establishing and developing communicative, linguistic, cultural and methodological skills that will enable the learner to face situations of oral or written communication.”(Ministry of Education, 2005: 4)⁴

⁴“Translation mine”

2.5.1.2 Communicative Objectives

The main objective behind teaching foreign languages, such as English, is to make learners capable to communicate in the target language with different peoples around the world and have access to high technology and modern sciences.

2.5.1.3 Linguistic Objectives

The language or linguistic objectives refer to the students' mastery of the target language through the four language skills: reading, speaking, writing and listening. In Algeria, the linguistic objectives of ELT can be summarized as follows:

- To improve the learners' basic knowledge and support the continuity of English language learning.
- To reinforce the learning strategies which facilitate for them the language acquisition.
- To provide the learners with the necessary tools, skills and techniques to carry on their learning.

2.5.1.4 Cultural Objectives

In fact, no language can be acquired without having a clear understanding about its culture. Therefore, one of the main aims of ELT in Algeria is to establish a comfortable learning environment which helps learners develop good perceptions and positive attitudes towards English learning, and to enrich their knowledge about others' cultures.. In this context, Wilkins states that:

“Whereas the second language learner needs language for use within his own community, the foreign language learner needs it so that he can form contacts of his learning therefore should be not his own culture, but that of the group whose culture has provided the justification of his language in the first place.” (Wilkins, 1972:154)

2.5.1.5 Methodological Objectives

In Oxford dictionary, the term methodology is defined as a system of methods used in a particular area of study or activity. Teaching English in Algeria aims at:

- Fostering learner autonomy which is seen as the most important methodological objective of ELT in Algerian schools. According to the Ministry of Education, the use of autonomous strategies in learning English helps learners in expanding their knowledge and getting more information.
- Making the learners actively involved in the learning process through engaging them in different learning tasks related to their real-life situations.
- Developing the learners' mental capacities such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation through intellectual activities.

2.5.2 The Objectives of ELT in Middle Education

According to the Orientation Law on National Education No. 08-04 23 (January 2008), the school has four main missions: education, training, socialization and qualification, the new English curriculum has been designed appropriately to cover these missions and facilitate their accomplishment.

The four years of the middle education are very important in the child's school life; he can develop his mental, emotional, physical and social capacities. Hence, during this foundation period, the learner starts progressively developing different competencies which help him continue a life-long learning. In the middle cycle, ELT aims mainly at assisting learners in finding solutions for the different problem situations they face during their language learning. According to the Ministry of Education, by the end of middle education, students will be able to:

- Understand, read and listen to English text, and recognize different types of text.
- Take part in different conversations and share discussions with their classmates using English language.
- Produce different types of paragraphs (letters, invitations, reports, articles...).

- Evaluate themselves and measure their own progress through different assessment tasks.

2.5.3 Final Objectives of ELT for Fourth Year Pupils

According to the Algerian Ministry of Education:

“The newly built syllabus contains a short introduction making explicit the finalities of the English language teaching, as set by the educational authorities of our country. From these finalities derive linguistic, methodological and cultural objectives.” (Teacher’s Handbook, 2004:03)

In order to reinforce, improve and develop the skills and the knowledge acquired during the first three years, ELT, at the fourth year middle school, aims at attaining the following aims:

2.5.3.1 Linguistic Objectives

- Developing and reinforcing what has been learnt during the previous three years.
- Equipping learners with the necessary tools which allow them to carry on their formal education.
- Making learners ready to attain more complementary objectives and skills in the next three years of secondary education.

2.5.3.2 Methodological Objectives

- Consolidating the methodologies which were adopted in the first three years.
- Enhancing the learners’ self-assessment strategies.
- Equipping learners with the necessary materials that foster their motivation and allow them to be engaged in real life situations where they use the target language.

2.5.3.3 Cultural Objectives

- Enriching the learners' knowledge and culture about the different civilization contexts.
- Exposing the learner to new customs, habits and beliefs of different peoples around the world.
- Developing the learner's open-minded perspectives and arising his eagerness to learn for the sake of gaining new culture about a particular language or people.

As a result, the syllabus of English in the fourth year middle school is complementary to the syllabi of the previous three years; therefore, the textbooks of middle education are designed by the same authors (Arab et al). So, the pupil will be exposed to the same theoretical and methodological principles.

2.5.3.4 Entrance Profile

According to the Document d'Accompagnement du Programme d'Anglais, 4ème Année Moyenne:

“The pupil of fourth year middle school has already been exposed to English for three years .He knows how to interact in the class, interpret and produce verbal and nonverbal correct messages and of average complexity orally and in writing.” (2005:66)⁵

2.5.3.5 Exit Profile

Whereas for the exit profile, it is mentioned, in the Document d'Accompagnement du Programme d'Anglais, 4ème Année Moyenne, that:

“In the fourth year middle school, the student will have to consolidate and develop the language prerequisites, methodological and cultural knowledge acquired in the third year. The ELT aims to enable the outgoing student of fourth year:

⁵“Translation mine”

- To interact in real situations of school life and everyday life.
- To interpret more complex authentic documents independently.
- To pass successfully the Brevet English exam.
- To continue his language learning in the next cycle in good conditions. (2006:66)⁶

Basing on the above mentioned general aims of ELT in Algeria, learners use English to communicate, interact, discuss and discover the world's cultures. Hence, ELT is considered as a cultural, technical and scientific tool which contributes effectively in the learner's development in all dimensions.

2.5.4 ELT Textbooks in Algerian Middle School

During the post colonial period, ELT textbooks, in Algeria, have been changed many times. This was due to the distrust of the Algerian educational authorities towards the English textbooks which were designed by foreigners to meet the French pupils' needs and according to their level. (Hayane, 1989). In addition, most EFL teachers in the mid of the 1960s were foreigners and they knew no Arabic. That is why; Algerian learners were in need of new textbooks taking into account their own requirements. By the beginning of 1970s, the Algerian educational system witnessed radical changes in different fields. Consequently, new textbooks were designed according to new standards in order to improve the English language level in Algerian schools. However, these textbooks were not so Algerian since they were still designed by a foreigner, and thus teaching English in Algeria knew many difficulties and challenges at that time.

Finally, Andy in Algeria was the first Algerian course book published for the fourth grade in 1975. A year later (1976), another Algerian textbook Madjid in England was released for the third grade. These new textbooks were carefully designed according to the real situation of ELT in Algeria. (Hayane, 1989)

⁶ "Translation mine"

In fact, thanks to the whole reconsideration of English textbooks and Algerian education system by the end of the 1970s when the “Fundamental School” was implemented, ELT became a standalone process, especially after adopting new textbooks designed by Algerian authors. In 1984, Spring One was published for the third grade. A year later, another textbook Spring Two was released for the fourth grade. We can see further details in the table 2.1 below:

Grade	Title	Authors	Year of Publication	Number of pages
Third	-Success with English	- Broughton	1968	303
	-Madjid in England	-Ministry of Education	1976	303
	-Spring One	-Belkaid et al	1984	182
Fourth	-Success with English1	-Broughton	1968	303
	-Andy in Algeria	-Ministry of Education	1975	303
	-Spring Two	-Belkaid et al	1985	235

Table 2.1 English Textbooks in Algeria From 1968 to 2003. (Hayane, 1989)

* This table illustrates the ELT textbooks adopted in the Algerian middle schools from the independence to 2003.

During the academic year 2002-2003, a series of educational reforms were undertaken at different levels and applied in the three cycles; primary, middle and secondary cycle. As a result, a national commission known as “Benzaghou Reform”⁷ was formed to review the programs, curricula and textbooks. In addition, this commission was in charge of making decisions concerning the teaching of foreign languages. For English language, it was decided to teach it from the first year of the middle school.

⁷Benzaghou is the name of the person at the head of the commission.

Thus, four textbooks were designed and published from 2003 to 2006; Spotlight on English 1 was first published in 2003 and designed for the first grade. In 2004, Spotlight on English 2 was published for the second year pupils in middle school. Later, a new textbook was designed for the third grade and published in 2005. The last and the actual textbook On the Move designed for the fourth grade, it was published in 2006. Details concerning these textbooks are shown in the table 2.2 below:

Grade	Title	Authors	Year of Publication	Number of pages
First	Spot Light On English 1	Merazga et al.	2003	189
Second	Spot Light On English 2	Merazga et al.	2004	125
Third	Spot Light On English 3	Arab et al.	2005	188
Fourth	On The Move	Arab et al.	2006	192

Table 2.2 New English Textbooks (Lekhal, 2008)

* This table summarizes the ELT textbooks designed for middle school learners from 2003 to the present day.

From the independence till present day, English textbooks have been changed and designed many times and by many authors. During this long period, the Algerian educational authorities were trying to design the most convenient textbook which suits the Algerian pupils' level, needs, culture and way of living as well as thinking.

2.5.5 Fourth Year ELT Textbook

On the Move is the actual ELT textbook designed for the middle school fourth year students who are aged between 14 and 15 years old and have studied English for three years. It was first published by the Ministry of Education in 2006.

In the section “To the Teacher”, the author Arab mentioned that: “***On the Move** takes up from **Spotlight on English, Book Three** while developing features of its own.*” (Arab, 2006:8). This textbook consists of six files, all of them following the same structure, i.e. two main parts subdivided into three sections (see Appendix E). The first part, “Language Learning” corresponds to the receptive stage of the teaching/ learning procedure. It is concerned with the acquisition of language in its various components and forms: functions, grammar and sounds. It includes:

- Listen and consider.
- Read and consider.
- Words and sounds.

The second part, entitled “Skills Building” which corresponds to the productive stage, consists in the practical uses of the language on the basis of what has been acquired in the first part. It comprises:

- Research and Report.
- Listening and speaking.
- Reading and writing.

These two parts are followed by “Project Round Up”, which is a sample breakdown of the items expected to be contained in the project of each file (see Appendix F). “Where Do We Stand Now?” is a rubric devoted to the student’s achievements, it is divided into an objective assessment called “Progress Check” (see Appendix G) and a subjective one called “Learning log” (see Appendix H). Finally, the file is closed with “Time For” which is devoted for students to take a break before moving to the next file (see Appendix I).

A good textbook would allow learners to make choices from a variety of activities. It also helps them to organize their learning and enables them to learn better, faster, clearer, and easier to meet the challenges of real- life situations.

2.5.6 The Notion of Autonomy within On the Move

The Ministry of Education considers developing learner autonomy as one of the main objectives of ELT in the middle of education in general and fourth year pupils in particular. According to the Teacher's Handbook, the teacher: ***“must keep in mind that the learners’ gradual autonomy is one of the main objectives.”***(2004:03), and this is the reason why new syllabus has been designed, new textbooks have been published and the CBA has been introduced as a new approach. On the other hand, the development of learner autonomy is mentioned by the authors of On the Move as one of the main features of this textbook ***“... the development of student autonomy through ‘survival strategies’ and research tasks involving group work and peer evaluation.”*** (Arab et al, 2006:09)

In this textbook and in the beginning of each file, there is an anticipating phase called “Food For Thought” in which pupils predict the files theme through illustrations. This technique renders them somehow more autonomous since they rely on their previous knowledge and predict. In addition, each file is ended with a project workshop in which pupils do a research about the file theme. In this phase, the teacher should act as a counselor; his role is to direct the learners’ efforts towards available sources of information as well as assessing their results. The project also encourages the use of extra learning resources, such as dictionaries, personal documents, and realia, which promote autonomous learning. However, these projects are often done in non-autonomous way, just getting information from the internet and copy them, or only one of the group members takes in charge.

Furthermore, On the Move offers learners the opportunity to assess their progress in a section called “Where Do We Stand Now?” .This section comes at the end of each file, and it comprises two types of complementary evaluation: “The Progress Check” and “The Learning Log”. The first type is a summative evaluation aims at involving learners in problem-solving situations and assessing their performance through different tasks related to what has been seen in the whole file.

Whereas, “The Learning Log” is basically a self-assessment activity which is less objective but more motivating to learners. The items covered are a summation of the functions, language forms, sound features and skills seen throughout the file. Learners are requested to evaluate their performance by ticking in the appropriate column (very well, fairly well, a little) against each item. An example of this evaluation section is provided in the table 2.3 below:

I can...	Very well	Fairly well	A little
<p>A. Use tag questions to ask for agreement.</p> <p>B. Use tag questions to ask information.</p> <p>C. Use appropriate intonation in tag questions.</p> <p>D. Use polite forms (what would you...)</p> <p>E. Derive adjectives adding the suffix –ed to verbs.</p> <p>F. Pronounce words containing silent letters.</p> <p>G. Use the imperative and sequencers.</p> <p>H. Write instructions for a recipe.</p> <p>I. Order a meal from a menu.</p> <p>J. Describe a dish.</p> <p>K. Speak about nutrients using comparatives.</p> <p>L. Read and interpret nutrition information on food labels.</p> <p>M. Pronounce words containing the vowel sounds /I/ and /I:/</p> <p>N. Cope with difficult vocabulary.</p> <p>O. Distinguish between opinion and fact in a text.</p> <p>P. Draw conclusions from stated facts.</p>			

Table 2.3 Evaluation Section in 4MS Textbook, File One “It’s My Treat”. P 39

*This table is a model of the learners’ evaluation section which is found at the end of each file in the textbook of the fourth year middle school.

This kind of assessment helps teachers in identifying their pupils' weaknesses in language learning and programming a remedial work if needed. In addition, it seeks to make learners more autonomous since it gives them the opportunity to evaluate themselves and their learning as well. As it is stated in the Teachers' Handbook:

“ Finally, it is strongly recommended to provide the learner with sufficient autonomy in order to enable him to assess by himself his own weaknesses ..., this will make him responsible for his learning in identifying and correcting his own mistakes.”(2004:12)

In fact, the “Learning Log” is an important assessing and motivational tool for both EFL teachers and learners, but we cannot ensure their awareness of its usefulness in language learning since not all of them are using it in our middle schools.

2.6 Background of the Competency-Based Approach

As it is mentioned in the Teacher's Handbook (first year middle school), a competency *“is a know-how which integrates and mobilizes a number of abilities and knowledge to be efficiently used in problem solving situations that have never been met before.” (2004:4)*. In other words, it refers to the individual's ability to use appropriately the acquired knowledge, skills and capacities in order to face the challenges and hindrances which encounter him along his life. Unfortunately, most schools and universities failed to instill within learners such ability and to form competent adults able to relate what they have learnt to their real-life situations. In this regard, Slavin claims that:

“Students must receive specific instruction in how to use their skills and information to solve problems and encounter a variety of problem-solving experiences if they are to be able to apply much of that they learned in school.” (Slavin, 1998: 241)

For Slavin, education should help learners in applying what has been acquired at school in extra school contexts; otherwise this education should be reconsidered.

The CBA was first applied in USA military field. Then, it has been extended to the educational field which was suffering from various difficulties and obstacles in USA and many countries around the world. The competency-based approach seeks to bridge the gap between the classroom and everyday real life through putting together all the knowledge, know-how, abilities and attitudes acquired at school for the solution of real life problems. In other words, this approach aims at supplying learners with a set of competencies which help them reinvest their learning outcomes in situations that are commonly encountered in extra school settings.

According to the U.S. office of Education, the competency-based approach is defined as a performance based process leading to demonstrated mastery of basic and life skills necessary for the individual to function proficiently in the society. Whereas Richards and Rodgers (2001), agree that CBA focuses on what the learners are expected to do rather than on what they are expected to learn about. It is mainly based on the outcomes of learning that students should possess at the end of a course of study. However, Schneck (1978) considers the CBA as an outcome based instruction that is adaptive to the needs of students, teachers and the community. This outcome is derived from an analysis of tasks typically required of students in life role situations. On the other hand, Nunan (1988) views that the CBA is typically a learner- centered approach. For him, this approach aims at attaining the following objectives:

- To provide learners with efficient learning strategies.
- To assist learners to identify their own preferred ways of learning.
- To develop skills needed to negotiate the curriculum.
- To encourage learners to set their own objectives.
- To encourage learners to adapt realistic goals and time frames.
- To develop learners' skills in self- evaluation. (*Nunan, 1988: 13*)

Basing on the above mentioned objectives, it is obvious that the CBA and learner autonomy share nearly the same aims; both of them support the learners' involvement in learning situations which make them at the centre of learning and help them acquire solid methods of learning and develop a sense of responsibility and independency.

2.6.1 CBA in the Algerian Educational Context

In the late of the 20th century, the concept of autonomy in learning became a matter of a great importance and the notion of 'student power' was current in education (Cockburn and Blackburn, 1969), and radically student-centered educational reforms were proposed by Freire (1970), Illich (1971), Rogers (1969) and others. Hence, the previous approaches were substituted by a new teaching method adopting the CBA principles. The real potential of this approach is the way it changes learners to become autonomous in their learning process; it is mainly based on the shift from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness. The Algerian education system was not far from this shift. Thus, the CBA is the approach currently used in ELT in Algeria.

According to the official document Programmes de la Deuxième Année Moyenne, the main aim behind implementing the CBA in Algerian middle schools is to equip learner with some competencies that enable them to reach an acceptable level of performance in EFL. These competencies can be summarized as follow:

- ***Oral interaction***; learners interact with each other or with their teacher in order to be involved in spoken communications in English.
- ***Oral or written interpretation***; learners display their comprehension through oral reformulation of authentic oral or written documents.
- ***Oral or written production***; learners produce simple oral or written messages.

Moreover, the CBA seeks to make learners behave as active users of the target language in real- world context through the establishment of: "***A know-how-to-do, and a know-how-to-be in learners.***" (*Teacher's Handbook, 2004:43*)

In fact, the competency-based approach is predominately adopted in the Algerian educational system in order to attain a level that makes learners rely on themselves and compete with other people around the world either in the field of work or in other situations. However, this alternative approach is actually applied in middle education, but we cannot assert that its objectives have been achieved, though the approach has been implemented for more than a decade.

2.6.2 The Rationale of Implementing CBA in Algerian Schools

Since the independence, the Algerian schools experienced different teaching methods and approaches, but unfortunately they failed to produce a generation of self-reliant individuals capable to solve their problem situations in real-life. Consequently, the CBA has been adopted as an attempt to match between the school life and real life. Thus, the syllabus is centered on the learner and on the construction of a functional knowledge which fits his needs in school and beyond it.

With regard to the Algerian educational context, the competency-based approach focuses on mobilizing the learners' values, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours in a personal way to address the challenges successfully. In this context, Chellei (2010) sees that the adoption of the CBA in Algerian schools seeks to enable young people to reach an international level in terms of required competencies which allow them to integrate in the globalized world. Besides, she views that this approach has been implemented in the Algerian educational system due to its positive implications such as;

- Making the school acquisition viable and sustainable.
- Developing the thinking process of the learner.
- Presenting learning contexts in relation to the needs of the learner.
- Putting an end to disciplinary barriers.
- Choosing a personalized pedagogy. (*Chellei, 2010:30*)

Actually, there is an apparent dissatisfaction about the learners' level in English in Algerian schools. This reality is obviously reflected in the quality of English language learning and teaching as well. Therefore, educationalists consider that the only way of updating the content of education is the orientation of the training programs towards the CBA. In addition, it is scientifically proved that if learners transform their knowledge, skills and habits into competencies, they will acquire them quickly. (Chellei, 2010)

2.6.3 Learner's Roles in the CBA

The CBA refers to learner-centered approach. That is to say, it considers the learner as the pillar of the learning process and the cornerstone of the classroom on which both learning and teaching are based. Thus, within this approach, the learner is no more a passive receiver of knowledge; he should play a set of roles which make him actively involved in the learning process like; setting goals, making choices and decisions, sharing and cooperating with others, solving problem-situations and using different strategies to overcome such situations. In other words, the learner is totally responsible for most of the learning tasks, and so he sees himself as the real supervisor of his own learning. As stated by Edwards:

“...When students are compelled to assume greater responsibility for directing their learning, they will gradually learn to see themselves as the controllers of their own learning. Learning is seen as self-initiated and not other-initiated”. (Edwards, 1998:80)

Hence, the CBA reshapes the learners' roles and responsibilities, and brings a radical change in their attitudes towards knowledge and learning. These roles can be summarized as follows:

- Take charge of their learning process.
- Collaborate and interact with each other.
- Assess their progress and themselves (self- evaluation).

- Create learning situations.
- Acquire problem-solving skills.
- Discover and construct knowledge.
- Develop a critical thinking.
- Contributes to information and process.

Generally, these are the roles advocated by the CBA which brings considerable changes to challenge traditional ways of learning and even teaching. Now, the change which is coming into education is the shift of the centre of gravity. Whether or not these roles are really played by learners in the Algerian middle education, we cannot assert this firmly. We may say that they are to a large extent keeping the traditional way of learning, simply because they used to do so, and they are neither ready to accept these new roles nor informed how to play them.

2.7 Research Design and Methodology

This part from the second chapter is concerned with the research design and methodology. It is mainly devoted to the research setting, the participants' profile, and the data collection instruments.

2.7.1 Purpose of the Research

The aim of the present study is to reveal the extent to which the notion of learner autonomy is promoted in the Algerian Middle schools. Moreover, the purpose of this research is to gain a greater understanding of learner autonomy by analyzing the students' beliefs and awareness of this concept. Furthermore, the issue of learner autonomy is also approached from the teachers' perspective. Hence, this research highlights to some extent teachers' views concerning autonomy and their beliefs on how they teach and whether they seek to promote learner autonomy or not.

The results of this study would provide greater insight into how learner autonomy can be understood and fostered in a specific Algerian context, and how satisfied both of learners and teachers are with the degree to which learner autonomy is, in their opinion, promoted in ELT in the Algerian middle schools.

2.7.2 The Research Setting and Sample Population

This study takes place in Guettaf Mansour Middle School in El-Bayadh during the academic year 2016-2017. This school was founded in 2010. There are four teachers of English; each one is in charge of five classes. There are 106 pupils in three classes of the fourth grade. In addition to the routinized materials: textbooks, white boards and pens, there are other ones such as: projectors and laptops. Moreover, there is a library which contains several books (about 240 English books) mainly those of grammar and exams.

The cores of investigation in any educational situation are the participants who represent the main point of focus in this study. The subjects are EFL teachers from different middle schools and fourth year pupils from Guettaf Mansour Middle School in El Bayadh. Apart from these participants, the inspector of English in this city also participates in this research.

2.7.2.1 Teachers' Profile

EFL teachers are indispensable in this investigation area of analysis for the sake of eliciting information about their perceptions on their pupils' interactions with the Target Language (TL) in and outside the classroom. That is: their involvement in autonomous learning regarding English. This category of teachers is also known as "PEM"⁸ in the Algerian educational context. They are particularly formed, prepared and trained to teach at that level. Respectively, our informants are selected at random regardless of their age, sex and length of experience in their teaching career. Their number is estimated around 22 teachers; most of them are female teachers, their number is more than the double of males (15 females and

⁸Professeur d'Enseignement Moyen (Middle School Teacher)

7 male teachers). In fact, their teaching experience varies from 05 to 25 years. Only 2 teachers have less than 5 years of experience as EFL teachers in middle school and 12 teachers spent between 5 and 15 years in this field. Whereas, the rest of them (8teachers) have more than 20 years of experience; they are in the last half of their teaching career. The majority of them (19) hold a “Licence “degree in English, whereas 2 teachers get their certificate from ITE (Institut Technique de d’Enseignement)⁹ and one teacher holds Master degree in English. The choice of middle school teachers is due mainly to the fact that those teachers are much aware of their pupils’ autonomy in learning English. The questionnaire is given to the teachers in an EFL seminar that was planned and supervised by the inspector of English in the 10th November 2016.

2.7.2.2 Pupils’ Profile

During this investigative study, we search data among fourth year middle school learners. We choose to work with this sample of learners because they have been learning English through the newly implemented approach CBA. Ultimately, they are supposed to have learnt English throughout three years middle school receiving the basic notions of the target language. Besides, these pupils are supposed to be matured enough to take charge of their own learning.

The participants consist of 106 pupils from three classes; more than half of them are female pupils (73 females and 33 male pupils). Among the female students there are 46 boarder girls. Their ages range between 14 and 16 (66 pupils are more than 15 years old while the other 40 pupils indicate that their age is less than 15 years old). This result is due to the great number of students who repeat a grade more than once, especially in the fourth grade, and the boarder female students who were generally aged more than 6 years when they entered school for the first time. So, the informants are in the “right” age to decide about their studies, that is to say, they are “aware” of their strengths and weaknesses not only in language learning but also in other subjects.

⁹ Technical Institute of Teaching

2.7.2.3 The Inspector's Profile

The inspector of English in El-Bayadh city is a fifty-two years male who has been a middle school EFL teacher for twenty seven years. In addition, he has five years of experience as an inspector. He is chosen to such an interview for many reasons; because of his long experience as an EFL teacher, his regular visits to different EFL classrooms, to gain more data about the current situation of ELT in Algerian middle schools and to reveal the reality of learner autonomy existence in our schools.

After the selection of informants that can represent effectively the whole population, the researcher moves to the next step of the study which is choosing the instruments for collecting the data.

2.7.3 Data Collection Instruments

Autonomy is a multifaceted process in which teachers, learners, and even inspectors are involved. For that reason, the researcher about such a theme is based mainly on the use of a case study through which we try to discover the learners' views about autonomy as well as that of ELT teachers and the inspector, and to obtain more reliable answers to the problematic. Yin defines the case study research method: ***“as an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context.”*** (Yin, 1984:23). The use of a case study to investigate an area of interest is mainly appropriate as described by Patton:

“Case studies become particularly useful where one needs to understand some particular problem or situation in great-depth, and where one can identify cases rich in information”(Patton, 1987:19)

Similarly, Oxford (2003) argues that: ***“Research on autonomy should combine perspectives as possible and no “single” perspective should be considered antithetical to any other.”*** (Oxford, 2003:90). For such a situation, the case study conducted in this research is appropriate to investigate the amount of autonomy among learners and the main factors that help in promoting their autonomy.

Hence, data in this study are collected through different tools in order to obtain a richer description of learner autonomy in the middle school education in Algeria and to tackle the issue from different angles. Robert Yin (1994) draws attention to the importance of using multiple data collection methods in research.

“A combination of data source is likely to be necessary in most evaluations, because often, no one source can describe adequately such a diversity to features as is found in educational settings, and because of the need for corroboration of findings by using data from these different sources, collected by different methods and by different people (i.e. triangulation)” (Yin, 1994:137)

In the current study, three instruments are used to get qualitative and quantitative data. First, a questionnaire is conducted with the EFL teachers and another one is addressed to the fourth year pupils in middle school, in addition to a classroom observation. Besides, a structured interview is administered to the inspector of English. The different steps of data collection in this research investigation are summarized in the following diagram:

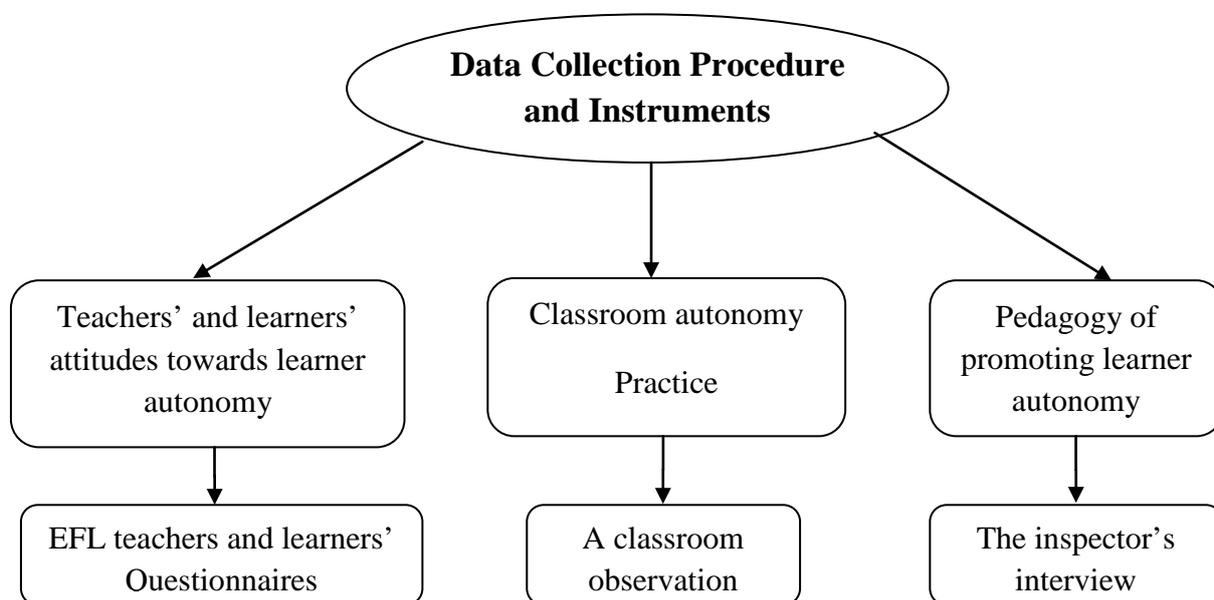


Diagram 2.1 Data Collection Procedures and Instruments

* This diagram summarizes the procedures followed and the instruments used in collecting data in this research investigation.

2.7.3.1 Teachers' Questionnaire

A questionnaire is a self-report data collection instrument that is filled out by the research participants. It refers to a series of written questions on a topic about which the subjects' opinions are sought. It is generally known that the questionnaire is one of the most popular research tools in Applied Linguistics for it is easy to construct, collect and treat a large amount of data :

“The popularity of questionnaires is due to the fact that they are relatively easy to construct, extremely versatile and uniquely capable of gathering a large amount of information quickly in a form that is readily processible.” (Dörnyei, 2007:101)

In this research, the teachers' questionnaire is prepared and distributed to EFL teachers from different middle schools in El-Bayadh city. The rational objectives behind this research instrument are to identify teachers' beliefs about autonomy of learning among middle school pupils, and to extract valuable information about their perceptions and views relating to the factors that inhibit student's involvement in autonomous learning, and the main possibilities that enhance pupils to be successful autonomous learners guiding their learning process effectively.

The questionnaire is divided into three sections. The first section, “Section A”, reveals teachers' views and attitudes towards learner autonomy. In this section, the questions are formulated in such a way the informants would answer by “yes” or “no”. The second section contains close-ended questions related to teachers' readiness to enhance autonomous learning. Here, the informants are asked to answer the questions by ticking in the appropriate column. The last section “Section C” holds open-ended questions concerning teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy. Through this section, the informants are required to write free responses concerning the subject of the study. The aim of these questions is to know the teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards learner autonomy and their different points of view about how to promote it.

The responses gathered from the teachers' questionnaire are very essential data simply because no one can be aware of pupils' level, and their awareness of autonomy in learning more than the teacher himself.

2.7.3.2 Learners' Questionnaire

The pupils of fourth year middle school classes are handed a questionnaire written in English and translated into Arabic, to ensure the pupils' understanding of the questions; it contains three sections (A, B, , and C). "Section A" embodies direct questions where the informants will answer with "yes" or "no". It is designed to gather data about the learners' attitudes towards learning English, whereas, in the second section, the participants have to choose among proposed answers by ticking the appropriate box. This part deals with the pupils' readiness for autonomy. Through the last section, which is the heart of the questionnaire, the researcher wants to shed light upon the learners' understanding and perceptions towards their autonomy in learning, their points of view concerning the obstacles that face them in being autonomous and their suggestions on how to overtake these obstacles.

The students' questionnaire is supposed to provide more data in order to enrich the current study and to have a concrete and complete analysis so that we may obtain answers to our research questions.

2.7.3.3 Classroom Observation

The second instrument used to collect data for this study is a class observation which is pointed out as a complementary research tool in order to provide us with more data about teachers and learners classroom practices. The classroom that has been observed is one of the fourth year classes which exist at Guettaf Mansour Middle School in El-Bayadh city. It consists of 35 pupils 14 boys and 21 girls. Among these girls, there are 13 boarder ones. The teacher is a young lady who has been teaching English for six years. They attend with her 4 hours a week. To gather the required data, we have attended in this class different lessons from the first file "It's My Treat" prescribed in the syllabus. The observation lasted

for about more than a month, exactly 20 hours were spent for file one. The aim behind the use of this instrument is to discover if the classroom is really autonomous and if the teacher enhances autonomy in his classroom.

2.7.3.4 Inspector's Interview

The interview method is used for data collection to extract information directly from the informants with reference to the researcher's area of inquiry. Interviewing is a research tool typically used to gain a better insight and in-depth about the respondents' interests, attitudes, beliefs, opinions, etc.

Another contributory research instrument, a semi-structured interview has view has been conducted with the inspector of English in a seminar hold last January in the current academic year. The interview consists of seven questions which aim at extracting data from the inspector's opinion on learner autonomy in middle school in general as well about EFL teachers' readiness for promoting their learners' autonomy and the common difficulties they face while achieving this task. We have adopted such an instrument because it is used in data collection for the rationale to elicit information directly from the participants.

2.7.4 Limitation of Data

In the present study, the data has been triangulated by using three different instruments (the questionnaires, classroom observation and the inspector's interview); each instrument aims at collecting data from different angle.

However, the study is not devoid of limitations and the collected data would give an incomplete picture about the subject tackled in this research. Because the selected population of some pupils and EFL teachers is not easily generalizable, since the study is based on only a small number of participants in one middle school in Algeria, they cannot represent the whole Algerian students' population. Nevertheless, the results obtained from the selected sample in this study can provide some useful insights about learner autonomy in an EFL Algerian context.

2.8 Conclusion

The Ministry of Education in Algeria considers developing learner autonomy as one of the main objectives of ELT in the middle education in general and in fourth year classrooms in particular, the reason why CBA is introduced so as to foster learner autonomy. However, this approach is not adopted in a way that really contributes to promote learner autonomy.

Moreover, the EFL textbook On the Move which is designed for fourth year pupils lacks self-study tasks to be done independently, besides the fact that this book cannot be used by pupils alone without the help of the teacher. Moreover, the system of evaluation undermines autonomy more than it fosters it. All these factors show that learner autonomy is still in its infancy in ELT in Algeria. In order to promote it, a great work is waiting for textbook designers, educational authorities, as well as teachers and learners whose attitudes towards autonomy are analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in the next chapter which is more concerned with the data analysis and research findings.

CHAPTER THREE

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

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3.1 Introduction

Education is considered as the most sensitive sector in the society since it is the tool by which the leaders can form the future generations. Therefore, improving the quality of both teaching and learning becomes the chief concern of any responsible authorities in the world. The Algerian policy makers, being aware of enhancing the educational system as a top priority, have been seriously interested in providing learners with the appropriate training which help them reaching the desired sample of future citizen who needs to be an autonomous and responsible person. Thus, fostering learner autonomy in Algerian schools is actually at the forefront of the Algerian education precedences in general, and the EFL teaching/learning in particular. Consequently, the CBA has been implemented as a new approach which contributes effectively in promoting this kind of autonomy.

In this chapter, the researcher aims to obtain considerable perceptions through the data gathered from the pupils, EFL teachers and the inspector of English in the middle school level regarding their involvement in autonomous learning. In this practical side, we attempt to analyze the participants' answers, and a special attention is devoted to a particular study about viewing the extent to which learners are autonomous in their learning.

3.2 Data Analysis

This section consists of processing the data obtained from each tool used during this empirical study, mainly: questionnaires, classroom observation and the inspector's interview, which will be discussed and interpreted after being analysed qualitatively and quantitatively. According to Selinger and Shohany:

“In quantitative analysis: the data is in numerical form, or some form which can be converted into numbers and the analysis almost utilizes statistics, quantitative data analysis techniques deal with non-numerical data usually linguistics units in oral and written form.”(Selinger and Shohany, 1989:201)

In this study, the researcher has followed both quantitative and qualitative method for analyzing the results of teachers and learners' questionnaires. Then he has analysed the data gathered via classroom observation and the inspector's interview using only the qualitative method.

3.2.1 The Teachers' Questionnaire Analysis

The first questionnaire has been administrated to around 22 EFL teachers from different middle schools in the city of El-Bayadh. It has been chosen for eliciting data from the informants to investigate the research questions and hypotheses. (See Appendix A). After collecting data, we have considered it convenient to treat it in tables, pie charts and graphs for better illustration and to analyse the questions according to their appearance and order in the questionnaire. In fact, treating data with the aid of statistics usually makes the research more manageable and more efficient. (Selinger and Shohany, 1989)

Section A: Teachers' Attitudes towards Learner Autonomy

In this section, the participants are asked to answer by 'yes' or 'no'.

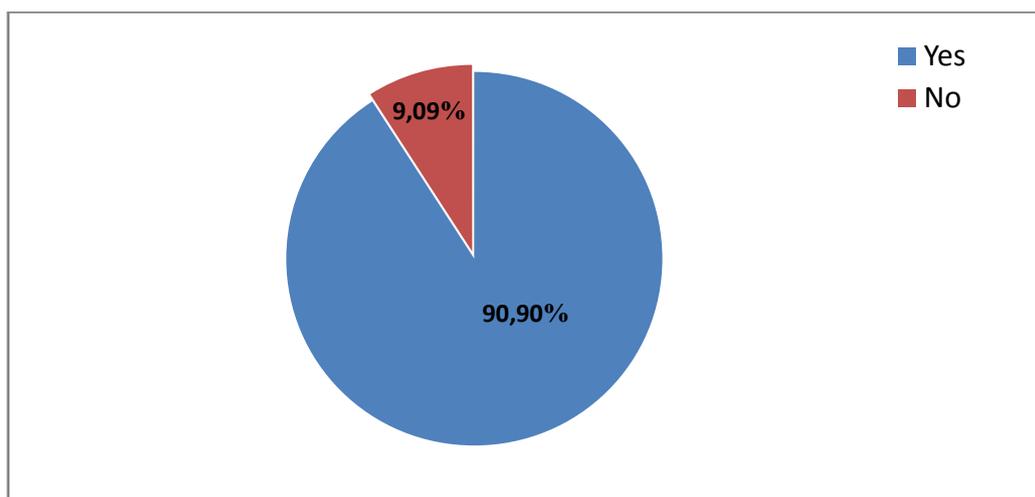
Question1: Do you think that learner autonomy is important in EFL classes?

The aim behind this question is to reveal the teachers' attitudes towards learner autonomy in English learning.

Items	Number	Percentage
Yes	20	90.90%
No	02	9.09%
Total	22	100%

Table 3.1 Teachers' Attitudes towards the Importance of Learner Autonomy in EFL classroom.

The answers to this question indicate that the overwhelming majority of the informants have positive attitudes towards learner autonomy; 20 teachers tick in the box of "yes", while only 2 teachers answer by "no".



Pie chart 3.1 Teachers' Attitudes towards the Importance of Learner Autonomy in EFL classroom

*This pie chart represents the teachers' responses about the importance of learner autonomy in EFL classroom.

Question2: Do you think that your learners have a sense of responsibility towards their learning?

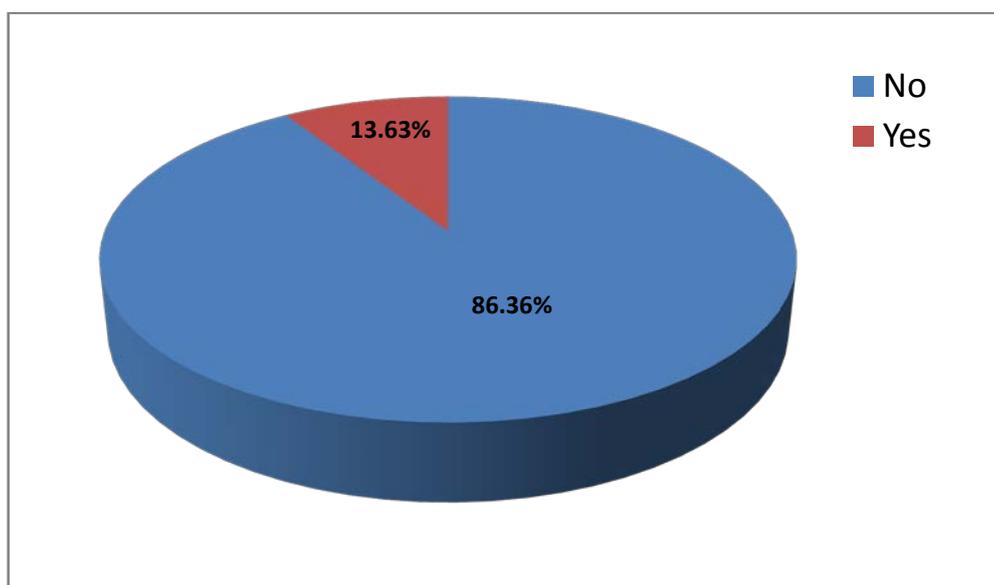
Through this question, we aim to know the participants' views about their learners' readiness to be responsible for their learning and to measure the degree of autonomy among them.

Items	Number	Percentage
Yes	3	13.63%
No	19	86.36%
Total	22	100%

Table 3.2 Teachers' Perspectives towards their Learners' Responsibility for Learning

Interestingly, the results show that the great majority of teachers believe that their pupils are not ready at all to handle their learning process and be autonomous. Unfortunately, most teachers (19) respond by "No" to confirm that their learners

have no sense of responsibility in learning; however, very few teachers (3) see that their pupils are ready to take charge of their learning.



Pie chart 3.2 Teachers' Perspectives towards Learners' Responsibility for Learning

* This pie chart shows the percentage of EFL teachers' answers about whether their learners are developing a sense of responsibility in learning.

Question3: Do you think that your students depend only on what you give them in the classroom to learn English?

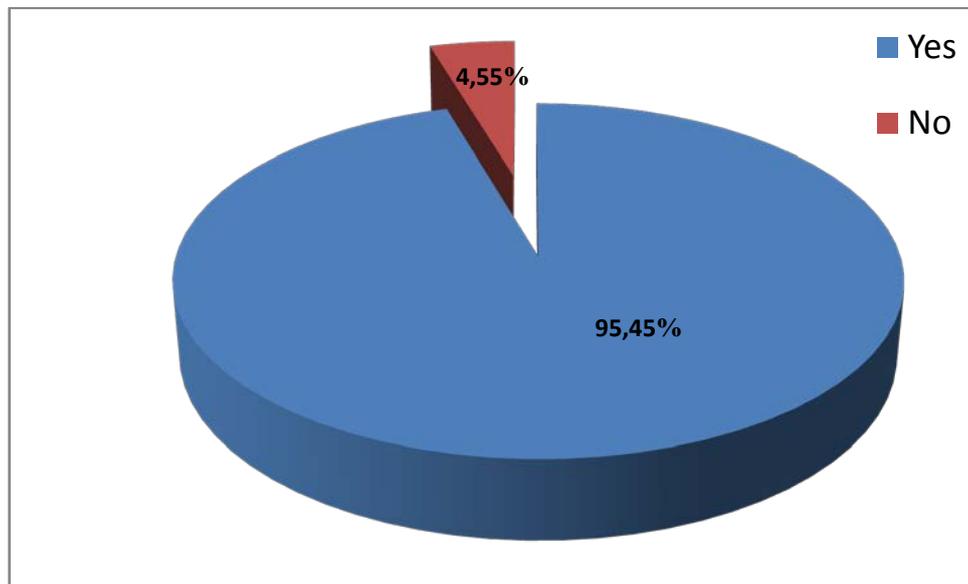
One of the main features of autonomous learner is being eager to look for more information by making extra researches outside the classroom in order to enrich his knowledge and enhance his autonomy.

Items	Number	Percentage
Yes	21	95.45%
No	01	4.55%
Total	22	100%

Table 3.3 Teachers' Views about Learners' Reliance in Learning English

As it is exposed in Table 3.3, the teachers' answers to the above question show that the majority of them (21) confirm that their learners are satisfied with

only what is given to them by the teacher and done in the classroom. However, only one teacher sees the opposite.



Pie chart 3.3 Teachers' Views about Learners' Reliance in Learning English

* This pie chart represents the learners' dependence on only what is given to them by the teacher in the classroom.

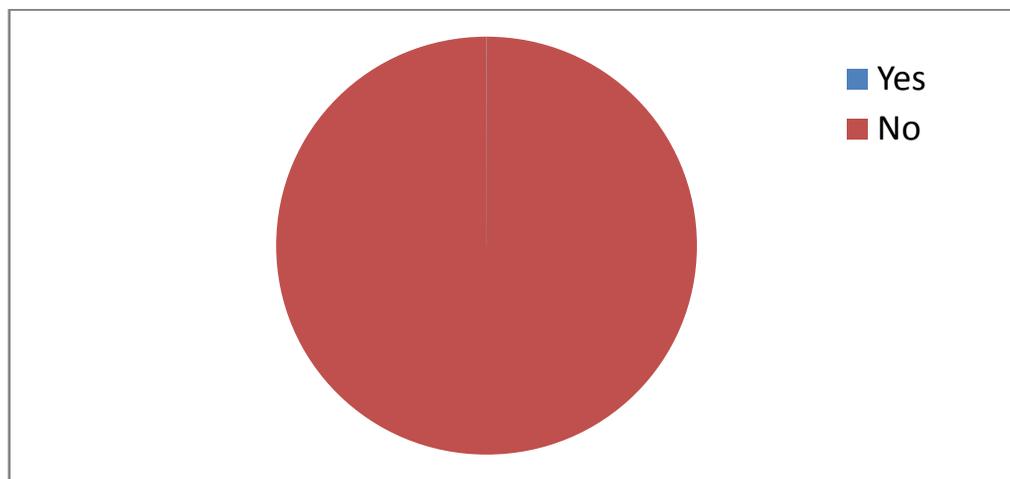
Question 4: Do you give your learners the opportunity to direct their learning process?

Being autonomous learner means the learner dominates while the learning process is taking place, and so this process becomes more learner-centered rather than teacher-centered. Through this question, teachers are asked whether they allow their learners to conduct the learning process.

Items	Number	Percentage
Yes	00	00%
No	22	100%
Total	22	100%

Table 3.4 Teachers' Views about Learners' Conduct of the Learning Process

Surprisingly, all the participants affirm that they do not give their learners a chance to be in charge of directing their learning process. This confirms that the learning process is still totally teacher-centered in our middle schools.



Pie chart 3.4 Teachers' Views about Learners' Conduct of the Learning Process

* This pie chart demonstrates the participants' views about whether they give learners opportunity to direct the learning process.

Section B: Teachers' Readiness to Enhance Autonomous Learning

The second part of the teachers' questionnaire contains close-ended questions to which the participants are asked to respond by "Always", "Sometimes" or "Never". The objective from addressing this kind of questions is to see whether or not EFL teachers are involved in the new model of teaching and ready to foster their learners' autonomy.

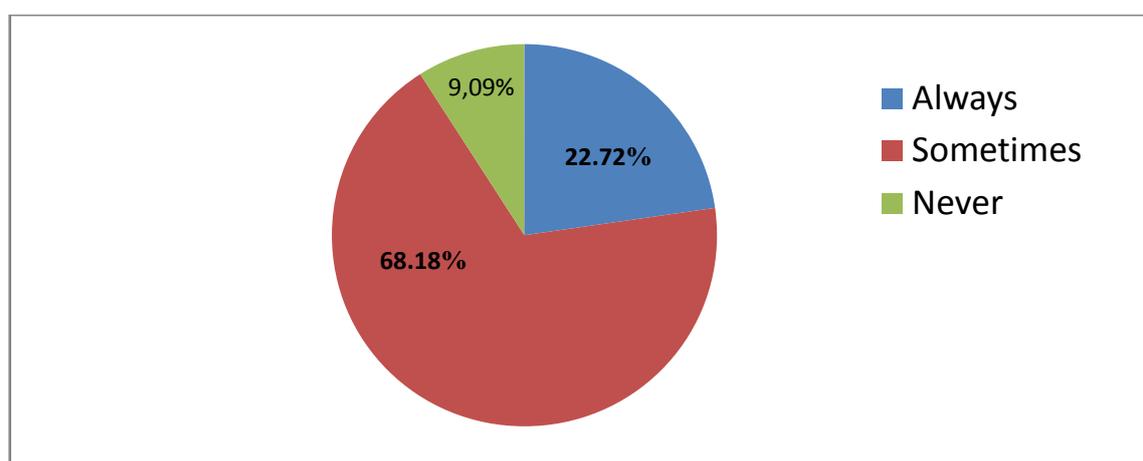
Question1: Do you encourage your learners to take part in decision-making?

In fact, the pupils' dependency on their teacher is a real obstacle to take decisions, and unfortunately, most of learners see their teacher as the only decision-maker in the classroom. The purpose behind asking this question is to explore the extent to which teachers are ready to give their pupils the opportunity to take decisions and make resolutions about their learning.

Items	Number	Percentage
Always	05	22.72%
Sometimes	15	68.18%
Never	02	09.09%
Total	22	100%

Table 3.5 Teachers' Encouragement to Learners to be Decision-makers

For this question, only 05 teachers affirm that they always give their learners a chance to make decisions related to their learning process. However, the majority of teachers (15) claim that they sometimes encourage their learners to be decision-makers in order to make them feel more autonomous, whereas only two participants answer with "never".



Pie chart 3.5 Teachers' Encouragement to Learners to be Decision-makers

* This pie chart shows how much the informants encourage their learners to take part in decision-making.

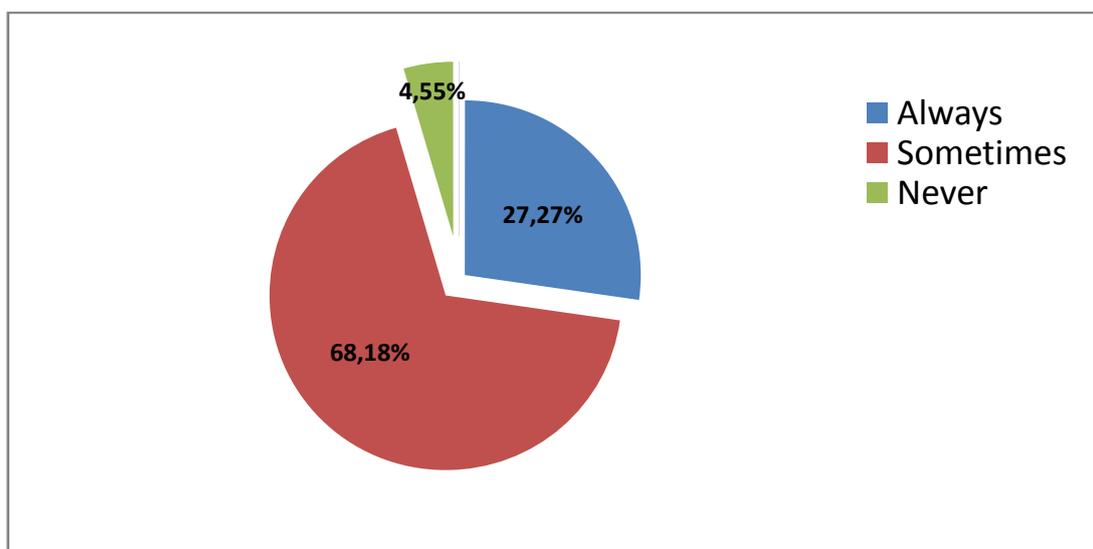
Question2: Do you encourage your learners to work in pairs and within groups in order to enhance their autonomy?

Working within groups and in a collaborative way gives pupils more opportunities to learn better and interact with each other. It is said that the pupil learns from his peers better and faster than from his teacher. The second question aims at checking whether teachers are interested in planning collaborative learning.

Items	Number	Percentage
Always	06	27.27%
Sometimes	15	68.18%
Never	01	4.55%
Total	22	100%

Table 3.6 Teachers' Frequency of Encouraging Collaborative Learning

The answers to this question show that most of teachers 68.18% are not really interested in collaborative learning , whereas only 27.27% affirm that they always encourage pair and group works, while only one teacher (4.55%) chooses the box of 'never'.



Pie chart 3.6 Teachers' Frequency of Encouraging Collaborative Learning

*This pie chart illustrates the frequency of EFL teachers' encouragement to their learners to learn in pairs and within groups.

Question3: Do you use technology and audio-visual aids in teaching English?

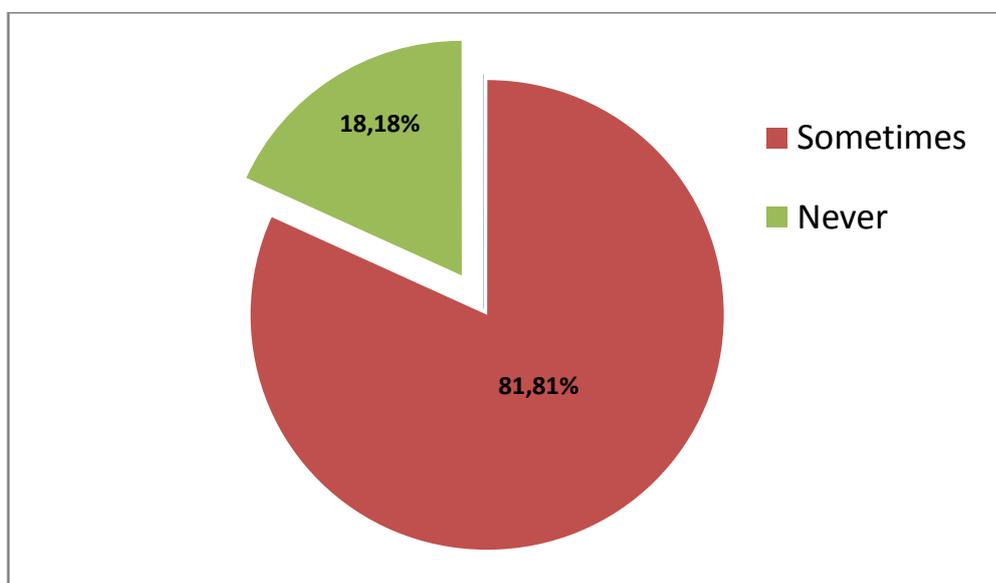
In the traditional teaching, learners used to be passive listeners and the teacher was the only autonomous body who knows, acts and speaks in the classroom. Today, the use of technology and audio-visual aids in teaching

languages helps a lot in shifting superiority towards learners. These aids benefit learners and help them develop a sense of self-reliance and independence. The main objective of this question is to determine the importance of technology for EFL teachers and to know if they really consider it as a tool for creating certain autonomy in learning.

Items	Number	Percentage
Always	00	00.00%
Sometimes	18	81.81%
Never	04	18.18%
Total	22	100%

Table 3.7 Teachers' Frequency of Using Technology in Teaching English

Surprisingly, most of them (18 teachers) answer that they “sometimes” use visual-aids in teaching English. However, 4 teachers confirm that they “never” use these aids, and no one responds with “always”.



Pie chart 3.7 Teachers' Frequency of Using Technology in Teaching English

* This pie chart represents the percentage of EFL teachers' frequency of using technology and visual aids in teaching English.

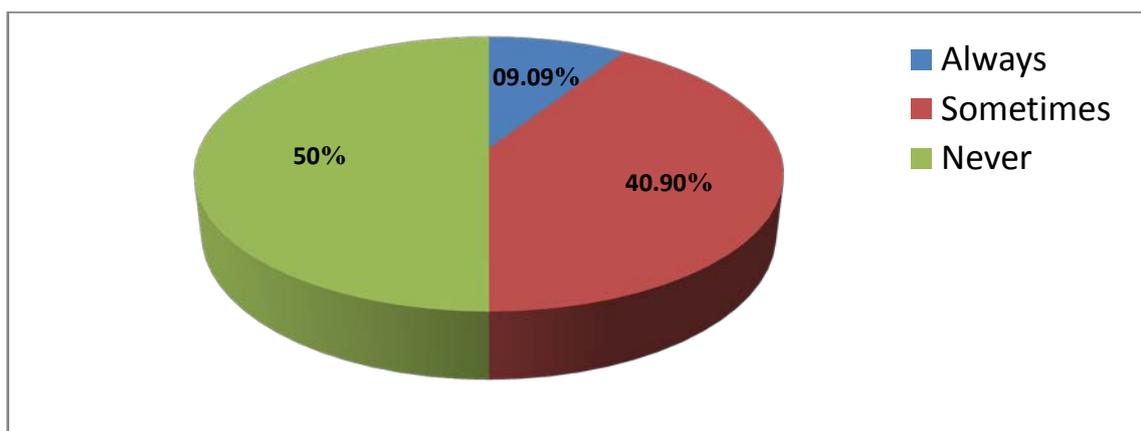
Question4: Do you use the textbook as a tool to promote your learners' autonomy?

As previously stated in the second chapter, English textbooks in Algeria have been changed and designed many times and by many authors in order to design the convenient textbooks which suit the Algerian pupils' level, needs and culture, and to help them to step towards autonomy. Hence, the researcher asks this question to know EFL teachers' reliance on the textbook as a means to foster learner autonomy.

Items	Number	Percentage
Always	02	09.09%
Sometimes	09	40.90%
Never	11	50%
Total	22	100%

Table 3.8 Teachers' Frequency of Using English Textbook to Promote LA

The answers show that the textbooks do little to foster learner autonomy and that when they do; they offer limited opportunity for practice to students. That is why half of the informants (11) agree that they never focus on the textbook to foster their learners' autonomy. However (09) teachers affirm that they sometimes use it, and only (02) teachers replay with "always".



Pie chart 3.8 Teachers' Frequency of Using English Textbook to Promote LA

* This pie chart clarifies the percentage of EFL teachers' frequency of using English textbook as a tool to enhance their learners' autonomy.

Section C: Teachers' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy

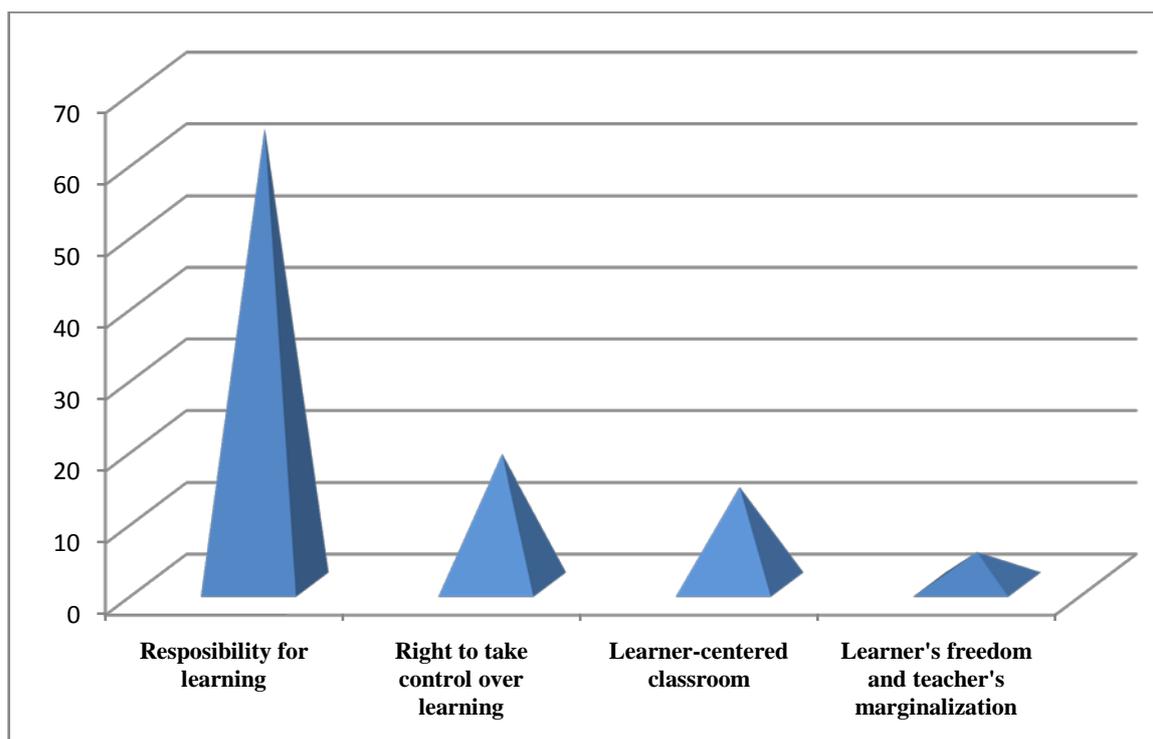
In the last section, the questions addressed to the teachers are open-ended questions in which the participants are asked to express comments and give their points of view by writing free responses and explanations to their answers. Since the respondents have different length of experience in teaching, numerous and various replies are given to state their beliefs and opinions; therefore, the analysis of their responses will be somehow different from those of the previous sections.

Question 1: According to you, what is learner autonomy?

In fact, the definitions of the term learner autonomy are quite vague and open to various interpretations, but most of them agree on the idea of being able to take responsibility of one's own learning. However, there are many teachers and educators who get confused about the real meaning of learner autonomy, and thus it becomes difficult for them to implement it since they do not know what this concept means exactly.

The above question is one of the pillars on which our research is built up on. It is addressed to EFL teachers in order to elicit their views and their own definitions of the term "learner autonomy".

As expected, the answers of this question show that the participants do not have a clear understanding about this term. More than 60% of the informants consider learner autonomy a situation in which learners are totally responsible for their learning. Whereas, 18.18% of them reveal that learner autonomy refers to learners' right to take control of their own learning; and only 13.63% of the informants say that learner autonomy is to make the classroom centered on the learner. Only one teacher has a negative attitude towards learner autonomy; he expresses that learner autonomy is to give the learners more authority and freedom to marginalize the teacher and his roles in the classroom. All the teachers' responses are analyzed in the graph below:



Graph 3.1 Teachers' Definitions of Learner Autonomy

* This graph demonstrates the percentage of different definitions given by the EFL teachers about the term “learner autonomy”.

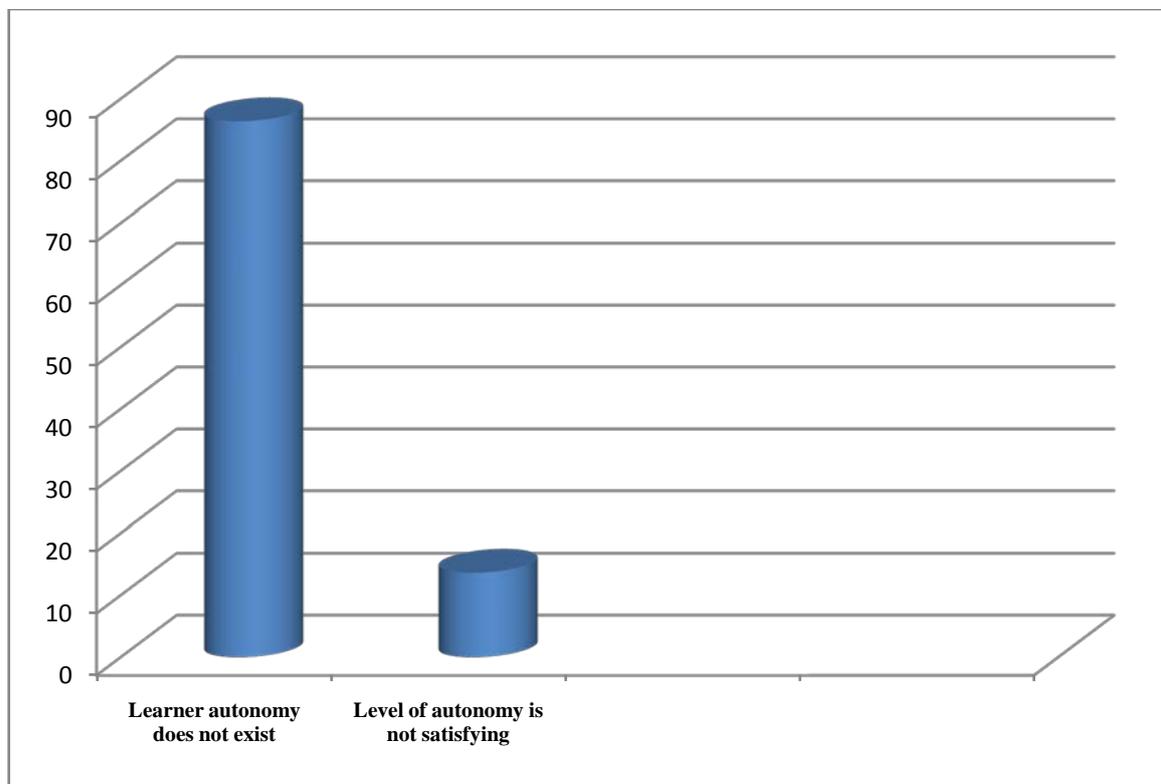
Question2: According to your experience, does learner autonomy exist in Algerian middle schools? Comment

With this question, the researcher wants to investigate the existence of learner autonomy and to show to what extent pupils are really autonomous in Algerian middle schools, particularly in the fourth year classes. Since the teachers are more aware of their students' level, they provide “adequate” answers to this question.

According to 86.36% of them, learner autonomy does not exist at all in Algerian middle schools and they think that the majority of pupils are not autonomous in their learning; they expect to cover everything by the teacher and they do not like to do things on their own and have no readiness for relying on themselves. Furthermore, they claim that the notion of autonomy can be dealt with at the level of secondary schools or university not in middle schools. Whereas, it

seems to 13.63% of the participants that the level of their learners' autonomy is not really satisfying; they consider fourth year pupils as average in autonomous learning and they still require too much effort for considerable level of autonomy.

According to the teachers' responses, we can say that the degree of autonomy in learning varies from one teacher to another; this may be due to their different experiences in teaching, their working conditions and even to the quality of their learners' achievements.

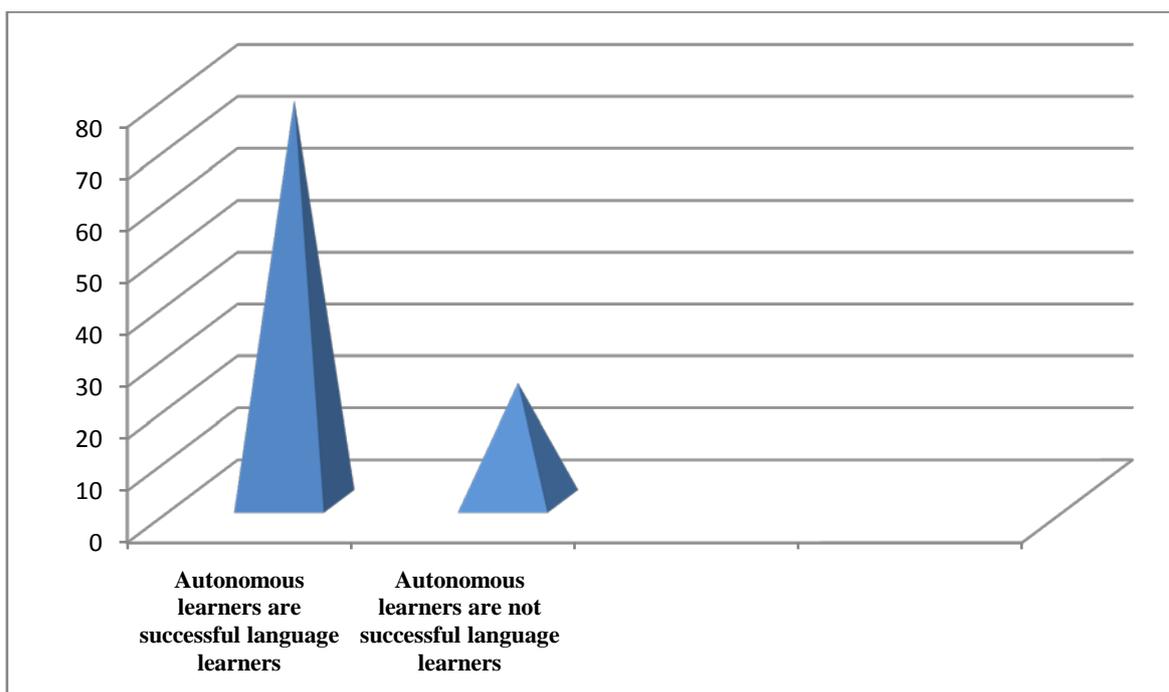


Graph 3.2 Teachers' Views about the Degree of Autonomy in Algerian Middle Schools

* This graph represents the percentage of the teachers' views about the existence of learner autonomy in Algerian middle schools.

Question 3: Do you think that there is a relationship between learner autonomy and successful language learner?

Many educationalists and scholars agree that learner autonomy is an essential element in the success of language learners, in a way that it enables them to conduct their own learning more effectively. In this context, teachers are asked whether or not learner autonomy has a positive effect on the success of language learners. In general, the answers show that 77.27% of the informants express strong positive views about the contribution of learner autonomy; they state that the most brilliant language learners are autonomous in their learning. On the contrary, it seems for 22.72% of them that autonomous learners are not necessarily successful language learners. They add that if the learning process is put in the pupils' hands, it is not going to advance and develop since most of those pupils are not highly proficient in English to such an extent that allows them to be responsible for their learning.



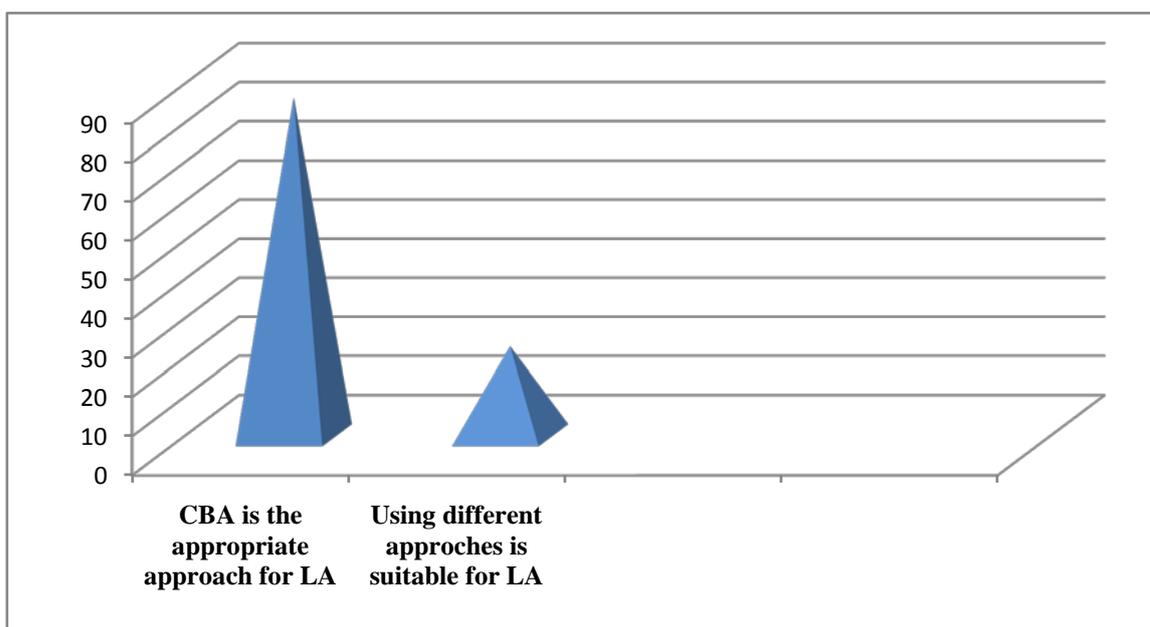
Graph 3.3 Teachers' Views about the Relationship between Learner Autonomy and Successful Language Learners.

* This graph represents the teachers' responses about the existence of a relationship between learner autonomy and successful language learning.

Question 4: According to you, which approach is more adequate to enhance learner autonomy in EFL classroom? Why?

Selecting the appropriate method of teaching plays a vital role in developing learner autonomy and helps students to be more involved in the learning process. In fact, the researcher asks such a question to know if teachers are concerned with the new and suitable methods to develop their learners' autonomy or they still adopt the traditional approaches of teaching.

For this question, 86.36 % of the informants affirm that they adopt the CBA as the most convenient approach which allows learners to be, to a certain extent, independent from the teacher, justifying their choice by saying that this approach is mainly based on the principle of learner-centeredness which is one of the main pillars of learner autonomy. However, only 13.63% of them do not give a definite answer to this question, arguing that fostering learner autonomy requires the use of different teaching approaches; the teacher should choose the approach which suits his learners best according to their level, abilities and needs.



Graph 3.4 Teachers' Views about the Most Convenient Approach to Enhance Learner Autonomy

*This graph represents the teachers' views about the appropriate teaching approach which helps in fostering learner autonomy.

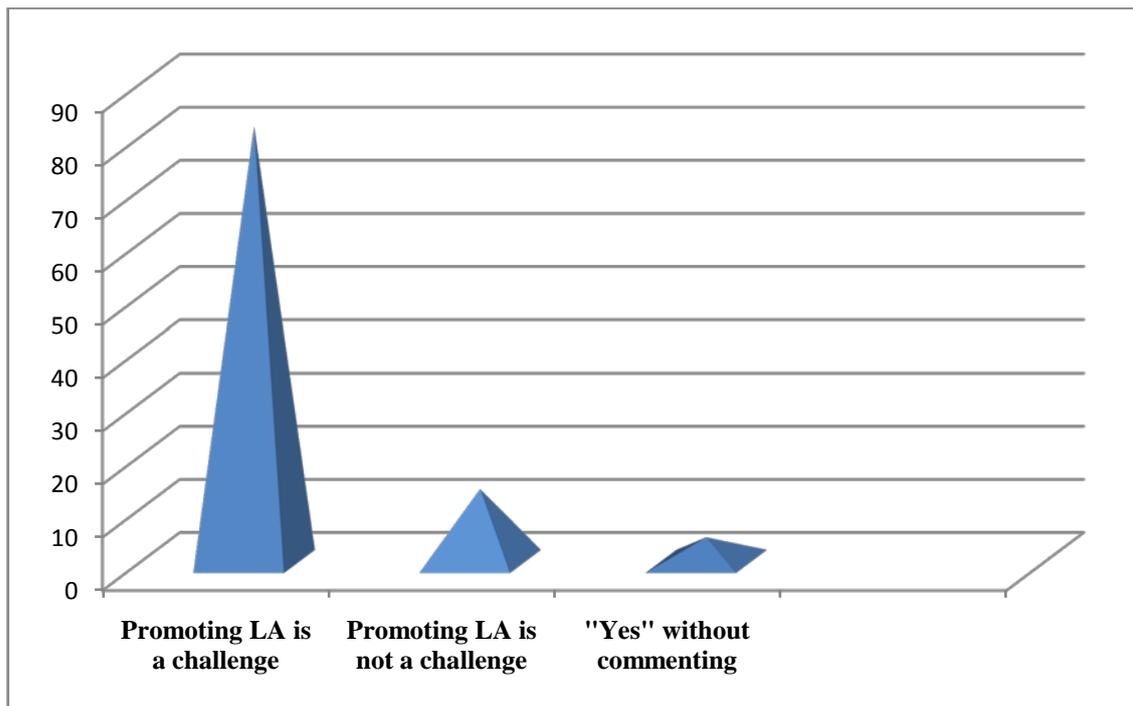
Question 05: Do you think that promoting learner autonomy is a challenge for EFL teachers in Algerian middle schools? Why?

According to the responses of the previous questions, it is quite clear that the notion of learner autonomy does not really exist in the Algerian educational context. Thus, the researcher adds this question to invite the informants to cite the frequent hindrances they meet while helping pupils to be autonomous learners.

Many answers gathered at this point, but most of them indicate that 81.81% of EFL teachers approve that promoting learner autonomy in Algerian middle schools is considered as the most critical challenge they face. Surprisingly, all of them relate that nearly to the same factors such as:

- Time constraints.
- Overcrowded classes.
- Lack of teachers' autonomy.
- Lack of motivating materials.
- Low level of pupils in English.
- Lack of interaction and collaboration between learners.
- Lack of potential efforts from pupils.
- Learners' over-reliance on the teacher.
- Lack of interest in learning.

However, few other teachers (13.63%) comment that promoting learner autonomy is not a challenge since it is the teacher's role to take his pupils in charge to involve them in autonomous learning. Furthermore, they believe that experienced and good teachers are supposed to train their learners how to use certain strategies in order to make them step towards autonomy, whereas, only one teacher (4.54%) answers simply by saying "yes" without arguing and commenting.



Graph 3.5 Teachers' Views about Promoting Learner Autonomy in Algerian Middle Schools

* This graph illustrates the participants' responses about whether or not promoting learner autonomy in Algerian middle schools is a challenge.

Question 6: Basing on your teaching experience, how can learner autonomy be fostered in Algerian middle schools?

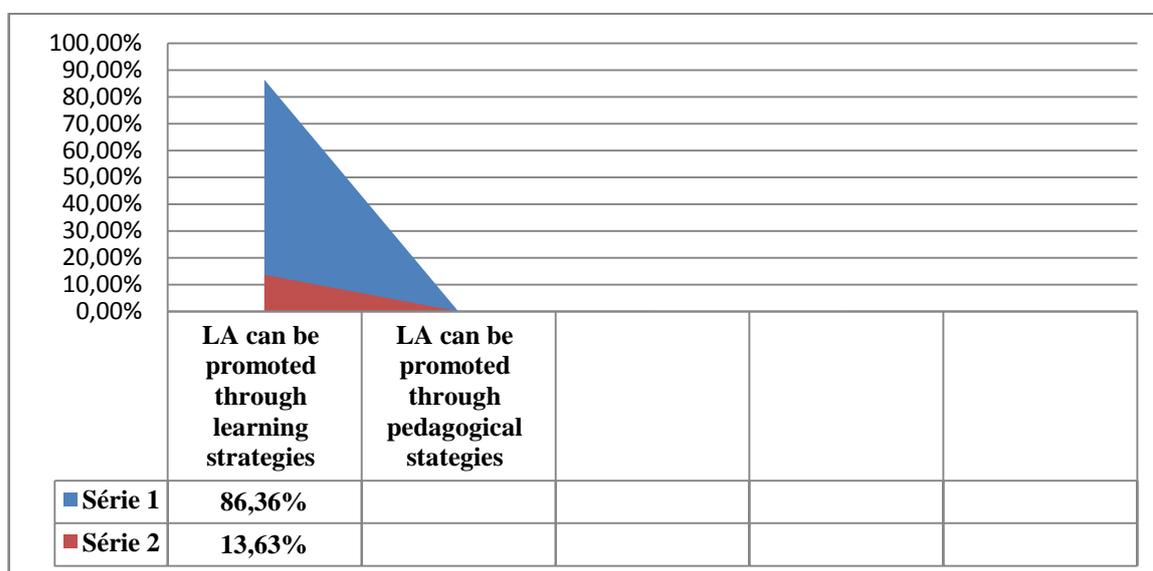
Promoting learner autonomy is the chief concern and the responsibility of any teacher. With this question, the researcher wants to obtain data from the participants regarding the relevant strategies and techniques they use to enhance an autonomous learning. Relying on their classroom experience, participants express different answers which can be split into two main views as shown in Graph 3.6. The majority of them (86.36%) see that promoting learner autonomy is a mission which can be achieved only by the teacher himself. Thus, they suggest the following learning strategies:

- Encouraging group work and collaborative tasks to learn from each other.
- Motivating learners and raising their awareness.

- Using a variety of materials to make learners enjoy English learning.
- Giving them more freedom to express their ideas and views in sort of a debate or discussion about interesting topics related to their real life.
- Treating them as responsible persons for their learning.
- Encouraging the spirit of projects and extra researches outside classroom.

However, a minority of teachers (13.63%) claim that it is hard for the teacher to foster his learners' autonomy because it is not easy to change their attitudes as they are much more reliant on him. In addition, they see that there are some pedagogical strategies which contribute in promoting learner autonomy such as:

- Reducing the number of pupils in the classroom.
- Providing teachers with autonomy oriented training.
- Designing new textbooks which meet the learners' needs and preferences.
- Giving teachers more freedom in what and how to teach.
- Providing teachers with the necessary materials and means which help in creating an appropriate atmosphere for autonomous learning like; audio-visual means, video-tapes, laboratories and libraries.



Graph 3.6 Teachers' Suggestions to Enhance Learner Autonomy

* This graph demonstrates the teachers' suggestions about how to enhance learner autonomy in Algerian middle schools.

3.2.2 Discussions and Findings of Teachers' Questionnaire

From the analysis of the teachers' questionnaire, we can deduce that the notion of learner autonomy is still in its infancy in the Algerian educational context. This reality is clearly reflected in the teachers' answers in the current research. In fact, most of EFL teachers in Algeria are not familiar with the notion of learner autonomy. In addition, there is a lack of understanding about this concept, and a little belief that it is a supporting factor in learning and a necessary element for the learners' success.

However, the majority of the participants view the concept generally very positively, they agree that the idea of learner autonomy is very interesting and they are aware of its importance in EFL classrooms, but, at the same time, they confess that learner autonomy does not really exist in the Algerian schools in general and in the middle ones in particular. Moreover, they confirm that their learners show no readiness to handle their learning process and they depend totally on what is given to them by the teacher; they get the habit of being spoon-fed from the primary school where they used to be active listeners, but passive learners.

After many educational reforms, the Algerian EFL classroom is still teacher-centered and far away from learner autonomy. In fact, EFL teachers in Algeria have been responsible for both of the teaching and learning process for a long period of time, and they have been considered as the most dominant figure that is the only knowledge owner and decision-maker in the classroom.

Unfortunately, the great majority of teachers have no readiness to abandon the traditional mode of teaching which depends on the flow of information only from the teacher to learners, and they do not accept the new roles they should perform in the classroom in order to enhance their learners' autonomy. Hence, introducing, for them, learner autonomy together with the shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach and changing their roles in the classroom is not an easy task to be accepted and applied by the teachers. In this context, Miliani argues that:

“Some teachers see themselves as unique fountains of knowledge not to be questioned. This means that any new technique brought into such a pedagogical landscape which seems to challenge the teacher’s authority is something of a blasphemy.” (Miliani, 1991:70)

In fact, we cannot expect EFL teachers in Algeria to foster pupils’ autonomy if they do not know what autonomy is, because they had never been taught about it before. Most of the informants confirm that they had no knowledge or understanding about learner autonomy. Thus, teachers who aim at promoting their learners’ autonomy should start by themselves (Little, 2002). In addition, some participants point out that even at university; this concept was just mentioned slightly in a theoretical way. Hence, it is important to note that teachers hold a wide range of interpretations and various definitions about the term of learner autonomy. Most of them believe that this term refers to learners’ total responsibility for their own learning; whereas others see that the notion of learner autonomy is synonymous with learner-centered classroom. However, being responsible does not mean the total exclusion of teachers’ contribution as guides and managers leading to an effective learning. This element was missing from all the participants’ definitions of learner autonomy. In other words, learners are able to work independently, but in negotiation and with support from the teacher who is positioned as a facilitator whose role is to negotiate and facilitate the teaching/learning process to enable his learners to be responsible for their own learning.

Consequently, EFL teachers’ knowledge about learner autonomy is one of the main constraints to fostering learner autonomy. As previously mentioned, they did not receive an effective training in their pre-service career, and even the in-service training programs do not provide them with any pedagogical strategies or techniques which help pupils step towards learner autonomy. Thus, they suggest the best solution for their current situation is “teacher training”. In fact, their answers show that they are poorly trained on how to enhance autonomous learning in their classrooms, especially with regards to teaching large classes.

Today, the use of technology and audio-visual aids in education becomes one of the most important criteria for a good quality of teaching, and it helps making the learning process more interesting and enjoyable for learners. However, the findings of this study show that there is a low level of technology application in the Algerian EFL classrooms. This is due to the fact that most of the Algerian middle schools are not well equipped with the necessary teaching tools and modern materials which can support learners to enjoy learning and move towards autonomy. On the other hand, there are some Algerian EFL teachers, especially the former ones, who are not really familiar with the use of technology, so they prefer using simple teaching aids such as; board, textbooks, written texts and printed pictures, because they used to do so and they are not ready to change their way of teaching. Whereas, other teachers avoid using audio-visual aids because they do not have enough time to work with, and they have large classes which impede the successful use of such materials.

With regard to the teachers' beliefs about the extent to which learner autonomy is promoted in Algerian middle schools, the results suggest that teachers do not hold strongly positive beliefs about the degree of their learners' autonomy; most of them see that the notion of learner autonomy does not exist in the Algerian middle schools at all, adding that this notion can be dealt with in secondary schools and university. However, this belief cannot be true since many educationalists see that there are degrees of autonomy, and the extent to which it is promoted depends on a set of factors such as; the learner's character, gender, age, etc. (Nunan, 1995) So, the learner's age is one of the main factors that influence the degree of autonomy in learning. That is to say, introducing the notion of autonomy for children during their first years of learning gives them more chance to be self-reliant learner and to get the habit of being responsible for their own learning, and thus they will be well prepared to conduct their learning process and ready to be lifelong autonomous learners.

In the context of fostering learner autonomy, we cannot say that teachers are the only ones responsible for this depressing situation, because there are some pedagogical matters which are imposed on them by the governmental educational policy in Algeria. Most EFL teachers do not find the English textbook designed for fourth year learners beneficial in introducing and promoting learner autonomy, because it does not meet the pupils' interests and needs, in addition, it does not contain self-study tasks in which learners can find themselves independent and self-reliant. Similarly, this textbook is not an appropriate tool for fostering learners' autonomy since they are not able to use it without their teacher's help. Moreover, teachers feel that they have no choice but to follow blindly the curricula and the syllabus which are imposed on them and supposed to determine everything that the teacher does in the class.

Furthermore, the problem of large and crowded classes is mentioned by the participants as a serious hindrance to the promotion of learner autonomy. They claim that the number of pupils is generally more than 38, especially in the fourth year classes where the teacher is concerned with classroom discipline more than pushing his learners towards autonomous learning. In the same context, Medjahed states that this problem:

“...is recurrent in Third World Countries widening the possibility of individual differences among learners, creating discipline problems and demanding more efforts from the teacher.” (Medjahed, 2011: 76)

Regarding learner autonomy and successful language learning, teachers are asked whether there is a relation between them. Most of the participants see that they are significantly and positively correlated because the autonomous learners are actively involved in the learning process, strongly motivated and highly confident of their abilities to learn English; so all these qualities allow them to be successful language learners, and help them manage the process of their own learning. That is to say that their good level in English increases their autonomy in learning and vice versa. Hence, the degree of autonomy differs from one learner to another according

to their language level and proficiency. However, the non-autonomous learners are passively engaged in the classroom activities and lack control over their learning process, because they are less confident of their capacities, and they are not willing to rely on themselves. In other words, they are totally depending on their teacher, and they have no readiness to cooperate with others in order to improve their level in English as well as their autonomy in learning. As a result, autonomy is one of the most important factors that influence the language learners' level which is different from one pupil to another according to the degree of their autonomy in learning; more autonomous a learner is, the more he achieves successful language learning.

Though, most of the teachers affirm that they rely on the CBA as their preferable approach to push their learners towards autonomy, the responses obtained show that they are still following the traditional way of teaching (teacher-centeredness) since they are not really interested in encouraging their learners to learn from each other through working in pairs or within groups. Although these tasks aim at promoting learner autonomy, many EFL teachers in Algeria think that no autonomy can be achieved from such works, justifying this by saying that group works turn the classroom into a mess and a noisy environment where the teacher loses control over his learners who do not benefit from this way of learning. In addition, all the participants confess that they never give learners any chance to direct their leaning process, or make decisions about what they learn. This proves that EFL classrooms are still totally teacher-centered in our middle schools where no room is left for learners to interfere in what is happening in their classroom, besides, our learners are not in a position to be good decision makers in their classroom.

Consequently, we can deduce that most of the Algerian EFL teachers are aware of the CBA effectiveness and its role in promoting learner autonomy, but they are not able to put this approach into a practice in the Algerian EFL classrooms to pave the way for the notion of learner autonomy which is limited because of many problems and obstacles such as:

- ***Students' level:*** most of the learners are at a low level in English; they are not competent enough to work without their teacher.
- ***Lack of time:*** learners in the fourth year middle school study English four times a week. According to their teachers, it is not enough to finish the program and give research works and collaborative activities to the learners.
- ***Lack of motivation and self-confidence:*** motivation is a clue factor in enhancing autonomous learning, but unfortunately most of learners have a lack of this factor as well as of confidence in their own abilities. As a result, they are not expected to advance in their learning.
- ***The educational and cultural background:*** learners have different background, culture and prior knowledge since they experienced different lives and events. Thus, it is difficult for most of them to learn English as a foreign language and adopt its western culture which is completely different from the Arabic one.

In order to overcome these hindrances, the EFL teachers are required to make suggestions on how to promote learner autonomy in Algerian middle schools. Indeed, most of their responses reflect many of those suggestions identified in the literature such as making the learners responsible for their own learning by taking decisions about what to learn, selecting the activities that encourage group works and collaboration, choosing their own materials and strategies and doing extra researches and project works, whereas other teachers focus mainly on some pedagogical suggestions such as; teachers' training programs, teachers' autonomy in what and how to teach, new textbooks, modern teaching aids, small classes, etc. Basing on the findings of teachers' questionnaire, we can deduce that there are many factors which hinder promoting learner autonomy in the Algerian middle schools. These factors can be related to EFL teachers and learners themselves or to other pedagogical obstacles. Therefore, enhancing autonomy requires a harmony and collaboration between three parts no more: the teacher, the learner, and the educational system as a whole from the ministry to the school administration.

To sum up, we can say that autonomy is a good idea in theory, but it is an idealistic goal of language teaching in practice. Thus, promoting learner autonomy is seen as a burden which is so much heavier on the EFL teachers in Algeria.

3.2.3 Learners' Questionnaire Analysis

The second questionnaire has been designed for more than 100 pupils in the fourth year middle school during the academic year 2016-2017. The questionnaire is chosen as a research instrument due mainly to the fact that a questionnaire saves time and effort; we can collect a huge amount of information in a short time, if the questionnaire is well structured, processing data can be fast and relatively straightforward.

In the present investigation, the learners' questionnaire contains mixed questions which are classified under three sections (see Appendix B). From this questionnaire, the researcher aims to explore the learners' beliefs, understanding, views and responses about their autonomy in learning and discover how autonomous they are in the absence of the teacher. All these responses are carefully treated and analysed according to their appearance and order in the questionnaire.

Section A: Learners' Attitudes towards Learning English

In the first part from the questionnaire, pupils are asked to answer by "Yes" or "No" without commenting. Through this section, the researcher aims to elicit the informants' views about learning English as a second language and to know who is in charge for managing and monitoring the learning process.

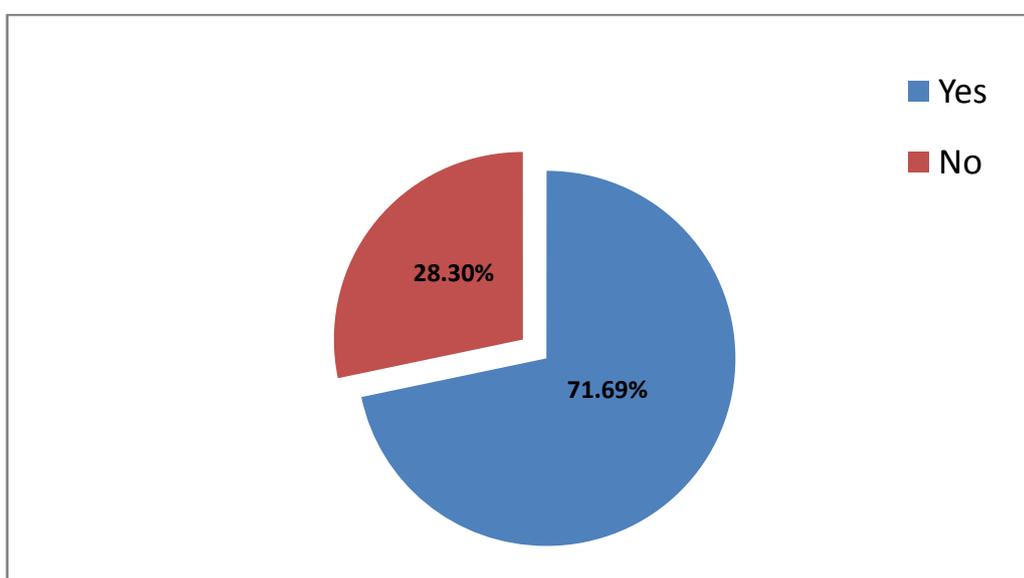
Question 1: Are you interested in learning the English language?

Today, English becomes the most commonly spoken language in the world since it is the official language of more than 50 countries, and it is taught in thousands of schools, institutions and universities around the world. The purpose of this question is to know if learners are aware of the English language importance, and to measure their interest in learning this language.

Items	Number	Percentage
Yes	76	71.69%
No	30	28.30%
Total	106	100%

Table 3.9 Learners' Attitudes towards Learning English

The answers show that the majority of learners (71.69%) express a positive attitude towards learning English believing that it is important to learn this language. On the contrary, only 28.30% of them respond with "No" to show their negative attitudes towards learning English.



Pie chart 3.9 Learners' Attitudes towards Learning English

* This pie chart represents the percentage of pupils' attitudes about their interest in learning English language.

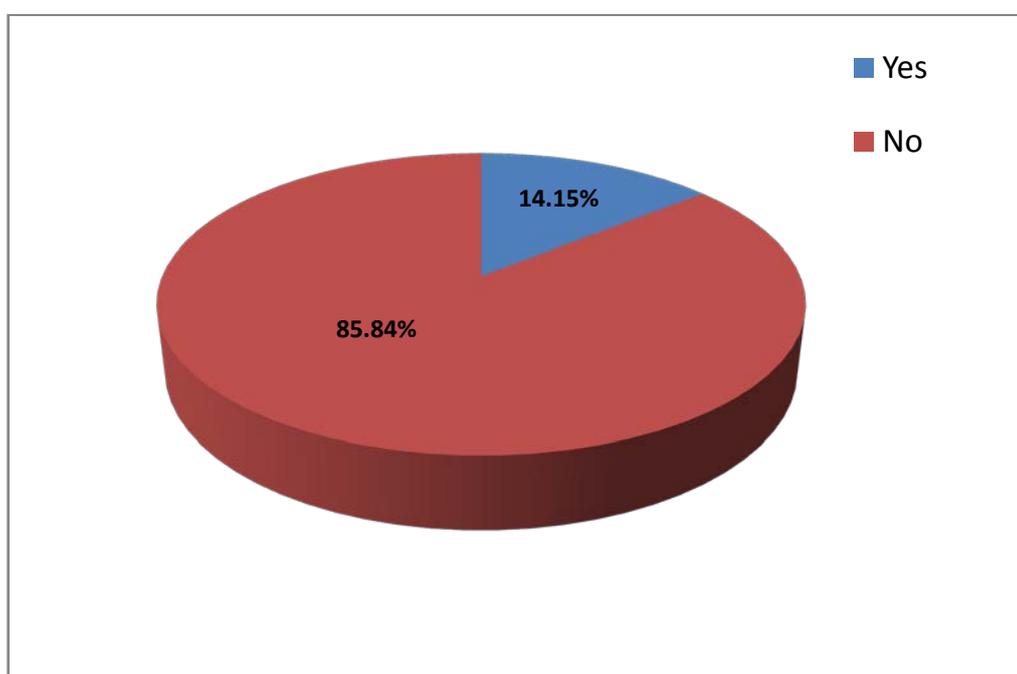
Question 2: Are you satisfied with your level in English?

The aim behind this question is to have an idea about the informants' level in English. Unfortunately, their negative responses reflect their low level.

Items	Number	Percentage
Yes	15	14.15%
No	91	85.84%
Total	106	100%

Table 3.10 Learners' Satisfaction with their Level in English

As it is illustrated in Table 3.10 above, 85.84% of the informants confirm that they are unsatisfied with their level in English. However, only 14.15% of them show their satisfaction; this minority may include only the excellent learners.



Pie chart 3.10 Learners' Satisfaction about their Level in English.

* This pie chart illustrates the pupils' answers about whether they are satisfied with their level in English.

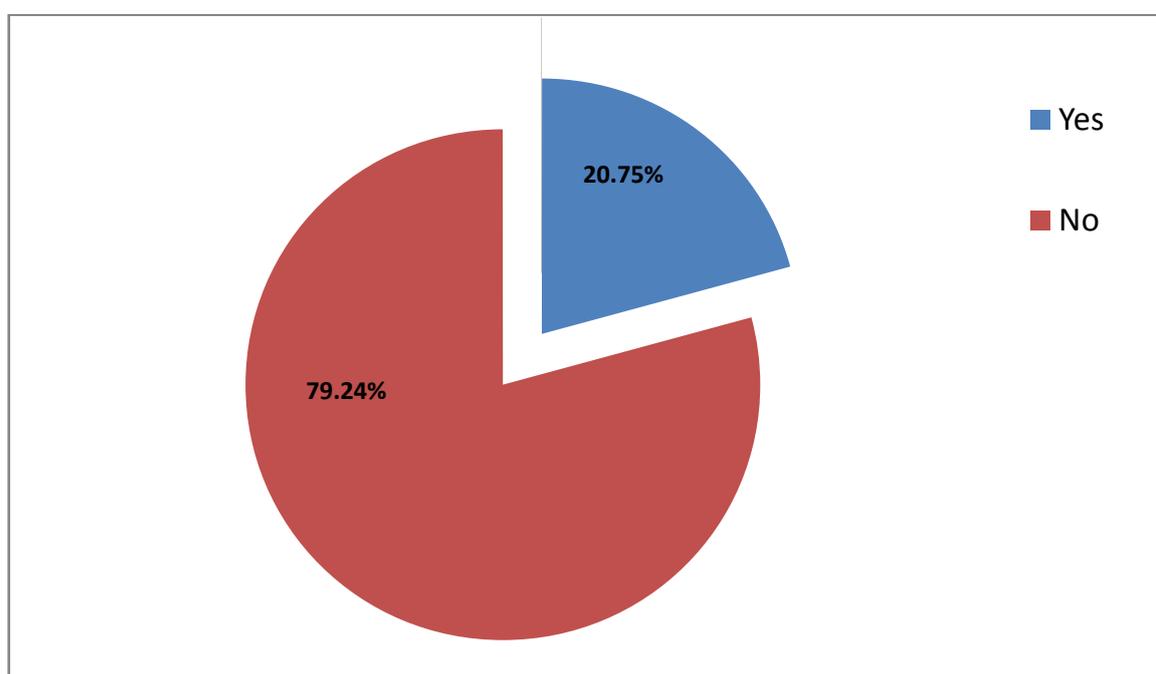
Question 3: Does your teacher motivate you to learn English?

Motivation is one of the main factors that affect the learning process. It arouses the learners' interest, maintains their curiosity in learning and helps them to be independent learners. Through the third question, the learners are inquired whether or not their EFL teacher motivates them to learn English.

Items	Number	Percentage
Yes	22	20.75%
No	84	79.24%
Total	106	100%

Table 3.11 Pupils' Views about their Teachers' Motivation

The responses to this question indicate that 79.24% of learners are not motivated by their EFL teachers, whereas the rest of them (20.75%) argue that their teacher motivates them to learn English.



Pie chart 3.11 Pupils' Views about their Teachers' Motivation

* This pie chart demonstrates the pupils' answers about their EFL teachers' motivation to learn English.

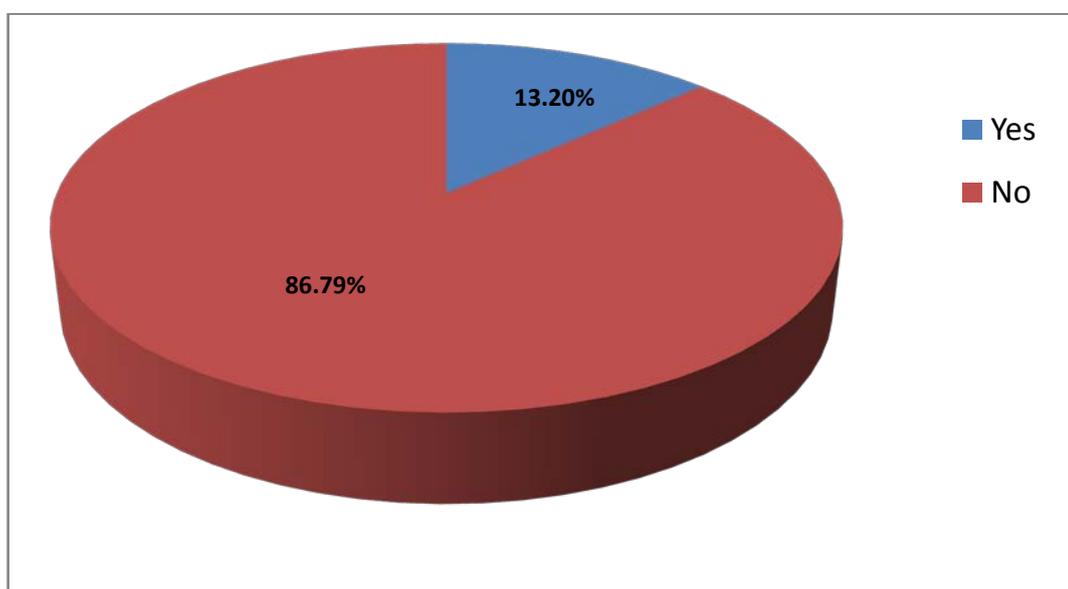
Question 4: Do you prepare your English lectures at home?

An autonomous learner is supposed to make personal efforts to improve his level and reinforce his abilities to conduct his learning process. To explore the extent to which the pupils are ready to learn English outside the classroom, they are asked whether they prepare their lectures at home or not.

Items	Number	Percentage
Yes	14	13.20%
No	92	86.79%
Total	106	100%

Table 3.12 Pupils' Home Preparation of Lectures

Surprisingly, the results obtained reveal that the overwhelming majority of pupils (86.79%) are not interested in lectures' preparation at home. In contrast, only 13.20% among them prepare their lectures at home.



Pie chart 3.12 Pupils' Home Preparation of Lectures

* This pie chart shows the percentage of the participants' answers about their home preparation of English lectures.

Section B: Pupils' Readiness for Autonomy

The questions in this section are close-ended and the participants are asked to cross out the appropriate box (Always, Sometimes or Never). Readiness of pupils is an essential condition to foster autonomy. Through this section, learners are required to answer whether or not are ready to be responsible and capable to handle their learning process.

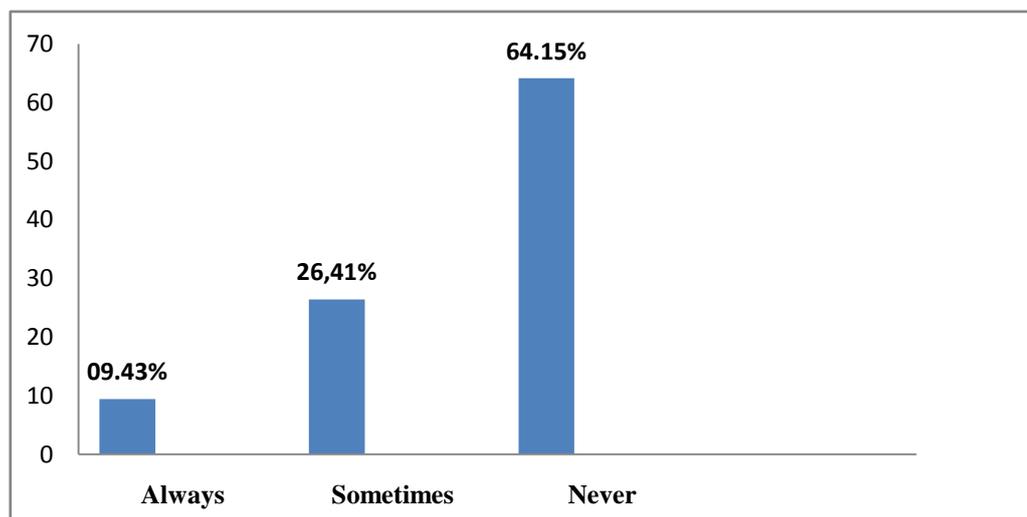
Question1: Do you discuss and challenge your teacher's ideas and views?

Discussions and sharing ideas are effective strategies that a skillful teacher uses for enhancing his learners' motivation and fostering their autonomous habits. The researcher asks this question in order to figure out whether the pupils have the opportunity to discuss with their teacher and to challenge his ideas and views.

Items	Number	Percentage
Always	10	09.43%
Sometimes	28	26.41%
Never	68	64.15%
Total	106	100%

Table 3.13 Pupils' Challenge to the Teacher's Thoughts

From students' answers, it is noticed that more than half of them (64.15%) affirm that they never discuss with their teachers or challenge their thoughts, while 26.41% among the participants replay with sometimes, and just 9.43% of the participants say that they always challenge their teacher's thoughts and ideas.



Graph 3.7 Pupils' Challenge to their Teacher's Thoughts

* This graph clarifies the percentage of pupils' answers about their challenge to the teacher's thoughts and ideas.

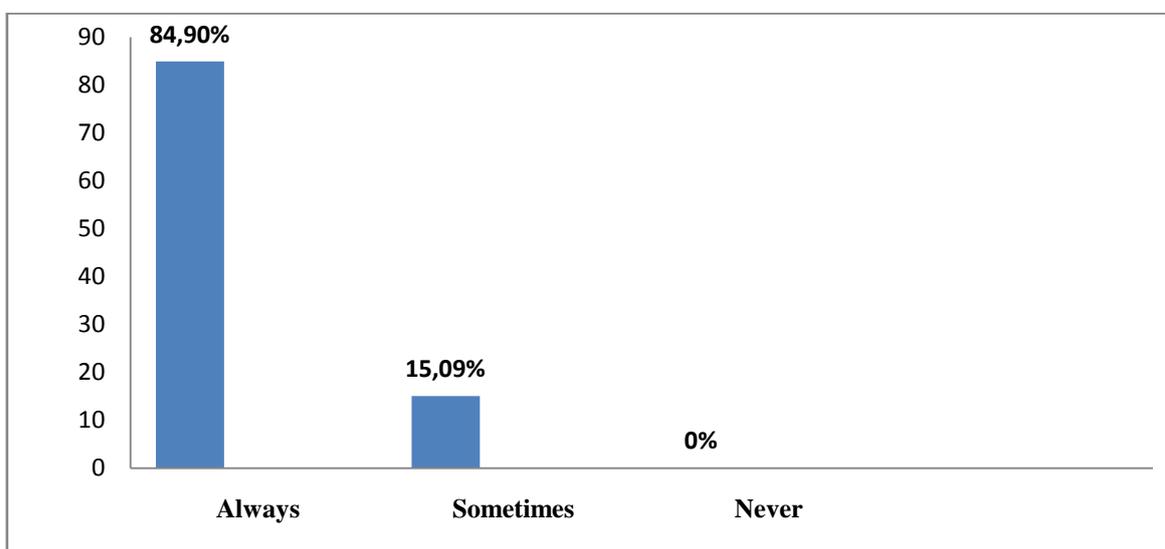
Question2: Do you prefer working within a group in order to be more autonomous?

One of the important skills that students need to achieve a successful learning is the ability to work as a team. This ability helps pupils to learn from each other, exchange ideas and share knowledge. This question aims at knowing the pupils views about collaborative learning as a performing way of their autonomy.

Items	Number	Percentage
Always	90	84.90%
Sometimes	16	15.09%
Never	00	00%
Total	106	100%

Table 3.14 Pupils' Preference of Working in Groups

As far as this question is concerned, 84.90% of the subjects appear to be fond of working in groups since they answer with always. On the other hand, only a limited number of the respondents (15.09%) tick in the box of sometimes, but no one answers with never.



Graph 3.8 Percentage of Pupils' Preference of Working in Groups

* This graph represents the percentage of the pupils' views about collaborative learning.

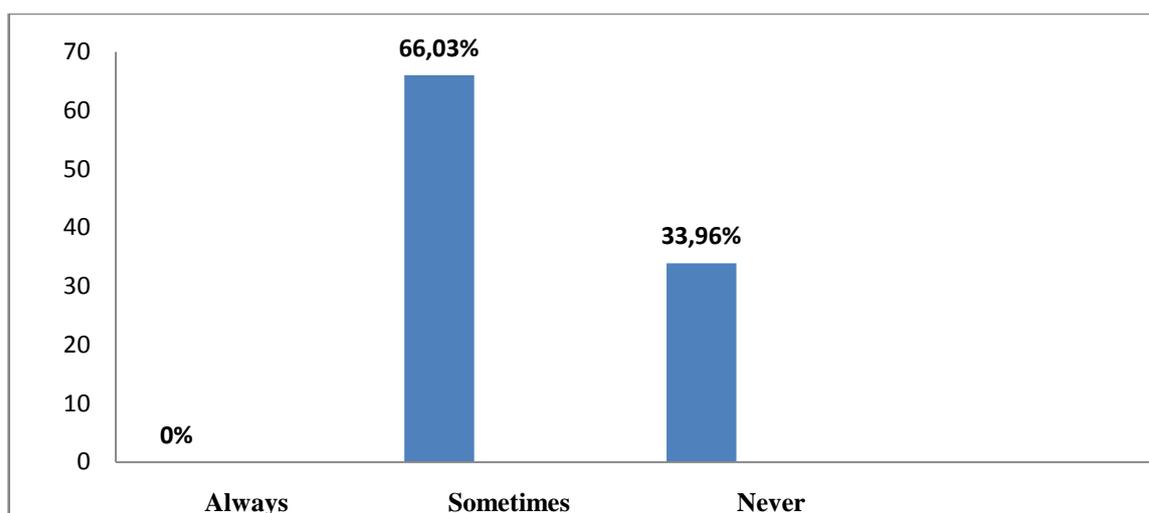
Question3: Do you prepare a project work at the end of each file?

At the end of each file, the learners should prepare a specific project work related to what has been seen through the whole file. These projects benefit pupils and help them develop their self-reliance and independence. The main objective of this question is to determine the importance of the project works for learners and to know if they are used in the EFL classroom.

Items	Number	Percentage
Always	00	00.00%
Sometimes	70	66.03%
Never	36	33.96%
Total	106	100%

Table 3.15 Pupils' Preparation of Project Works

Basing on the results illustrated in table 3.15, we notice that the answers to the above question are divided between two items. Most of the pupils (66.03%) say that they sometimes prepare a project work. However, 33.96 % of them confirm that they are never given a project work to be done at the end of the file, but surprisingly, no one of the participants answers with “always”.



Graph 3.9 Pupils' Preparation of Project Works

*This graph shows the pupils' frequency in preparing project works.

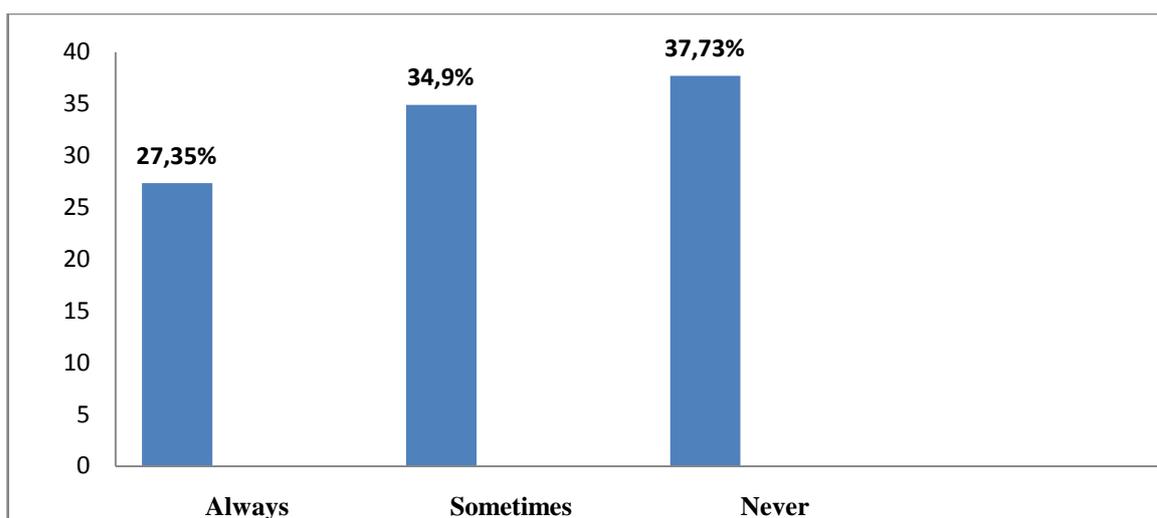
Question4: Do you use grammar books, dictionaries, internet, and extra researches to improve your English?

Language learning is a continuous process, it should not stop as the session finishes. Books, dictionaries, internet and doing extra researches play an important role in making pupils independent and successful language learners. The purpose of this question is to see whether students use these materials to increase their knowledge as well as their autonomy in learning.

Items	Number	Percentage
Always	29	27.35%
Sometimes	37	34.90%
Never	40	37.73%
Total	106	100%

Table 3.16 Students' Use of Extra Materials to Learn English

The answers to this question report that 29 students (27.35%) always tend to work out, doing independent researches outside the classroom and out of the teacher's demand, whereas, 34.90% of them replay that they sometimes use these materials, and 37.73% of the pupils tick in the case of "never".



Graph 3.10 Students' Use of Extra Materials to Learn English

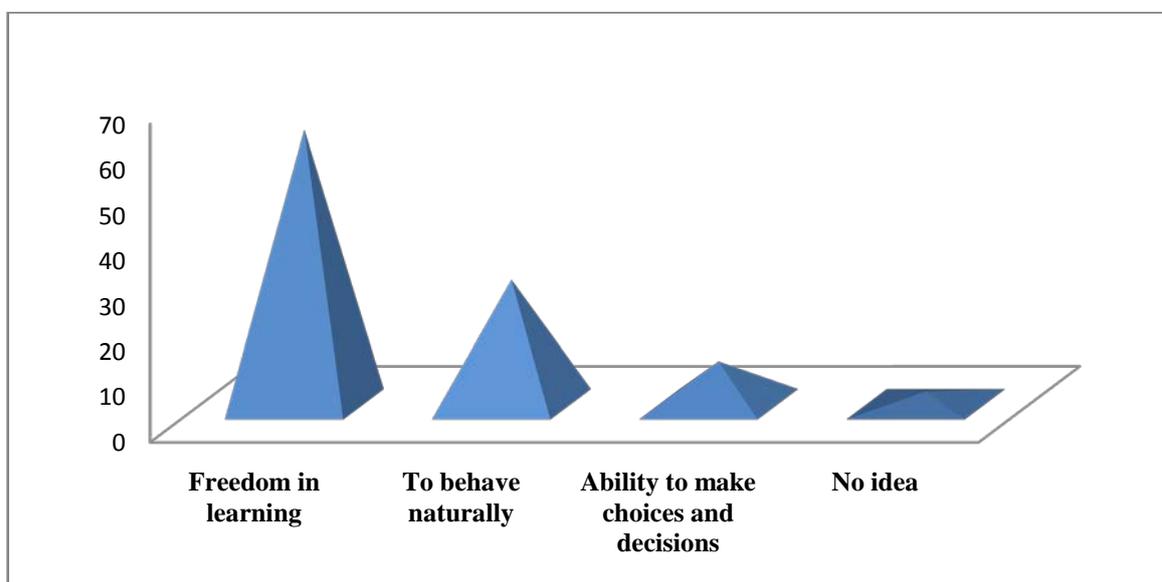
* This graph shows the pupils' frequency in using extra materials to learn English.

Section C: Learners' Perceptions about Learner Autonomy

The last section is devoted to discover the students' points of view about the concept of autonomy in terms of definition, difficulties, obstacles and strategies to overcome these obstacles. Through this section, the informants are asked to answer some open-ended questions and justify their responses using their own words.

Question 1: As a pupil, do you have an idea about learner autonomy?

Tightly related to this study theme, this question attempts to discover how middle school learners in Algeria conceptualise learner autonomy, and to know how they see and understand it. The answers show that the majority of learners (60.37%) understand their autonomy as a kind of freedom which allows them to learn by themselves without relying on the teacher. But 27.35% of them believe that learner autonomy is to behave in a normal way in the classroom without being afraid of the teacher. However 9.43% of the pupils agree that learner autonomy means the learners' ability to make choices and decisions about the way they learn and study. Yet, only 3 participants (2.83%) write that they have no idea about its meaning.



Graph 3.11 Learners' Conceptualisation of Learner Autonomy

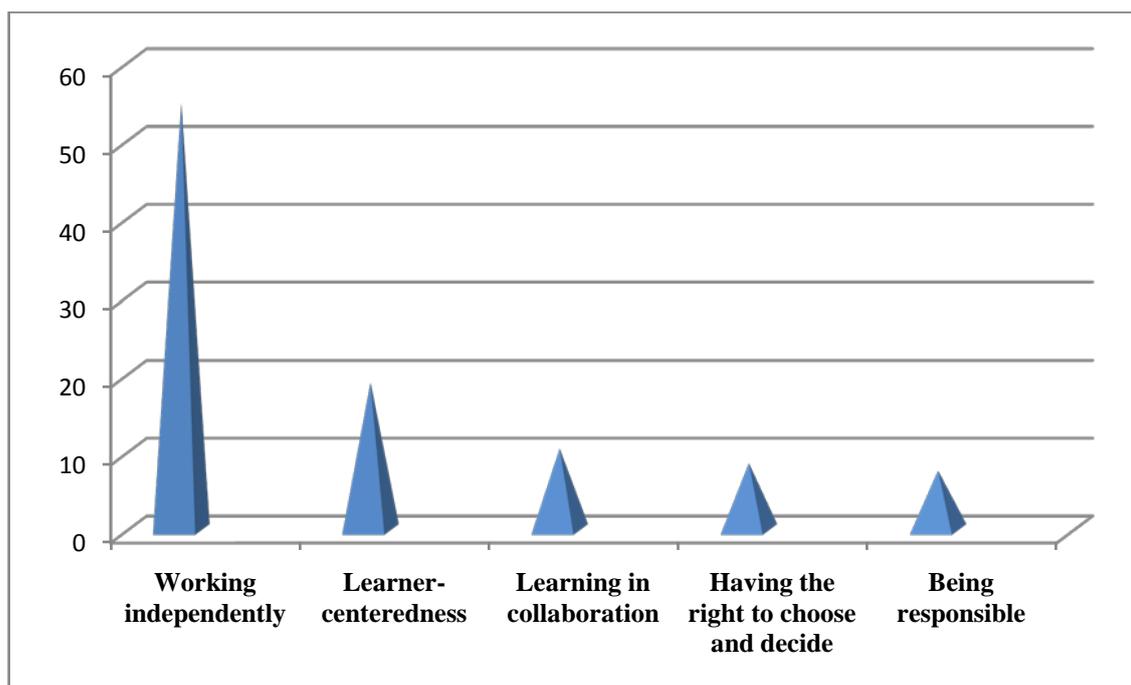
* This graph represents the pupils' conceptualisation about the notion of learner autonomy.

Question2: How do you like to practise your autonomy in English learning?

As the previous answers reveal, the understanding of learner autonomy differs from one learner to another. Thus, they are supposed to have different views about how this autonomy can be practised in learning English. This question is asked in order to determine the ways pupils prefer to practise their autonomy in EFL classrooms.

The answers show that more than half of participants (54.71%) prefer working independently without their teacher's interference in order to see themselves so autonomous. On the other hand, about 18.86% from the informants believe that they learn better and they feel more autonomous when the teacher adopts learner-centered approach in the classroom and gives them more chance to take part in the learning process, whereas 10.37% of them say that they enjoy learning when it is done in a collaborative way. They justify this by adding that they feel more independent and comfortable when they work in groups or in pairs because they catch more chances to take part in learning from their peers better than from the teacher. However, 8.49% of the responses reveal that some pupils consider themselves autonomous when they have the right to choose the ways they prefer to learn English, the decisions to be taken about their learning process, the materials to be used in the class and the activities and tasks to be carried out in the lesson. Only 7.54% of the pupils view that being responsible is enough to practise a full autonomous learning. In this context, one of these participants writes: ***“To practise your autonomy is to be the leader of your class and not the follower of your teacher.”***¹

¹ “Translation mine”



Graph 3.12 Pupils' Preferable Ways to Practise Autonomous Learning

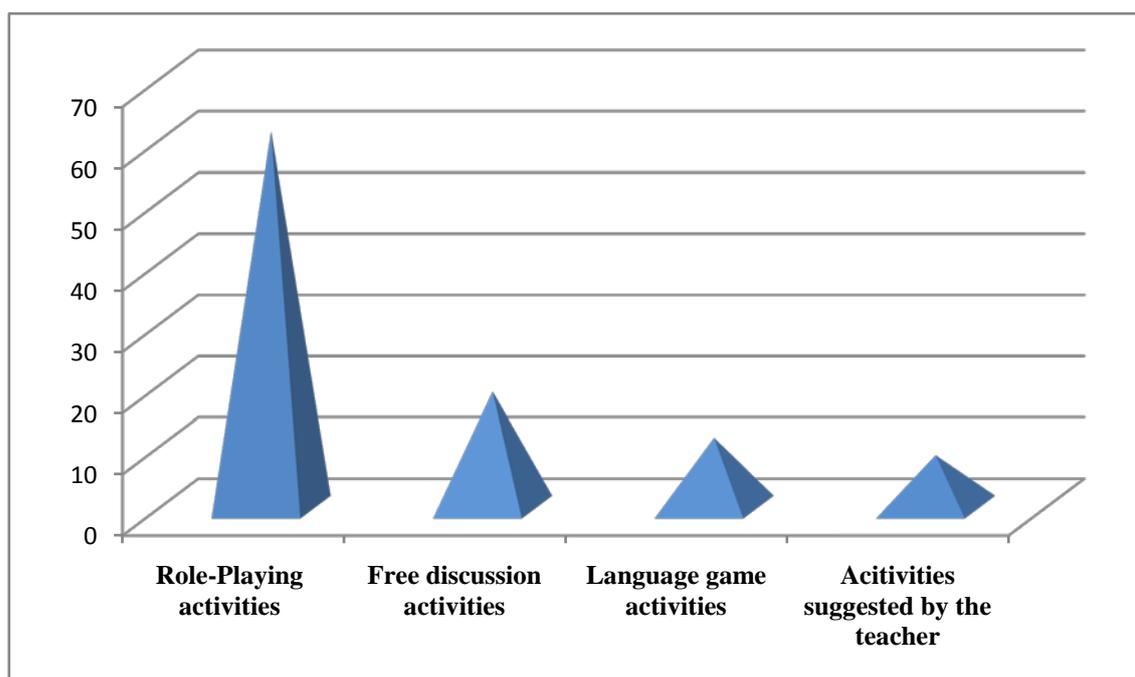
* This graph shows the percentage of pupils' responses about their preferable ways to practise autonomous learning.

Question3: What type of activities do you prefer to foster your autonomy? Why?

In fact, the teacher has a key role in providing his learners with the appropriate activities that contribute in developing their language capacities and promoting their autonomy in learning. However, autonomous learners are supposed to have the greatest responsibility for choosing the activities that suit them best to realise their learning objectives. The purpose of this question is to find out the learners' favourite activities which help them manage their learning autonomously.

According to a great portion of pupils (61.32%), role-playing is considered as the most favourite activities in EFL classroom, claiming that such activities facilitate their engagement in the learning process and allow them to interact with their peers since it can be done in cooperative pairs or groups. On the other hand, 18.86 % of the participants are supporters of free discussion activities; in their

opinion, these tasks are very beneficial because they may help them become fluent language users since they have the opportunity to express themselves freely and independently. However, 11.32% of the participants prefer language game activities. They believe that this kind of activities is enjoyable and often associated with fun; in addition, it improves learners' language acquisition and increases their motivation in learning. The rest or about 8.49% enjoy the activities suggested by their EFL teacher without giving any comment or justification.



Graph 3.13 Pupils' Favourite Activities

* This graph illustrates the percentage of pupils' responses about their preferable activities which enhance their autonomy.

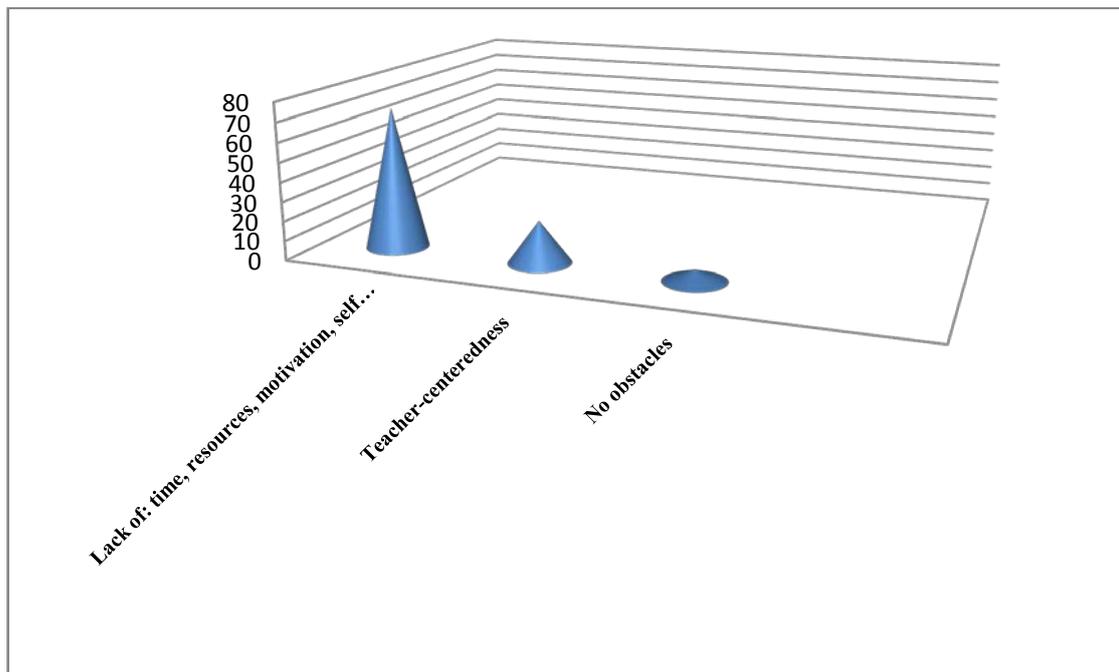
Question4: According to you, what are the main obstacles that constrain your autonomy in learning?

The objective behind such a question is to determine the main difficulties pupils face when they want to be independent and more autonomous learners in the classroom. Most of the informants enjoy this question which allows them to express the obstacles that hinder them in achieving autonomous learning.

Many answers are gathered from this question, but the majority of pupils (72.64%) agree about some common hindrances such as:

- Absence of time arrangement.
- Lack of resources and materials.
- Lack of self-confidence.
- Lack of language proficiency.

Other participants (21.69%) allege that most of the impediments are caused by the teacher justifying their answers by the teacher-centeredness which makes learning boring for them, and so, they lose interest in taking part in the class. In addition, they complain that the teacher does not train them to use techniques and strategies which help them become more independent and autonomous learners. In contrast, only 6 students (5.66%) say that they have no problem in achieving autonomy since they are highly motivated and involved in the learning process.



Graph 3.14 Pupils' Views about the Obstacles that Constrain their Autonomy

* This graph demonstrates the percentage of pupils' answers about the obstacles they face in achieving autonomous learning.

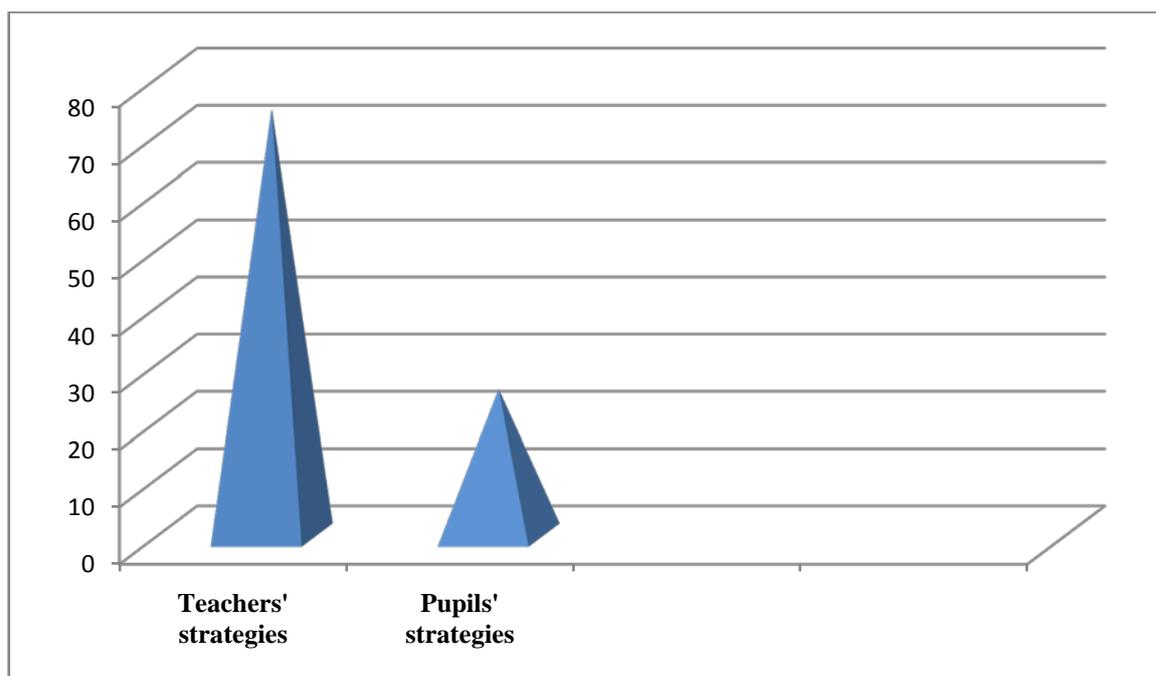
Question 5: According to you, what are the effective strategies and solutions to overcome these obstacles and enhance your autonomy in learning?

The fifth question deals with the pupils' suggestions about the best strategies to overcome the above mentioned obstacles and to enhance their autonomy. In this regard, they express different opinions and suggest many strategies and solutions, but most of them (74.52%) state that it is the teacher's role to promote learner autonomy through:

- Involving learners in the learning process.
- Making them responsible for their learning.
- Giving them opportunities through tasks, home works, research papers...
- Motivating them to perform works independently.
- Looking for their needs, interests and problems.
- Sharing and discussing with them all what happens in the class.
- Being a helper and facilitator for them.
- Providing them with the necessary information to enrich their knowledge and improve their proficiency in English.

However, a few minority of informants (25.47%) agree that they can develop their autonomy through:

- Learning outside the classroom by looking for more information and doing extra researchers.
- Being interested in the class in order to attract the teacher's attention.
- Being self-confident to gain the teacher's trust.
- Being kind, polite, serious and active learners.
- Working with the classmates inside and outside the classroom.



Graph 3.15 Pupils' Suggestions to Enhance their Autonomy

* This graph demonstrates the percentage of pupils' responses about the best strategies to overcome the obstacles which hinder them to be autonomous.

3.2.4 Discussions and Findings of Learners' Questionnaire

In the present study, a questionnaire is addressed to the fourth year pupils at Guettaf Mansour middle school in El-Bayadh. The rational aim behind such a questionnaire is to investigate learners' involvement in autonomous learning regarding different areas: learners' understanding of their autonomy, learners' reliance on the teacher in learning English, learners' perception of their teachers' responsibility in learning and learners' practice in and outside the classroom. After collecting data from learners' questionnaire, their responses are carefully analysed through different tables, pie charts and graphs, and now they will be discussed and interpreted in order to enlighten the learners' attitudes towards their autonomy.

Based on the results of the data analysis, it is clearly noticed that there is a contradiction in most of the learners' responses which reflect their positive attitudes towards English learning; however, the data collected from their questionnaire reveal that they are not ready to take charge of their learning process and be

autonomous. In fact, the only motive behind learning English, especially for fourth grade students in Algerian schools, is to have good marks and better grades in the Brevet exam. Hence, the Algerian examination regime is considered as one of the main constraints that hinder the development of learner autonomy.

Unfortunately, the informants show no independence or reliance on themselves, they still consider their teacher the most responsible who is regarded as the only resource of knowledge. However, learner autonomy comes from the learners' willingness and interest in learning, and when they reach a higher level of autonomy they have more control of their learning in and outside the classroom. Although, learner autonomy is closely related with the language level, and it could be fostered by making students interested and aware of their learning, the majority of learners express their dissatisfaction about their level in English which is a major factor in their ability to be autonomous.

This study has also showed that learners are not sufficiently motivated by their teachers who ignore the benefits of motivation in learning English and the strong connection between learner autonomy and motivation. However, if pupils are highly motivated, they will learn much better, and thus they will be more autonomous. In addition, through motivation, learning is more enjoyable for learners and teaching becomes less boring for teachers. Furthermore, they are not intrinsically motivated to use certain strategies that help them become more independent such as; self-learning at home. This strategy allows learners to do more exercises about what has been seen previously and to prepare their lessons before attending the class. As it was expected, most of learners do not prepare their English lectures before coming to school. This can be due to their teacher who does not ask them to prepare their lessons before class and do the exercises in the textbook, or to the learners themselves who are not ready to devote no time or energy for advance preparation and self-learning at home.

In fact, the learners' ability to discuss with their teacher about the learning process is a good and important sign that leads directly to their involvement in

autonomous learning. Evidently, more than half of the informants in this study mention that they never negotiate the teacher's ideas or challenge his thoughts and views. This may be justified either by the learners' trust in their teachers' knowledge and information or by their weakness in English and lack of self-confidence which does not allow them to be in a position to challenge their teachers' ideas and discuss with him. In other words, confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence. On the other hand, the teacher's behaviour with his learners in the classroom may contribute to this situation in different ways; his authoritarian role makes him unaware of the importance of his pupils' questions, discussion, and initiatives which are crucial in fostering their sense of creativity, knowledge and autonomy.

Moreover, it is worthwhile to mention that the learners show a strong desire for working in groups and collaborate with each other as a way to feel more autonomous. Surprisingly, when asked about the project work as a compulsory task which should be done at the end of each file, more than half of the participants affirm that they are sometimes asked to prepare this task, that is to say most EFL teachers in Algerian middle schools do not take the project work seriously since they are not aware of its importance in enhancing learners' autonomy, or they avoid giving learners such work because they know that it will be done by copying and pasting from the internet without making any effort or even understanding what they have copied down, and thus, no autonomy can be achieved from these projects.

However, most of the informants demonstrate a little interest for doing extra researches to improve their level in English; they get satisfied with the knowledge given by the teacher without looking for further information. Whereas, only few pupils seem to be ready for self-learning at home; they make researches by using internet, books and dictionaries as learning tools to enrich their knowledge and contribute to promote their autonomy. Thus, we deduce that our learners get into the bad habit of being spoon-fed, that is why they have no eagerness towards seeking more information or doing any self-learning tasks at home.

Regarding their perceptions about learner autonomy, the findings of the current study show that middle school learners do not have a clear understanding of the term learner autonomy. Most of the informants acknowledge that they understand their autonomy in learning as a kind of freedom and independence which allow them to learn by themselves without any reliance on the teacher. Yet, only few students agree that learner autonomy is the ability of learners to make choices and decisions about their learning, whereas others see that being autonomous is to behave in a natural way inside the classroom. These misunderstandings may be resulted when the term learner autonomy is translated from English into Arabic, because there is a wide range of different interpretations. For example; autonomy refers in Arabic to “استقلالية” which means freedom, therefore, our learners see their autonomy as a freedom through which they are separated from their teacher’s subordination and dependence. As mentioned above, learners have a clear misunderstanding about the concept of learner autonomy and so they do not believe that it is a necessary component for their learning and success.

Additionally, through the questionnaire, learners are asked about how they like to practise their autonomy in learning. In their responses, pupils determine different ways they prefer to practise their autonomy in EFL classroom. Most of them tend to work independently without the teacher’s interference. They see that this situation gives them a sense of autonomy; however, being autonomous does never mean to make a break with the teacher who remains for learners as a helper, a supporter, and a facilitator of the learning process.

In the same context, other pupils state that being autonomous means for them being in a learner-centered classroom. That is to say that our classrooms are still teacher-centered where the learners are passively receiving the teacher’s information and instructions without being involved in the learning process, and this is one of the remainings of the traditional approach both teachers and pupils get used to it. On the contrary, only few participants see that their autonomy is related to

their right to choose, select and decide about their learning process. This minority may include the brilliant learners who are, to some extent, aware about the real meaning of learner autonomy since they want to take part in all what happens in their classroom. On the other hand, there are some participants who view that being responsible is enough to practise a full autonomous learning, but, in fact, learning is a heavy responsibility which should be shared with the teacher. Consequently, the learners' responses are firmly related to their above perceptions about the term of learner autonomy, and their favorite ways to practise autonomy are tightly linked to the main characteristics of autonomous learners similar with those prevalent in the literature.

At the end of the questionnaire, pupils are asked about the obstacles that inhibit them from being autonomous. Many of them cite nearly the same hindrances they are facing in their ways to move towards autonomy. These obstacles are summarized in: lack of materials and time arrangement, lack of teachers' support and motivation, lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem which make them seem to be incompetent to take charge of their own learning. So, we notice that most of the participants believe that their autonomy is the responsibility of their teacher; they are not yet ready to handle their learning process and be autonomous and self-regulated learners. This means that middle school learners in Algeria are still thinking in a traditional way towards their learning, this may be due to the habits they had in their primary education where they used to be good listeners, but passive pupils. However, other pupils relate all the factors that impede them to be more autonomous to the teacher-centeredness, complaining that the teacher is the only responsible for all what happens in the classroom, and so they have no room to practise their autonomy. They add that their teacher does not train them to use the strategies which allow them to come into contact with the idea of autonomy.

In fact, after having acquainted with different challenges that exhibit learners in their path for obtaining the desired level of autonomy, they do not hesitate to

suggest some strategies and solutions to overcome these obstacles and to enhance their autonomy in learning. The informants express different views and suggest many solutions. But most of these suggestions are put into the teacher's hands since he has an undeniable role and a major impact on students' development towards autonomy through: involving and making them responsible for their own learning, motivating and providing them with the necessary information and tools, and looking for their interests and needs. Indeed, these propositions focus only on the teacher's role, but they are not sufficient to promote learner autonomy; they need to be complemented with learners' readiness and willingness to manage their learning and move towards autonomy. On the contrary, few informants see that promoting their autonomy can be achieved by themselves through; learning outside the classroom, being interested and self-confident, working in groups and collaborating with each other.

As a result, learner autonomy is a complex concept which requires concerted efforts between teachers and learners. In addition, we can deduce that fourth year middle school pupils are, to some extent, aware of their autonomy in learning, but they are not given the full ingredients of autonomy practices and all the possibilities to hold this autonomy not just in learning but in different aspects of their daily lives. Hence, there is an urgent need of changing pupils' attitudes towards learner autonomy and establishing a strategy training to prepare them for such a change which is in no way an impossible task.

3.2.5 Classroom Observation Analysis and Findings

Classroom observation is one of the instruments used for data collection in this study. It helps the researcher gathering more information about teachers as well as learners' practices in the classroom and it aims at observing:

- Learners' involvement in the learning process.
- Teaching methods and strategies.
- Learners' use of learning strategies.
- Different materials used by the teacher.

- Learners' engagement in collaborative work.
- The relationship between the teacher and learners.

During this period, the observer's objective is to know to what extent the observed classroom is an autonomous one through answering the following questions:

1. Does the teacher introduce the new file, its content and project?
2. Does she use different materials and teaching aids to make the lessons enjoyable and interesting?
3. Does she share her learners' discussions and decisions?
4. Does she encourage group works and let her pupils learn from their peers?
5. Does she adopt the CBA in ELT?
6. Do learners take part in the learning process actively?
7. Do they prepare the next lesson at home and make extra-researches to enhance their understanding?
8. Do they depend on themselves in solving learning problem situations and correcting their mistakes?
9. Are they really engaged and interested in the learning activity?
10. Do they interact with their teacher and with each other?

My first session with the teacher to observe 4AM 2 class was on October 04th, 2016 at 9:00 am when the teacher presented the first lesson in the programme. What was noticeable in this session is that the teacher did not introduce the first file, its content and theme. She only wrote the title "It's My Treat" on the board without explaining its meaning and even the learners did not ask her about it. After that, the teacher started the lesson of "Listen and Consider" which was a grammar lesson about tag questions. She provided some simple examples from the textbook to introduce the lesson content, and then she wrote them on the board and expected her students to write these examples in their copybooks.

In all the observed lessons, she did not begin any lesson by informing students of its objectives, and she never asked her learners to choose their materials or activities. Instead, she gave them instructions to be followed without explaining

or discussing them. For their part, learners followed these instructions without any questions or comments, and when they were asked if they understood something, they generally answered “yes” or sat silent.

In fact, technology can contribute to the learning process in many ways; the use of different materials such as: audio-visual aids, computers and data-projector makes the session more enjoyable and interesting since it breaks the routine, avoids boring and keeps students’ attention and interest. Yet, these tools and ICTs are not in the learners’ hands because of the lack of such equipment in the Algerian EFL classrooms. During the researcher’s attendance, it was noticed that the teacher used only routinized materials like: white board, pens and English textbook which was blindly followed by her. In addition, she used some printed pictures as illustrations about food, dishes and drinks. Exceptionally, during the session of writing, she brought with her a video about how to prepare a pizza, but she could not show it to her pupils because there were only one laptop and one projector in the school, and unfortunately they were taken by the teacher of science.

Overall, through the observed sessions, the teacher did not speak about the project of this file or introduce its topic. When she was asked about this, she replayed that it was done in purpose to let her pupils discover the file’s theme through the next lectures, and later she would talk about the project work. But unfortunately, she did not do that until the last session of file one when she asked her pupils to prepare project works about traditional dishes in Algeria and bring them after the exams. So, we did not attend the day of the projects’ presentation since the observation period was over.

All along my presence with the teacher in the classroom, she talked a lot and explained every detail without giving her learners a chance to negotiate or discuss with her, and even the pupils did not bother themselves to ask questions or give comments; most of them were just listeners and receivers. Her teaching practice and the amount of talk she did in class proved that she dominated her learners too much.

While explaining the lesson, the teacher used English first, and then translated what she said into Arabic or French because she did not believe that her pupils understood what she said in English.

After having a look at the teacher's documents, it seemed that her lesson plans were well-prepared and the CBA principles were well-respected in these papers. However, during the class, the teacher adopted a set of approaches and used many strategies at the same time and unconsciously. Thus, most of the time pupils found themselves lost and more reliant on the teacher who said that she did so for the sake of making her pupils understand better and her intention was to help the weak ones.

While observing the pupils' practice in the classroom, it was clearly noticeable that only few pupils were participating and actively engaged in the learning process ; they gave examples, did activities, asked questions and answered those of the teacher. As it was expected, the same pupils were interested in the learning process and highly motivated since they prepared their lessons at home and conducted extra-researches before attending the class and out of the teacher's demand in order to enhance their understanding and learning, whereas the majority of them were restricted to what was given to them by the teacher. In this context, the teacher stated that they developed this habit of overreliance in the primary education and they did not want to change it.

All along my presence with them in the classroom, the pupils faced many difficulties in their learning. As it was mentioned previously, only the brilliant pupils tried to overcome these difficulties by their own and found their needs personally. For example, they took their dictionaries to find and check the meaning of difficult words while the other learners were waiting for help either from those brilliant ones or from the teacher. However, most of them expected their teacher's help, for example, they asked her to translate certain words for them from English to Arabic because they did not bring their own dictionaries to the classroom or they did not know how to use it. On the other hand, the error's correction was generally

done by the teacher and what was noticeable is that she stopped the pupils once they committed any mistake to correct them, and she did not give them a chance to correct each other. In other words, self-correction was rarely used only by good pupils, but peer correction was, in fact, totally absent in this classroom.

In addition, the classroom observation reveals that the learners did not appear to be motivated to participate in the lesson. Indeed, they were unwilling to take part in the learning activities that the teacher assigned. Most of these activities were predetermined by the syllabus and they were often taken from the course book. Surprisingly, the teacher did not give her pupils any collaborative task where they had to work collectively. Most of the time she asked them to work individually or in pairs. She justified this by saying that the classroom was overcrowded and working in group caused noise and disturbed both the teacher and the brilliant pupils.

After having observed this classroom for more than a month, we can say that the responses obtained from the teachers and learners' questionnaires are not really exact and true. In fact, the teacher had a traditional class and her teaching appeared to be teacher-centred; she was the most dominant person in the classroom where her centeredness was quite apparent. She was the knowledge provider who controlled both of the learning and teaching process, and she carried the main responsibility for managing the various aspects of learning. It was also observed that she was the only decision-maker in the classroom.

Furthermore, the pupils took the habit to rely totally on their teacher; they were not interested or ready to make any effort to be autonomous and responsible for their learning. Moreover, their interaction with their teacher and with each other was very limited. In this aspect, we notice that the brilliant students in this classroom were somehow selfish and arrogant; they avoided any interaction or contact with the weak learners, especially the boarder ones who were mostly passive learners; they were silent, shy and demotivated, and even the teacher confirmed this problem which was, according to her, due to the low level they came with from the primary school. Thus, these pupils need special care from their EFL

teacher who should support, guide and assist them to be more self-confident and self-reliant.

In short, it was obviously clear that the observed teacher did not implement the notion of learner autonomy in her class or make any effort to foster it in her teaching practices. This may be due to the lack of a strong belief about learner autonomy as a supporting factor in student learning. As a conclusion, we can say that the observed classroom is far to be autonomous one since both of the teacher and learners are poorly prepared for autonomy, and this reality was evidently reflected in both of the learning and teaching practices of the participants in the current research.

3.2.6 The Interview Analysis and Findings

Through this research instrument, the researcher aims at collecting more data and providing reliable information about his research theme by extracting direct responses from the inspection of English who represents the EFL teachers in the city of El-Bayadh. He has been asked some open-ended questions about his understanding of learner autonomy, its implementation in the Algerian educational context, how much autonomous the pupils are in middle schools and how to promote their autonomy. All these questions are presented as follows:

1. What do you understand by the term “learner autonomy”?
2. As an ex-teacher, did you use to promote your learners’ autonomy? How?
3. Is the fourth year textbook helping the pupils to be more autonomous?
4. According to your visits to EFL teachers in different schools, how do you find the pupils’ engagement in the learning process?
5. Comparing with the old generation of EFL teachers, do you see that the new teachers are ready to teach with the CBA principles and able to prepare their learners for autonomy?
6. Do you organize study days, workshops and seminars about teacher training programmes which help teachers foster their learners’ autonomy?

7. According to you, what are the main constraints of fostering learner autonomy in Algerian middle schools and the best techniques and strategies to reduce learners' dependence on the teacher?

According to the inspector, learner autonomy is an essential element in education to build up and improve the learners' level, and it is very important in ELT because it is the most effective tool that makes learners reinvest the acquired knowledge at school in their real life situations, but unfortunately they are not taking advantages of that right and duty at the same time. With regard to its definition, the inspector states that the term learner autonomy has many definitions and different interpretations; but all of them focus on the same general meaning which refers to the learner's independence from his teacher in order to be in charge of his own learning. In this context, he identifies that overall EFL teachers in Algeria lack understanding about this concept, and he adds that they have various misconceptions about the term learner autonomy; most of them believe that learner autonomy is synonymous with self-study or independent learning without the teacher's help and support. In addition, they are really pessimistic about the idea of learner autonomy in their classrooms; they hold negative views towards it, and they are unsure if their students will be able, one day, to take control of their learning. In this regard, the inspector explains that middle school teachers think that the notion of learner autonomy can be dealt with in secondary schools or university where learners are enough mature and ready to take charge of their learning; however, he denies this thought and affirms that learners of any age are able to do so.

In the second question, the inspector states that he has been a teacher for more than thirty years, and along his career, he did his best to engage his learners in the learning process by using all the possible ways and strategies in order to make them more responsible and independent. In this context, he states that he strongly believes in the famous quote said by the American statesman Benjamin Franklin: *"Tell me and I forget, teach me and I may remember, involve me and I learn"*.

Hence, the inspector focuses on the pupils' involvement as a way to make them learn. Moreover, he clarifies that this involvement can be realized, for instance, by giving the learners a chance of being the decision-makers of their learning process. However, according to the inspector, this does not exist in our classrooms since most of the decisions in relation to the lessons' objectives, procedures, activities and tasks are taken only by the teachers who refuse to put some decisions on their pupils' hands.

Concerning the textbook designed for fourth year pupils, the inspector sees that it is not really appropriate for enhancing their autonomy since they cannot use it without the teacher's help. Moreover, this textbook is full of grammar rules and activities and it lacks self-study tasks, interesting reading texts and group works. Thus, the learners have no chance to collaborate and help each other. In addition, the content of the textbook does not meet the students' interest or level. On this point, the interviewee claims that the real problem in enhancing learner autonomy is not related only to the textbook, but to those teachers who follow it blindly without making any effort to prepare their own activities corresponding to the lessons they present and according to their pupils' needs and interests.

On the basis of his visits to many EFL teachers and his observations to both pupils and teachers' practices in the classrooms, the inspector confirms that the majority of the teachers are still adopting the traditional approach of teaching. Unfortunately, the inspector adds, this often happens with the new EFL teachers who generally have a level of English language that is relatively good, but they still ignore the ways and techniques to transmit this language to their learners, and though their positive attitudes towards learner autonomy, they are not ready to enhance it since they have never been trained in an autonomous way, and so, they still consider themselves the most responsible person in the classroom. Besides, the inspector describes the actual EFL teachers as the luckiest ones, because they are teaching in the era of internet and high –technology where all the teaching aids and materials are available, and he focuses on the CBA as the most effective instrument

which helps and guides the teachers to advocate autonomous learning. However, he affirms that the Algerian EFL teachers avoid adopting this approach and they deal with it as a burden which hinders their teaching task and marginalizes their role as the only responsible body in the classroom.

For the pupils' practices in the classroom, the inspector states that through his frequent presence in different EFL classrooms, he notices that spoon-feeding exists in all the schooling grades, and since our students adore being spoon-fed, they have not the spirit of autonomy and will not go further in English learning. Moreover most of pupils feel satisfied with the information given by the teacher without looking for extra resources to enrich their knowledge.

According to the inspector, autonomy starts when learners feel enough self-confident and highly motivated. He connects learner autonomy to student motivation, that is, if students are motivated they can become autonomous in their learning. However, it is not really the case for our pupils who lack motivation and self-awareness to deal with learning in an interesting manner which would induce them to promote their autonomy and improve their level in English and even in the other subjects. In this respect, the interviewee mentions that pupils do not use metacognitive strategies, self-assessment and self-monitoring and they ignore the benefits of using such strategies to increase their motivation and willingness to take charge of their learning process.

As claimed by the inspector, the Algerian EFL teachers need to be well prepared and trained before starting the teaching job through pre-service training and programmes which provide them with the necessary pedagogical strategies and techniques to make them successful future teachers who are ready to help their pupils become autonomous learners. In the same regard, the inspector points out that recently the Ministry of Education in Algeria imposed these training programmes on the new recruited teachers, but unfortunately, this training is done in a theoretical way and most of the lectures are given by trainers who have no relation with ELT.

On the other hand, the inspector confirms that he plans, at the beginning of each academic year, for many pedagogical meetings, seminars, and study days to tackle with EFL teachers many topics such as; the shortcomings in ELT in the Algerian middle schools, enhancing learner autonomy and implementing the CBA. The latter, according to him, is at the heart of every teacher development program.

In the last question, the inspector confirms that the Algerian teachers are still facing different hindrances along their professional career, not only in fostering learner autonomy, but in producing qualified learners in general. He summarizes the challenges they face in seeking to foster learner autonomy in students' lack of interest and motivation, limited resources, teachers' misunderstanding about the concept of learner autonomy and how to apply it in EFL classroom. However, he adds, teachers are not the only ones responsible for this frustrating situation, as he describes, learners do not show willingness to be independent and autonomous by taking the responsibility of their learning process off from their teachers' hands.

Concerning the best strategies to overcome this situation, he expresses that there is no best strategy or an ideal technique that fosters learner autonomy, but there is a good teacher who cares about his pupils' learning, motivates them, encourages their collaboration, gives them a sense of responsibility, and sees himself as a guide, a facilitator, a helper and not the only knowledge dispenser and owner. In addition to these characteristics, the teacher also needs an adequate schooling system, smaller classes, equipped classrooms and laboratories, rich libraries and more suitable syllabuses and textbooks which help him develop his learners' autonomy.

3.3 Conclusion

The collected data, its analysis and discussion are crucial factors that help the researcher obtain important information about the subject of this study. The findings of this chapter depend mainly on claims, views and facts that are actually experienced by a number of participants in the teaching/learning process. These findings veil the ambiguity on the notion of learner autonomy in Algerian middle

schools and allow us to confirm our hypothesis made so far in the general introduction of this research.

The EFL teachers' negative perceptions towards learner autonomy show clearly how strong some of them fight against the change and keep enjoying their status of the classroom rulers and knowledge holders. This goes without saying that learners are the first victims and their learning process will be directly affected. Throughout this exploratory study, valuable insights have been drawn regarding the difficulties and obstructions which impede both of EFL teachers and learners in Algerian middle schools from reaching the desired level of autonomous learning.

Consequently, we could also gain information about the effective strategies to enhance learning autonomy from teachers' and learners' viewpoints. On the basis of these findings, we devote the coming chapter to provide some suggestions and recommendations that empower our learners to use appropriate strategies and techniques to be successful autonomous learners in and outside the classroom settings.

CHAPTER FOUR

PEDAGOGICAL RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

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4.1 Introduction

In the area of teaching English as a foreign language, the concept of autonomy has gained a very important space. It attracted attention of a number of specialists as they provided multiple views to appreciate the issue. Autonomous learning, however, does not mean that the teachers' input is not needed (Little, 1991). On the contrary, it is through the teacher that learners can be given opportunities for purposeful training activities that enable them to use effective learning strategies.

However, after drawing some findings from the previous chapter, it is obviously clear that the notion of learner autonomy is originally Western concept; it can be fostered only through western social and cultural practices. Hence, in the Algerian educational context, this concept is somehow new and hard to be achieved for both teachers and learners, because they need to change some radical habits and strong beliefs in order to reach the desired level of autonomy. This is mainly due to the fact that teachers are not well informed on how to deal with this notion and the shift from the previous method to the new one has been done without taking into account teachers' in-service training and education development. Additionally, once our learners set foot on the road of autonomy; they find it blocked by many barriers and difficulties. Therefore, through this chapter, we try to shed light upon some indispensable implications and recommendations which can be helpful for both teachers and learners to overcome these barriers and enhance autonomous learning.

4.2 Preparation for Autonomy

Many scholars and educationalists (Cotterall 1995; Spratt, Humphreys, and Chan 2002; Scharle and Szabo 2000) argue that the task of promoting learner autonomy should be preceded by preparing learners and teachers as well for such task in order to investigate their readiness for this change. In other words, enhancing autonomous learning requires the review of both teachers' and learners' beliefs, their teaching and learning habits, motivation levels, responsibility and attitudes.

Throughout this exploratory case study, the researcher attempts to find out the learners and teachers' readiness for autonomy in the Algerian EFL classroom. In fact, the findings of the previous chapter reveal that they are not ready to enhance an autonomous learning. Thus, both of them are in an urgent need to be well-prepared and trained to promote learner autonomy.

4.2.1 Preparing Teachers for Autonomous Learning

Although the term autonomy is generally linked with learner, it is mainly the teacher's duty and responsibility to foster this autonomy among his learners and make it a concrete reality in his classroom. In other words, teachers have an effective role in changing the learners' attitudes and habits towards their learning process, and making them closer with the idea of autonomy. However, it should be mentioned that this does not happen in a day since the teachers themselves do not experience this autonomy or even get informed or taught about it. Hence, the Algerian EFL teachers need to be prepared to take the first steps towards such a pedagogical concept. Their preparation can be done through the development of teachers' own autonomy and teachers' training.

4.2.1.1 Teacher Training

According to several researches and studies, teacher autonomy and learner autonomy are two inseparable concepts. That is to say, if the teacher experiences autonomy himself, he will get ready to make his pupils independent learners and to push them towards autonomy. As Little suggests:

“First-hand experience for student teachers in their own early teacher education facilitates their adoption of learner autonomy principles in their future teaching practices.” (Little, 1995:180)

In the same context, other scholars Tort-Moloney (1997), McGrath (2000) and Smith (2000) agree that teachers who themselves did not learn autonomously may have negative attitudes towards the notion of autonomy in learning, and this will greatly influence on the development of autonomy in their learners.

In fact, teacher training is a continuous process which should be done regularly throughout the teachers' career; they should be trained in specialized institutions which provide them with professional training before being teachers, i.e. pre-service training. During this phase, teachers should be taught and convinced about the great importance of learner autonomy in EFL classrooms as an indispensable element which contributes a lot to successful language learning. In addition, they need to be well informed about the different strategies, techniques and tools that help them reduce their learners' dependence and rise their self-reliance in learning. After that, they can fostered this training when they are in-service through focusing on teacher reflection and taking responsibility for one's own teaching process. Additionally, this training should be continued simultaneously with the actual practice of teaching, they can adjust their pedagogical actions and develop their professional lives through seminars participations, being members in teachers' associations, subscribers in pedagogical reviews and professional training workshops which help in updating their knowledge and information.

Actually, the majority of EFL teachers in Algerian middle schools are holders of "Licence" degree in English language, and they obtain their diploma from Algerian universities where they often receive theoretical lectures in various modules without being taught about how to deal with pupils and work with them. Therefore, they ignore how to promote their learners autonomy since they are not trained for such a task in their pre-service training. As a result, there is an urgent need for our teachers to receive a professional training within specialized teacher training institutes. Moreover, they need to experience autonomy themselves during pre-service training in order to be familiar with the notion of autonomy in language learning and ready to accept and foster that of their learners. As stated by Little:

"We must provide trainee teachers with the skills to develop autonomy in the learners who will be given into their charge, but we must also give them a first-hand experience of learner autonomy in their training."(Little, 1995:179-180)

As it has been previously mentioned, the path leading to learner autonomy is not an easy one; it is full of hindrances and obstacles, especially in the Algerian schools where the traditional teaching approaches are still being used. Therefore, EFL teachers need to be well trained not only on autonomy, but also on how to overcome all the barriers they may face in their career, and to address these constraints which surely will impede them from taking the first steps towards such an engagement.

4.2.1.2 Reflective Approach for Teacher Development

In order to see whether they did well in the classroom and could attain the teaching objectives, teachers should reflect on their teaching practices. In this context, Bartlett asserts that:

“If we want to improve our teaching through reflective inquiry, we accept that it does not involve some modification of behaviour by externally imposed directions or requirements, but that it requires deliberation and analysis of our ideas about teaching as a form of action based on our changed understandings.” (Bartlett, 1990: 203)

However, Elliott (2009) sees that reflective approaches make teachers engaged in a continuing critical thinking, checking and assessment of their perceptions, actions and behaviours in the aim of promoting them, whereas, Thompson and Zeuli (1999) argue that reflective approaches reinforce the development of new conceptual knowledge and understanding instead of habitual practices. In addition, Vieira (1996) affirms that reflective teaching and teacher training are inseparable concepts. In other words, teachers should reflect on their teaching through reviewing their practice and thinking about what goes well and what goes bad during achieving their mission in the classroom. In the same context, Vieira (1996) adds that teachers can correct their wrong habits in teaching by wondering about many things related to their job such as;

- Whether or not they attain the teaching aims.
- The amount of knowledge acquired by learners.
- The usefulness of the materials they used.

- The selected activities and its effectiveness in motivating learners.
- The extent to which learners were autonomous.
- The extent to which the classroom was learner-centered.
- The changes that should be made to teach this lesson again.

Consequently, reflective teaching is an indispensable condition in the autonomous classroom, thus EFL teachers have to reconsider their methods, strategies and attitudes towards the target language teaching in order to ensure that the way they teach is really convenient to enhance both of a successful teaching and autonomous learning. In fact, EFL teachers in Algerian schools in general, and those teaching English in middle education in particular, are in an urgent need to reflect on their teaching through adopting a reflective approach which helps them in detecting their flaws and correcting them. They can support such approach by some private documents which should accompany them all along their teaching career.

4.2.1.2.1 Diaries

A diary refers to a private handwritten book in which people record their daily experiences, attitudes, remarks, thoughts and feelings. For teachers, diaries help them in reflecting on what happens with their learners in the classroom. In this context Bailey (1990) states that:

“The diary helped teachers to state the problem and explore why the difficulty was occurring. By recording approach to the problem, is building a bank of ideas which teachers can refer back to in the future and also use to guide other teachers.” (Bailey, 1990:221)

In the foreign language classroom, EFL teachers can enhance their professional development through writing diaries and journals in order to register their daily experiences objectively with regard to their teaching style, their strategies, their relation with learners, their selected activities, their teaching aids and especially their impact on promoting learners' autonomy. Nunan confirms that: ***“diaries, logs and journals are important introspective tool in language research.”(Nunan, 1995:118)***

In other words, EFL teachers will benefit from these documents in the coming teaching days as references which help them get back to their previous behaviours in the classroom and find out their pros and cons in teaching. In addition, they also provide a rich source of experience that is helpful in guiding other teachers in the field of language learning.

Unfortunately, Algerian EFL teachers do not have the culture of keeping personal journals or writing diaries, most of them consider this task as useless and time-consuming. On the contrary, other teachers tend to write diaries and journal, but they are generally about their private life and not professional career. Hence, our teachers are advised to keep writing diaries which should be based on objectivity, honest reflections and critical thinking in order to make them beneficial tools in developing themselves as teachers and improve the level of their learners.

4.2.1.2.2 Portfolios

A teacher portfolio (or dossier) is a record of his accomplishments, his academic works and a coherent set of materials that represents his teaching practice with regard to his students learning. Portfolio is another professional means that allows teachers to reflect about what they did and achieved over time and thus, it pushes them to improve their level in teaching and look for more effective strategies to involve learners in the learning process and foster their autonomy. For Vieira (1996), the professional portfolio should include a set of elements which can be summarized as follows:

- The critiques that teachers received along their professional career.
- A list of their gained rewards.
- The comments made by a superior as the inspector or even those made by colleagues or learners.
- The pedagogical suggestions and recommendations given in seminars, in services and workshops.
- The teaching objectives and personal aims.

In fact, Algerian EFL teachers do not give a great importance to the portfolio since they do not believe in its effectiveness as a necessary tool which contributes to their professional development and to the enhancement of autonomous language learning in their classroom.

4.2.1.2.3 Teacher's Logbook

A log book is a record document in which teachers register all the events occurred during the class. It is an important classroom management tool; it can be used to memorize the individual learner's work, the students' involvement in learning, their engagement in the classroom activities and their interaction with the teacher and with each other. In addition, the aim of teacher's logbook is to keep in touch with the learners' parents in order to inform them about their child's level, grades and behaviours at school.

In this regard, Leni Dam (1995) gives a sample about her own logbook that she uses in the classroom. She mentions that it includes the lesson plans, the activities to be done and the reflected remarks and comments about the lessons course. Besides, through the logbook, teachers can keep track their classes and control both of the teaching and learning process. On the other hand, EFL teachers can benefit from such a book in noting the common problems their learners face while learning the target language, their strengths and weaknesses and the steps to be followed in order to make them more responsible and self-reliant.

In fact, all Algerian teachers have what is referred to a logbook or class book, but they generally use it as an administrative document in which they write down the lesson's procedures, the given activities and the home works to be done.

4.2.1.2.4 Posters

Posters are small pieces of paper which can be hanged all over the classroom. EFL teachers can use them to write in English the new lexis, the grammatical rules, the decisions made with learners, the objective of each lesson and the project works. Besides, at the end of the class, teachers can share with their learners discussion, knowledge and views regarding their language learning, and then these ideas are not wiped out; they are kept on the classroom's walls for future use. And so, these

posters help both teachers and learners in organizing the classroom works and they contribute to autonomous language learning since they provide learners with direct and visible target language.

As a result, diaries, portfolios, logbooks and posters are important reflective documents which should be used in EFL classroom in order to help teachers review their teaching practices and promote their learners' autonomy. Thus, Algerian teachers should change their perceptions towards these pedagogical documents and consider them as practical teaching tools and not only useless papers to be filled after each class.

4.2.1.3 Teachers' Roles to Foster Autonomy in Learning

The birth of learner autonomy at the beginning of 1970s brought with it an urgent need for many radical changes in the whole educational system in all over the world. For Algerian EFL teachers, it takes a long time to change their traditional roles in the classroom and accept the new ones. This shift requires a great effort and a strong desire to be ready for a deep alter in classroom management, teaching methods and in practising new roles and habits. Hence, teachers' roles are of a crucial importance in promoting learner autonomy; it is, in fact, impossible to promote learning without the teachers' existence. They are irreplaceable in the learning/teaching process, and their roles vary from facilitators, assistants, counselors to managers of the learning resources.

4.2.1.3.1 Facilitator

In order to enhance an autonomous learning, EFL teachers are required to adapt a "facilitating mode" in the classroom. That is to say, to be a facilitator, the teacher should make it easy for his learners in finding their own way while learning. This can be through simplifying what is complicated for them, giving them more responsibility, freedom, choices and equal opportunities in the classroom, exercising their own judgment (Dörnyei, 2001), and of course respecting their autonomy in learning and aiming at fostering it, and this is the most important matter the teacher should take into consideration.

4.2.1.3.2 Assistant

To be on the right path of autonomy, learners need a great support and assistance from their teacher who plays an important role in pushing them towards an independent learning. Algerian EFL teachers can help language learners in acquiring the target language through exposing it within the context that suit their level, needs, interest and culture. In addition, teachers should give their learners more opportunities in order to be in touch with the new language by encouraging them to practise it in the class as well as at home (Lowes& Target, 1999), providing them with different learning strategies and techniques and letting them select the most convenient ones that suit and help them best to be more autonomous learners.

4.2.1.3.3 Manager

An autonomous class needs to be well-managed and directed by its teacher who is in charge of orienting both of the teaching and learning process towards the right path which leads to create an autonomous atmosphere where pupils will be able to hold a successful learning. Moreover, EFL teacher are responsible for planning activities, establishing a sense of cooperation between learners, interacting with them and organizing the different tasks to be done in the classroom. Hence, learners can be self-regulated and independent in their learning, but always oriented and guided by their teacher.

4.2.1.3.4 Counsellor

To be autonomous does never mean that learners are totally free in the class; they should be always advised and counselled by their teacher. In EFL classroom, the teacher's role as a counsellor is to inform learners about all what is related to the language learning by making them aware of the different learning strategies and techniques they can use to improve their level in English and enhance their autonomy in learning, giving them more advice about how to acquire best the target language and offering them various opportunities to practise, share, evaluate and make decisions in order to be perfectly involved in the learning process.

As a result, Algerian EFL teachers have to be ready to abandon the traditional roles which they used to play, and accept the new ones to simplify, help, guide and direct learners towards an independent learning inside and outside the classroom.

4.2.2 Preparing Learners for Autonomous Learning

The results obtained from this study reveal that our middle school learners are not ready to be autonomous and to take charge of their learning process; however, the notion of learner autonomy is mainly based on the learner himself as the most important element in the learning process. That is why a great effort should be made by EFL teachers to raise their students' awareness, motivate them to learn English and train them to select and use the strategies which help them in learning independently. Thus, this section provides some other suggestions on how to prepare learners for autonomous learning.

4.2.2.1 Learner Training

In the field of language learning, many educationalists and practitioners consider learner training as an indispensable condition for the enhancement of learner autonomy. Thus, numerous studies have been conducted to shed light on the relationship between learner training and learner autonomy. In this regard, McCarthy (1998) states that the objective of learner training is to improve the effectiveness of learning and to foster the notion of learner autonomy. Whereas, Sheng (2008) confirms that: *“promoting learner autonomy is a long-term process, and learners need plenty of opportunities for strategy training during foreign language classes.”* (Sheng, 2008:7). On the other hand, Sinclair (1997) affirms that learner training helps learners in thinking about the factors that affect their learning positively and finding the learning strategies which suit them best in order to meet their needs and take more responsibility for their own learning. In other words, learner training is to make learners more aware about how to learn effectively, as Trim (1988) argues:

"No school, or even university, can provide its pupils with all the knowledge and the skills they will need in their active adult lives. It is more important for a young person to have an understanding of himself or herself, an awareness of the environment and its workings, and to have learned how to think and how to learn". (Trim, 1988: 3)

In fact, raising learners' awareness of the learning process is an important step which should be taken in order to increase the learners' ability to review their own progress, achievements and learning objectives. In an autonomous classroom, learners should be first aware of the importance of learner autonomy as an essential element for successful language learning. However, it is the teachers' duty to raise their pupils' awareness and prepare them for the training by engaging them in an open discussion about their beliefs and attitudes towards learning, learning style and learning strategies they prefer to use because such a discussion helps teachers in getting a clear idea about their pupils' needs and preferences.

In the next step, teachers can foster their learners' autonomy through training them on how to use these styles and strategies in language learning. As a result, they will be more aware about the important strategies on how to approach the language learning process (Nunan, 1999), and they keep learning independently and with more self-confidence (Jordan, 1997). According to Cotterall (2000):

"If learners are given enough time and space, as well as clear directions, they can succeed considerably. If teachers want to promote learner autonomy, they need to encourage them "to set personal goals, monitor and reflect on their performance, and modify their learning behaviour accordingly." (Cotterall, 2000, p. 116)

After that, learners should put their learning strategy into practice by using it in a meaningful context. Then, they assess the effectiveness of their strategy use with the help of their teachers who ***"...evaluate their own success in using the learning strategies"*** (Sheng, 2008:5). Eventually, learners can expand and transfer their strategy to other tasks, and even to other subject matters. (Sheng 2008)

Unfortunately, EFL teachers in Algerian schools have no readiness to train their learners on how to learn effectively; most of them do not adopt any strategy training in the English class, whereas others tend to impose their preferred strategy on learners without caring about whether it suits them or not. Therefore, our pupils in middle schools are still dependent on the teacher and incapable to identify their own preferred styles and strategies to enhance their learning and autonomy as well.

Thus, Algerian EFL teachers have to assist in raising students' self-esteem and willingness in being autonomous learners through enhancing their awareness of their abilities and responsibilities towards learning. Learners should be informed about the different learning styles and skills which help them better improve their language proficiency, and trained well to develop their metacognitive strategies to be able to analyse, assess, set goals and reflect upon their own learning. If learners become able to use such strategies, they will be more confident, independent and self-directed.

As a consequence, learner autonomy and learner training are two interrelated concepts; the notion of learner autonomy cannot be fostered in the Algerian schools without an explicit strategy training through which learners will be able to make choices concerning their own preferred styles and strategies through which they can meet their needs in English language learning.

4.2.2.2 Developing Learner Responsibility

According to Scharle and Szabo (2000), taking responsibility for one's learning is not an easy task because:

“People do not normally wake up a fine day and find that they have become responsible overnight. More likely, they go through a slow gradual process as they are approaching adulthood.” (Scharle and Szabo, 2000:9)

So, in order to reach the desired degree of learners' responsibility for their own learning, EFL teachers should be patient because developing a sense of responsibility in learners is a long term task; it is a gradual process which demands

time and effort from both teachers and learners. This implies that EFL teachers have to give learners enough opportunities to take this responsibility such as; freedom of choice, decision making, selection of strategies and materials, etc.

However, EFL learners in Algerian schools, especially those in middle ones, have no willingness to assume such a responsibility, and they are still considering the teacher as the absolute responsible body in the classroom. This is mainly due to the bad habit of being spoon-fed which makes them so dependent and even lazy. For this reason, teachers are required to take part in changing these negative attitudes through raising their students' awareness about the importance of taking responsibility not only in English learning but also in real life as responsible citizens in their society.

4.2.2.3 Enhancing Learners' Motivation

The concept of motivation is strongly related to that of learner autonomy. Thus, the relationship between motivation and autonomy has been investigated by many scholars and researchers such as; Dickinson (1994), Ryan & Deci (1985) and Ushioda (1996) who confirms that autonomous learners are by definition motivated learners. Students who are intrinsically motivated have a great desire to hold their learning independently, they are willing to work hard, formulate their own learning goals, take risks and challenges, do not need excessive support, and may even stimulate others in the classroom through collaborative learning, while those who do not display a strong intrinsic motivation often learn only for the sake of learning. In the same context, Benson states that: "*intrinsic motivation implies self-direction*" (2001: 69). So, it is clear that there is a causal relationship between the two indistinguishable terms; autonomy should go hand in hand with intrinsic motivation.

According to many scholars (Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998), motivation is a key factor that enables learners to learn independently and high level of motivation promotes learner autonomy. That is to say, enhanced motivation is stimulating learners' interest towards language learning while dealing with classroom's

activities, and it can be increased accordingly as they feel self-confident and better involved in their learning process. This gives the possibility to be less dependent on their teachers and to take responsibility to control their own progress. However, Thanasoulas (2000) argues that creating motivation within learners requires some conditions to be existed before aiming at motivating learners. (See the diagram 4.1 below)

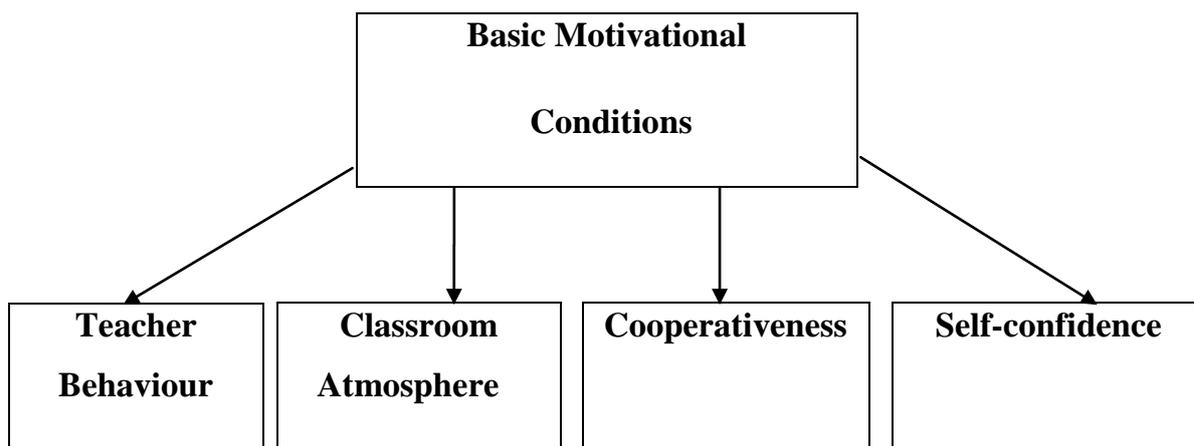


Diagram 4.1 Creating Basic Motivational Conditions. (Thanasoulas, 2000)

* This diagram illustrates the main conditions suggested by Thanasoulas (2000) for motivating learners.

4.2.2.3.1 Teacher Behaviour

For Dörnyei “*teacher’s behaviour is a powerful motivational tool.*” (Dörnyei, 2001:120). A good relationship between the teacher and his learners should be established on mutual respect, reciprocal trust, shared discussion and decision making. In fact, these factors give learners a sense of belonging in their classroom and a full involvement in the learning process. As a result, good teacher behaviour in the classroom can effect positively his learners’ motivation; they feel highly motivated and more confident to be in charge of their learning.

4.2.2.3.2 Classroom Atmosphere

Reaching the desired degree of motivation among learners is not an easy task for the teacher. This requires first building a comfortable environment where students feel secure, self-confident and encouraged by their teacher to express themselves and give their thoughts and views without being afraid or anxious. Hence, this safe atmosphere raises their motivation and willingness for learning.

4.2.2.3.3 Cooperativeness

Autonomous learners tend to work collectively rather than individually. So, working within groups in a cooperative way and collaboration are essential conditions for motivating learners. In autonomous classroom, EFL teachers have to bear in mind that autonomy is a common aspect that can be better displayed within a community of learners. Hence, cooperativeness is a main factor in motivating learners and pushing them towards autonomy.

4.2.2.3.4 Self-confidence

Raising the students' self-confidence is, for Thanasoulas (2000), a motivational condition. EFL teachers can do this by making students more aware of their capacities which qualify them to improve their level in English and be successful language learners. In addition, the learners' self-confidence can be reinforced by giving them a sense of responsibility for their learning through engaging them in the classroom tasks, activities, discussions and decisions making. As a result, those learners become strongly self-esteemed to see themselves enough able to learn the target language autonomously.

Actually, Algerian learners lack all the conditions that prepare them for motivation. For example, most of EFL teachers are still behaving strictly because they keep adopting a traditional teaching which imposes on them being the absolute ruler in the classroom. Moreover, the Algerian classroom is far to be convenient for motivation; teachers are still suffering from overcrowded classes where the collective work is an impossible task because of noise and disorder.

Consequently, Algerian EFL teachers should take into account that enhancing learners' motivation is an indispensable condition in the autonomous classroom. They can motivate their language learners through showing them the importance of the English language by relating it to their own life and contexts beyond the language classroom, and creating an appropriate environment in which learners feel safe, self-confident and ready to be involved in an autonomous learning process.

4.2.2.4 Learners' Reflection

In fact, it is a real struggle for teachers to change their learners' attitudes and habits from being passive and spoon-fed to active and responsible participants for their own learning. This can be realized through encouraging them to keep self-reports, diaries and evaluation sheets which help them to record all what happens in the class and reflect on the difficulties and hindrances they face along the learning process. In addition, by reflecting on their learning, students become more aware of using the appropriate methods and strategies which contribute in reinforcing their autonomy and solving different problem situations they encounter. In this regard, Dam (2000) argues that this kind of reflection encourages learners to be more engaged in self-assessment which is a crucial element in the learning process and a key component of learner autonomy.

4.2.2.4.1 Learners' Journals and Self-reports

A reflective journal is a personal record in which learners can write about their learning experiences, events and incidents happened during the class period. Self-reports serve as an effective medium between the teacher and his learners. In other words, through these learning journals, teachers can extract more information about their pupils' attitudes towards learning, their common learning problems and their favourite strategies to acquire a particular skill or to deal with a given task. (Thanasoulas, 2000). In the same context, Wenden (1998) confirms that reflective journals play a key role in raising learners' awareness of their own strategies. This can be achieved by writing down their thoughts while doing a learning activity. That is to say, this thoughtful self-report reflects a "*verbalization of one's stream of*

consciousness". (Wenden, 1998: 81), and helps learners in thinking back on their learning later.

In short, through journal writing and self reports pupils really start taking charge of their own learning since they help them develop their abilities and improve their writing skills in English. Hence, they are of a crucial importance in raising learners' awareness of learning strategies without which *"learners will remain trapped in their old patterns of beliefs and behaviours and never be fully autonomous"* (Wenden, 1998: 90)

4.2.2.4.2 Writing Diaries

A learning diary is a reflective tool which helps learners in assessing what they have already learned. Through this evaluation sheet, learners can plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning process. Additionally, they can take notes, record their observations while learning and summarize the lectures with their own words. This private journal can be a descriptive paper in which learners write down about their daily experiences in the classroom, their expectations from a lesson and its outcomes, their learning problems and suggested solutions. (Thanasoulas, 2000) Moreover, in their diaries, learners can record all the points, comments and questions that they cannot ask in front of their classmates. Hence, whatever they discuss with the teacher will be obviously confidential. Their discussions can be about their fears, strengths, weaknesses and preferences in learning. On the other hand, diary writing helps learners in developing their vocabulary and improving their English; it can be employed as a useful tool to memorize and remember the meaning of vocabulary items. Therefore, diary keeping in vocabulary course is so beneficial for learners' reflection on their language learning and practice. According to Bartlett (1990): *"In writing we not only begin to observe, but we take the first step in reflecting on and about our practice"* (Bartlett, 1990:209). In the same regard, Richards and Lockhart (1996) agree that diaries provide a record that learners can use for ongoing reflection. However, these diaries are useful not only for the students, but also for the teachers who can use them to communicate with their learners and to assess their teaching as well as the students' learning strategies.

Similarly, Bailey and Nunan (1996) cite that diaries make it possible

“to tap into affective factors, language learning strategies, and the learners’ own perceptions of language learning, which are normally hidden or largely inaccessible to external observers”.(Bailey & Nunan 1996:197)

4.2.2.4.3 Learning Logs

A learning logbook is a personal document which serves as a unique record of the student’s learning and thoughts. It is also called "thinking book" because it enhances learner’s thinking and develops his metacognitive abilities. Unlike the diaries, learning logs are more concerned with the learners’ work process, their achievements, perceptions and attitudes towards learning. In other words, they are not about what learners have done, but about what they have learnt. In addition, they are less private than diaries; learners can discuss and share what they have written in their learning logs with their peers and teachers. Hence, through this peer partnership system, learners can exchange their thoughts, knowledge and understanding in a collaborative way. Besides, they can provide feedback to their teachers who, in return, benefit from such documents as an assessment tool for learning.

As a result, self-reports, diaries and learning logbooks have potential benefits for both learners and teachers. They play a real communicative role as well as a reflective one since they serve as a medium of communication between teachers and learners, at the same time; they contribute in fostering learners’ critical thinking and reflection upon their learning. Additionally, these reflective documents enhance learners’ intellectual growth through writing in the target language and support them to become more responsible and to take ownership of their educational experiences.

Indeed, the idea of keeping learning journals and logs is not really welcome among our learners. Most of them may consider them as time consuming and useless documents. Therefore, EFL teachers in Algerian middle schools are highly

recommended to raise their students' awareness about the importance of writing diaries and self-reports as means for improving their level in English and fostering their autonomy in learning.

4.2.2.5 Approaches to Enhance Learner Autonomy

In recent years, the concept of learner autonomy has gained a great interest in the field of language learning. Thus, new approaches and innovations have been used to develop this concept in foreign language education.

4.2.2.5.1 Resource-Based Approach

This approach focuses on the importance of resources in the teaching and learning process. It refers usually to learners' independent interaction with learning resources which may include human resources. This kind of interaction is the main structuring element in second language acquisition. In resource-based approach, learners can be actively involved in the learning process through the effective use of different learning resources such as; printed papers, illustrations, pictures, course books, videos, computers and even the teacher and the classmates are considered as human resources since the pupil can interact with them. All these resources contribute in fostering learners' autonomy by accommodating their varied interests, experiences, learning styles, needs and levels. In this regard, we can distinguish between two main materials which are often related to resource-based approach.

- Self-access

Self-access language learning is closely related to learner-centered approach and learner autonomy. According to Sheerin (1991) it is *“a way of describing materials that are designed and organized in such a way that students can select and work on tasks on their own”* (cited in Benson, 2001:128). In other words, self-access method allows learners to choose and select the learning materials that help them to study on their own. In the same context, Gardner and Miller (1999) agree that self-access language learning is considered as a set of materials or a system for organizing resources which lead to learners' own interaction.

Unfortunately, most of the Algerian EFL teachers, especially the former ones, keep using simple and traditional resources; they may present different

lessons with the same materials. This behaviour decreases the learners' eagerness in learning and creates a state of routine and boredom in the class. As a consequence, Algerian EFL teachers should vary in the learning resources they use in teaching English in order to ensure that learners study independently choosing from among different resources that are available.

-Self-Instruction and Distance Learning

Self instruction refers to students' ability to plan, organize, promote and assess their own learning independently and cognitively without the teacher's insistence. For Dickinson (1987), it describes "*situations in which a learner, with others, or alone, is working without the direct control of a teacher*". (Dickinson, 1987: 5). Whereas, distance learning is defined by Moore (1972) as:

"The family of instructional methods in which the teaching behaviours are executed apart from the learning behaviours...so that communication between the learner and the teacher must be facilitated by print, electronic, mechanical, or other devices" (Moore, 1972:76)

Basing on these definitions, we can conclude that both of self instruction and distance learning support the autonomous learning since learners are given more chance in learning independently from their teacher's direct control.

4.2.2.5.2 Technology-Based Approach

Nowadays, the widespread use of technology becomes an indispensable necessity in different domains and makes the communication between people easier and the transmission of information quicker and more confident.

Education, as one of the most important sectors in the society, supports the insertion of technology in its institutions to facilitate the teaching task and enhance the learning process. Hence, by the beginning of the 1980's, Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has been inserted in the educational field. Since then, it was used in language teaching and learning to serve as a modern means to facilitate communication between those who are engaged in the learning process, to evaluate learners, and to manage learning activities. (Carliner et al., 2008)

According to UNESCO (2017);

“Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can contribute to universal access to education, equity in education, the delivery of quality learning and teaching, teachers’ professional development and more efficient education management, governance and administration”.

Moreover, the integration of ICTs in language classroom provides learners with large amounts of information, and encourages them to collaborate with each other, and thus become actively involved in the learning process and be fully autonomous. Besides, ICTs change the role of the learner from one to be taught to one who learns and the teacher as a guide instead of an expert (Negroponte et al., 1997). Additionally, ICTs have a key role in fostering learner autonomy since they allow learners to update their knowledge without a teacher and keep up with the rapid changes in modern communication technology through different means such as; internet, computers, audiovisual aids, electronic boards, smart phones, recorders, etc. These technologies are motivational instruments for learning and they ***“provide language teachers and learners with effective means to make language acquisition in the classroom viable in a way that has not been possible before.”*** (Tschirner, 2001: 305)

As a result, the Technology-based approach helps learners to access various resources through different technological means, and so it permits them to depend on themselves and acquire important computer skills. In fact, there are many effective technological instruments for engaging language learners in lifelong learning so as to promote their autonomy.

4.2.2.5.2.1 Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL)

By the beginning of the 1980s, the emergence of the educational concept learner autonomy brought with it a new technological learning material referred to CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning). This programme mainly focuses on learning and allows learners learn on their own (self-directed learning) since it

strongly emphasises on student-centeredness. CALL contributes greatly in fostering learner autonomy in the sense of facilitating the learning process through:

- Text reconstruction by typing in words.
- Correcting learners' wrong answers.
- Providing learners with remedial activities.
- Reinforcing what has been learned previously in the classrooms.

The use of technology in language teaching and learning is not a new fashion; it has been existed in educational institutions for centuries. Hence, computers become indispensable tools for enhancing language learning; they are useful since they affect positively the students' achievement and autonomy as well. In this regard, Benson and Voller (1997) agree that: *“Computer software for language learning is an example of a technology which claims to promote autonomy simply by offering the possibility of self-study.” (Benson and Voller, 1997:10)*

As a matter of fact, computers are not in the hands of all the Algerian pupils neither at schools nor at homes. Unfortunately, there are some of them, especially the boarder ones who live in remote areas, ignore how to manipulate this machine and even its functions and tasks. Therefore, Algerian EFL teachers should use frequently computers in the class in order to make their learners more familiar with such technological means. In addition, computing sessions should be programmed in our middle schools to teach learners how to exploit the computer effectively in their learning.

4.2.2.5.2.2 Internet

The Internet or "the Net" is a global worldwide system of computer networks in which users at any one computer can get information from any other.¹ Today, it becomes an important medium to enhance learner autonomy since it provides learners with unlimited learning resources such as;

¹ <http://searchwindevelopment.techtarget.com/definition/Internet>

- Discussion boards and online forums which allow learners to share discussions, exchange ideas and enrich their cultural background of the target language.
- Social networks such as; Facebook, Twitter and Instagram through which learners can interact with millions of subscribers from different countries in the world, they can share their experience and help on assignments and projects. (Harper, 2008)
- Chat programs such as Skype, MSN and Messengers can be used by learners for chatting with foreigners to improve their language proficiency.
- Various educational websites that provide learners with online lectures and help them in doing researches and project works.
- Download English books, movies and music by which learners get exposure to English from its native speakers with different accents around the world.
- E-mails offer excellent opportunities for learners to keep in touch with their teachers and to collaborate with their friends even if they are geographically separated.

As a result, the internet becomes, nowadays, a motivational learning tool that makes learners more aware about EFL, motivates them in learning it and gives them new strategies for practicing this language and assessing their performance. That is why learners are needed it more and more. But, in fact, this fashion has not come to most of the Algerian schools and homes yet. The majority of middle school learners have no idea about the use of such tool, and even those who know, they do not use it for pedagogical aims. Hence, EFL teachers should raise their learners' awareness about the benefits of the net in learning and how it can affect positively on their education, at the same time; they should be always controlled and guided by their parents while using such tool.

4.2.2.5.2.3 Multimedia

The Television plays an important role in our life. It serves as an essential resource to enrich our culture in different fields and skills. In addition, it can be an effective learning resource that contributes in promoting learner autonomy. TV

channels, documentaries, news and other programmes help learners in gathering more data and information about all what happens around them. And thus, they update their knowledge and improve research and experience on learning in any domains of educational setting. Moreover, the radio programmes, especially the educational ones, can help learners in acquiring the English language through listening to native speakers and developing their listening and speaking skills, additionally, it gives them more opportunities to use their productive and receptive abilities without depending on their teacher. Therefore, the use of multimedia has a great impact on foreign language learning, notably on learner autonomy notion since it makes learners link between their classroom experiences and daily life.

In reality, our learners are in touch with the media, especially TV, but they do not watch the programmes that can positively enhance their English learning, and make them gradually independent learners. Therefore, EFL teachers in Algeria need to persuade them to be more interested in listening and watching educational channels to improve their language level and foster their autonomy in learning.

4.2.2.5.3 Strategy- Based Instruction (SBI)

Autonomous learners are generally referred to self-regulated students who have the ability to adopt and use effective learning strategies to attain their objectives. These strategies are defined as: *“specific methods of approaching a problem or task, modes of operation for achieving a particular end, planned designs for controlling and manipulating certain information.”* (Brown, 2000: 112). In addition, learning strategies are of a great importance in empowering learners and helping them to be self-reliant and autonomous. According to Cohen (1998): *“Language learning will be facilitated if learners become more aware of the range of possible strategies that they consciously select during language learning and teaching”* (Cohen, 1998:65) .In other words, learners need to be trained on how to choose and use the learning strategies that suit them better to become autonomous. In this regard, he argues that Strategy-Based Instruction (SBI) is commonly known as a learner-centered approach which focuses on the use of learning strategies in language teaching in the aim of enhancing learner autonomy

and increasing proficiency among learners.(Cohen, 1998). In the same context, Wenden (1998) confirms that: *“Without developing such strategies, students will remain trapped in their old patterns of beliefs and behaviors and never be fully autonomous.” (Wenden, 1998:90)*. That is to say, learning strategies play key roles in foreign language classrooms because they make students more aware of their own learning process. Moreover, SBI aims at fostering the development of learner autonomy and reinforcing the learning skills and skills in learning how to learn (Nunan, 1991). On the other hand, Oxford (1990) defines this approach as:

“a program in which participants become aware of and familiar with the general idea of language learning strategies, and the way such strategies can help them accomplish various language tasks.” (Oxford, 1990:202)

Besides, Oxford (1990) states that there are seven steps to be followed in the strategy-based instruction. These steps are classified in the table 4.1below:

Step1	Learners do a task without any strategy training.
Step2	They discuss how they did it and the teacher asks them to reflect on how their strategies may have facilitated their learning.
Step3	Teacher demonstrates other helpful strategies, stressing the potential benefits.
Step4	Learners are provided with opportunities to practice the new strategies.
Step5	Learners are shown how the strategies can be transferred to other tasks.
Step6	Learners are provided with further tasks and asked to make choices about which strategies they will use.
Step7	Teacher helps learners to understand the success of their strategy use and assess their progress towards more self-directed learning.

Table 4.1 Steps of SBI Oxford (1990)

* This table summarizes the seven steps of SBI suggested by Oxford (1990)

Similarly, McCarthy (1998) explains the relationship between autonomy and learner strategy training by clarifying that the essential aim behind this strategy is to enhance the effectiveness of learning and foster learner autonomy.

Although SBI is a basic element in preparing the ground on which learner autonomy is built, this research findings reveal that the Algerian middle school learners are still incapable to use the learning strategies that help them becoming independent, in addition their EFL teachers are teaching them the target language without training them on how to use these strategies flexibly, appropriately and independently to become more autonomous. (Benson, 2001)

Therefore, it is important for Algerian middle school teachers to understand that their role as language teachers is not limited in filling their learners' brains with a transmitted knowledge; rather they need to train their learners systematically adopting the SBI to fulfill their wish of being autonomous learners.

4.2.2.5.4 Scaffolding Strategies

In the educational context, scaffolding refers to the diversification of the strategies, techniques and instructions used by the teacher in order to ensure the students' understanding and reinforce their independence in learning. It means: ***“providing contextual supports for meaning through the use of simplified language, teacher modelling, visuals and graphics, cooperative learning and hands-on learning”*** (Ovando, Collier, & Combs, 2003: 345). In other words, the foreign language teachers should facilitate the target language acquisition through simplifying its rules and using as much as possible different tools and easier means to make learners more motivated and engaged in the learning process. Hence, scaffolding is of an eminent importance in enhancing an autonomous learning; it helps EFL teachers in conveying their knowledge via different ways of teaching since they can vary in the strategies used in the class and the instructions given to learners. On the other hand, the individual differences make the learners' intelligence and understanding differ from one another, that is why teachers have to take into account these differences and bear in mind that learners are not alike.

Therefore, they should take different forms ranging from explanations, giving cues, constructive questioning and feedback, sorting information into an appropriate sequence, modifying a task by limiting the amount of information, modelling and so forth. (Pritchard and Woollard, 2010)

Indeed, the idea of diversity is still strange in our culture, especially in the teaching field where most of EFL Algerian teachers used to focus on a particular approach or a strategy because it serves them positively with certain pupils and in a specific class or school. However, a successful teacher should change his traditional teaching mode and accept the new alternative methods to meet his learners' needs and provide them with equal opportunities to guarantee their autonomy in learning.

4.2.2.6 Activities to Promote Learner Autonomy

Learning activities are considered as one of the basic elements that should be never missed in EFL classrooms; they contribute positively in creating interaction among learners and engaging them in a cooperative learning which plays an essential role towards the development of learner autonomy. According to Thomsen (2000), a Danish experienced teacher:

“The criteria for a good activity are that it should be meaningful, you should learn from it, and it should be not too easy and not too difficult...and should be open-ended and entail differentiated processes as well as products.” (Thomsen, 2000:77)

In addition, he confirms that a good activity should meet the learners' needs and interests, and it should rely heavily on cooperation. Therefore, it is important that teachers perceive their students' wishes, interests, aspirations, background and knowledge, and plan the learning activities accordingly. Moreover, Seeman and Tavares (2000) agree that the matter of choice is of a crucial importance for learners; they should take part with the teacher and their fellows in choosing the topic and the associated activities in order to be able to set their own goals according to their own needs. Thus, it is necessary that teachers consider learners as experts who know their needs, goals, strengths, weaknesses, and potential problems. (Wolter, 2000)

Certainly, learners are not alike; they have different goals, strategies and proficiency level, so that they learn in different ways. Thus, teachers should provide different kinds of activities for different kinds of learners. However, when it comes to the activities that foster learner autonomy, they should be loosely structured to allow more room for learners' initiative and to give them more freedom in achieving tasks, but tightly controlled by the teacher as learners are not yet very responsible and they need to be told what to do. For Dam (2011), the activities that enhance autonomous learning should focus on active participation from each student, differentiation in the input and outcome, and on the use of the target language. However, there are a variety of activities through which teachers can develop learner autonomy in EFL classroom.

4.2.2.6.1 Group Work

It is commonly believed that language learning is a collective phenomenon; it requires cooperation and partnership between learners and teachers, and even between learners themselves. This is why group work is an integral part of collaborative learning, and it constitutes an essential instrument for both interaction and language use. Through group activities, learners are able to connect with fellow students, use various learning strategies, motivate and support one another in task performance since the ground work is laid for peer assistance. Additionally, the group works provide learners with more opportunities to initiate, make decisions and move a step closer to learner autonomy.

However, in group works, most teachers face the common problem of heterogeneous group of learners, and that is why they have to introduce different types of activities, exercises, and topics *“that are common to various interests in the group.”* (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998:152). For instance, grammar activities can be used as a cooperative learning in which learners are divided into small groups and given different instructions such as, ‘fill-in-the-blank’ or ‘find and correct the errors’. At the end of the activity, each group of learners is asked to reveal their answers, and to tally up the correct and incorrect answers for a self-

assessment, then to report on the grammar points they missed or found difficult. And so, weak learners can understand better from their fellows who are more knowledgeable about grammar, and they can ask them any question without being embarrassed, at the same time; good learners can consolidate their knowledge though explaining the grammar rules and sharing their ideas and understanding with their mates. Thus, cooperative learning enhances learners' improvement in grammar as well as in self-confidence which is a powerful instrument in fostering learner autonomy than any other skill or knowledge practiced in the classroom.

Moreover, both of productive activities (writing, speaking) and receptive activities (reading, listening) can be carried out as a team work. For example, each group of learners can agree on a particular topic to write or speak about. After that, each learner should take part in the activity, and shares his ideas and thoughts with his teammates either orally or in a written way. At the end of the exercise, all the groups are required to present their works, whereas all learners should be involved in the activity by reading their writings and listening to each other. Thus, the four language skills can be used as a way of integrating group activities to help learners become fluent language users able to take control over their learning process.

However, forming groups should not be done at random; teachers are responsible for this. They can help their learners in choosing their teammates and train them on how to select their own groups. According to Dam (1995), there are some criteria which should be taken into account when training learners on forming their teams. First, learners can select the partners that they prefer to work with because they can work well with them and they can learn better from them. Second, learners can choose new partners they have never worked with before in order to ensure the diversity of members within each group and guarantee the variety of the group work. Third, learners tend to work with those who share with them the same interest or have certain abilities. Finally, for Dam, learners may prefer to work in a group where one of the learners acts as a tutor for the other group mates.

According to the findings of the current study, most teachers in middle schools meet difficulties when attempting to rely on group work. They consider it as

a burden task which is very demanding and time consuming. Thus, in order to plan for a successful group work, Algerian EFL teachers have to follow some strategies like the ones suggested by Pritchard and Woollard (2010) such as;

- Naming each group to give it a sense of identification and responsibility;
- Praising each learner's performance as a team member;
- Sharing tasks and duties between learners among each group;
- Planning a consistent seating arrangement which allow each group members to carry on working together;
- Setting activities that can be done in pairs to prepare learners for group work.

As a result, group work is an important part of the learner autonomy classroom since it relies heavily on each learner's participation of the group to contribute, and on the diversity of learners within each group. Besides, it is beneficial in the sense that it provides learners with an opportunity to learn from each other in an active and involved way. Therefore, teachers in Algerian middle schools have to be aware of its importance in EFL classroom and ready to give their learners more opportunities to work collectively and cooperatively.

4.2.2.6.2 Homework

Homework refers to a set of activities given to student to do at home in the aim of helping them revise and consolidate what they have already learned in the class. These activities would promote language learning and skills enhancement since they are done outside the classroom without the teacher's assistance. Hence, homework plays a key role in fostering the learner's independency in learning. In this regard, Harmer (2001) cites that: "***Learner autonomy gets a powerful boost the first time homework is set for students to do out of class .They will now have to study without the help of the teacher.***" (Harmer, 2001:338). Therefore, EFL teachers can focus on the use of homework for autonomy development through giving learners more opportunities to activate their language outside the classroom. (Nunan, 1996)

However, it is a challenging task for teachers to assign homework without a careful preparation because it may be useless and time consuming for both learners and teachers who are obliged to deal with. For Harmer: *“homework is frequently seen as necessary evil rather than an important condition to learn autonomy.”* (Harmer, 2001:338). Thus, it is important for the teacher to be aware of the homework purpose and to put a lot of emphasis in his learners’ awareness as well. In addition, it is the teacher’s responsibility to plan for a successful homework from which learners take a full advantage and positive effects on their learning process. That is why; EFL teachers should take some tips into consideration when assigning homework to their learners:

- Set in advance a definite goal for the homework, explain it and make sure that learners understand its purpose.
- Choose the homework which provides learners with a variety of opportunities to do what they want to and need to.
- Select the homework that meets the learners’ needs, interests and individual preferences.
- Assign an adequate homework for different learners’ abilities in terms of their language level, motivation and learning experiences.
- Use different kinds of homework and avoid repeating the same type of assignment so that pupils will not be bored.
- Focus on the homework which reinforces and consolidates what was taught in the class.
- Avoid the homework which forces learners to give back or copy what has been given by the teacher.
- Engage learners in challenging homework which makes them highly motivated and actively involved in learning.
- Avoid excessive quantities of homework which overburden learners and make them uninterested.
- Consider the homework as a way of independent learning and not an additional practice or a punishment task for learners.

- Assign the homework that contributes to make learning more individual like personal schemas of study, relevant, interesting and useful. (Harmer, 2001)
- Allow learners to discuss, evaluate and give their proposals about the homework tasks that suit them best.
- Develop a reasonable way to give comments, criticism and correction when the homework is achieved by learners.

As a consequence, teachers play a crucial role in assigning a meaningful homework which makes learners well-driven and more engaged in the learning process. However, not all teachers are skillful enough in assigning homework to their learners. Unfortunately, this is the case for most of Algerian EFL teachers who give the homework as an extra busywork without a serious preparation in advance to attain its intended purpose and provide their learners with appropriate feedback. Moreover, they do not care about the amount of homework both in length and frequency; they may often give lot of tasks to be done at home without taking into account other homeworks given by other teachers in different subjects, and so learners will feel overworked and they will lose interest. On the other hand, this behaviour leads learners to not do the homework by themselves; either they give it to someone else to do it like their parents or to copy it from their mates.

Therefore, EFL teachers should bear in mind that the homework has potential benefits which contribute effectively to promote the autonomy of our pupils in middle school education. Hence, they must carefully prepare its assignment for a positive result, and select the most convenient tasks to meet their pupils' personal interest and language learning needs.

4.2.2.6.3 Self-Study Tasks

Self-study tasks refer to free activities designed by the learner himself in the aim of compensating his shortcomings in a certain language skill and developing his learning abilities. Through these tasks, learners have the opportunity to practice the target language using a wide variety of stand-alone activities which allow them to study at their own convenience and according to their individual needs and

preferences. And so, they are involved in working on their own, and they get accustomed to learning independently.

Since learners are allowed to choose their own study exercises, they can use plenty of resources to improve their level in English through: watching English movies and TV programmes, listening to English songs, reading novels and short stories in English and playing language games to enrich their English vocabulary. In addition, the use of the internet is considered as an effective self-study tool which plays an important role in language learning; it helps learners to use and practice the target language in a comfortable environment where they can use English in writing e-mails, chatting with others and conducting researches.

Regrettably, the research findings reveal that the learners' level in English is not the desired one by their teachers because they still depend totally on what is given to them in the class without making any personal effort outside school to expand their knowledge. Therefore, Algerian EFL teachers should establish among their learners the culture of self-study tasks and motivate them to adopt such method of independent learning which helps them to score well at the academic level and boost their autonomy.

4.2.2.6.4 Project Work

Project work is one of the main aspects of collective learning in EFL classroom. It reflects a sense of cooperation which is the best way of developing learners' own abilities and enhancing their autonomy in learning. According to Hedge (2000): "*Projects are extended tasks which usually integrate language skills work by means of a number of activities.*" (Hedge 2000:362). This means that learners can enrich their knowledge and develop their language skills through doing extra readings, investigation, and research outside the classroom. In this way, they can prepare themselves for individualized work and "*approach learning in their own way, suitable to their own abilities, styles, and preferences.*" (Skehan, 1998:273)

Similarly, Fried-Booth (2002) argues that the project is:

“student-centered and driven by the need to create an end-product...which brings opportunities for students to develop their confidence and independence and to work together in a real-world environment by collaborating on a task which they have defined for themselves and which has not been externally imposed.” (Fried-Booth 2002:6)

In other words, Booth sees that project works should be based on learner-centeredness which is an essential element in increasing learners’ self-confidence, reinforcing their autonomy and engaging them in collaborative learning. Furthermore, Stoller (2002) sees that a successful project work should be accomplished by following ten steps which illustrated in table 4.2.

Steps	Activities	Teachers	Students
1	Agree on a theme for the project	✓	✓
2	Determine the final outcome	✓	✓
3	Structure the project	✓	✓
4	Prepare the language demands of information gathering	✓	
5	Gather information		✓
6	Prepare the language demands of compiling and analyzing data	✓	
7	Compile and analyse data		✓
8	Prepare the language demands of preparation of the final product	✓	
9	Present final product		✓
10	Evaluate the project		✓

Table 4.2 Developing a Project in a Language Classroom (Stoller, 2002)

* This table illustrates the steps suggested by Stoller (2002) for a successful project work in a language classroom.

Basing on the above mentioned steps, it is noticeable that the realization of the project work is shared between teachers and learners. During the first three steps, they negotiate with each other about the project topic, and then they set its intended goal and agree on the project framework. Through this negotiation phase:

***“Learners can be brought to accept responsibility ...
The basis of this negotiation must be a recognition that
in the pedagogic process teachers as well as students
can learn, and students as well as teachers can teach.”
(Little, 1995: 178-180)***

In the next steps, learners start collecting information about their project theme and analyzing data, whereas the teacher’s role in this implementing phase is to provide learners with the necessary language needs to help them in achieving the project tasks. Hence, throughout the implementation, the teacher’s function is simply limited in:

***“being with students, working alongside them,
awaiting their next move or their return ..., and being
absorbed in how they are handling their own language
needs.”(Fried-Booth, 2002: 18)***

However, during the final two steps, learners are fully responsible for presenting their work and assessing it by themselves. That is to say, at the end of the project work, learners become more independent and they can reflect on what they achieved. Thus, they participate in self-evaluation and develop a sense of self-confidence through showing their ability to select, set, analyze and perform.

In the same regard, Stoller (2002) suggests six features for a good project work:

- It focuses on the content rather than the language;
- It is mainly done by learners who are supported and guided by the teacher;
- It can be achieved individually or cooperatively in small groups of learners; or collectively as a whole class where all learners work together;
- It depends on learners’ original skills through conducting real life tasks;
- It has a final outcome to be attained;

- It should be motivating, activating and challenging in order to increase learners' confidence, self-esteem and autonomy.

On the other hand, Papandreou (1994) focuses in his study on the roles of both language teachers and learners in the project work realization. These roles are better summarized in the table 4.3 below:

	Student	Teacher
Topic	Select topic	Describe parameters and suggests
Objectives	Set final objectives	Help in setting objectives
Preparation	Directs	Advises
Planning	Directs	Contributes ideas
Time	Plans schedule	Make suggestions
Research	Coordinate and implement	Observe and facilitate
Result	Analyzes	Observes
Presentation	Performs	Listen as a member of the audience
Evaluation	Participates in self-evaluation	Provides feedback.

Table 4.3 Teacher's and Students' Roles in Projects (Papandreou, 1994:42)

* This table summarizes the main roles of teachers and learners in the project work.

We can deduce from the previous table that Papandreou (1994) puts a great emphasis on the learners' roles in the project work realization. For him, they are responsible for doing the main tasks such as; selecting the topic and the objective, directing the preparation and the planning, implementing and analyzing the results, then performing and taking part in the evaluating process. On the contrary, for the teacher, Papandreou focuses on his roles as a helper, advisor, observer and listener.

In fact, the project work is essential and indispensable task within EFL classroom. It *“consolidates and extends learning, increases motivation, enhances classroom dynamics, and promotes learner autonomy.”* (Sandy, 2006:2). However, a successful project work requires a series of steps that should be carefully followed from its assignment until its presentation. In addition, both teachers and learners need more awareness about their required roles in the project realization.

Unfortunately, in Algerian middle schools, no autonomy can be achieved from the project work because it is still considered as an optional activity; many teachers do not take it seriously, and learners often deal with it reluctantly since most of them seek information from the internet without offering personal efforts, as Baiche (2008) states: *“the only person who benefits from the project works is the cyber space manager because he is paid to do it.”* (Baiche, 2008:116). Therefore, Algerian EFL teachers and learners have to follow carefully the necessary steps leading to a highly beneficial project which helps immensely in creating autonomous learners. Moreover, they have to review their roles in the project preparation, realization and presentation. As for learners, they are the real doers of the project work, whereas teachers are just facilitators and guides.

4.2.2.7 Parental Support for Autonomy

The family is the first school in each child's life where parents are responsible for giving the primary education for their kids. Hence, pupils enter their school with a variety of prior knowledge, attitudes, habits and behaviours. All these prerequisites influence their learning and the degree of their autonomy. Therefore, parents can contribute effectively in building their children's autonomy by giving them the right to choose and select their simple needs like; food, clothes, comrades, etc. Besides, parents can involve their kids in problem-solving situations, for instance, through complicated games or challenging tasks which allow them to experience themselves as responsible individuals for revolving such situations. However, parents should act as controllers and guides to support their kids' initiatives, adjust their attitudes and direct their behaviours.

In addition, learners are not alike; there are some individual differences among them. They differ from each other in age, gender, prior experience and intelligence. These factors have an impact on how learners deal with their learning process and perceive their autonomy, and so there is a wide variation among them in terms of their language proficiency and success in mastering the target language. In fact, parents play a key role in the development of these individual differences in their children's motivation before they begin school. In this context, Deci and Ryan (1985) agree that parents can enhance their children's motivation in school by meeting their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. As a result, autonomy-supportive parenting is an indispensable condition for developing a sense of self-reliance among children who will need it later in their school in order to hold a successful autonomous learning.

Unlike the western culture, the Algerian parental education is not supporting the child's autonomy. He is always seen as incapable of doing certain tasks, even though he can achieve them successfully. Parents are often afraid of giving some freedom to their children and letting them take risk. Moreover, the Algerian kid is generally treated as a useless person by his parents; they do not allow him to take part in discussions, decisions, choices or even in his own personal things. Such practices may undermine the child's self-confidence and influence negatively his autonomy in learning.

In short, parents are the first teachers for their children education; they have to teach them how to deal with their difficulties, how to face their problem situations, how to be responsible for their actions and how to depend on themselves.

4.2.3 Preparing the Algerian EFL Classroom for Learner Autonomy

According to the results of the current study, the Algerian EFL classrooms in middle schools are not well prepared to welcome the notion of learner autonomy as a pedagogical approach. In other words, the classroom observation reveals that the Algerian EFL classroom is far from being appropriate to create an autonomous environment where learners can engage in problem-solving and collaborative work.

4.2.3.1 Classroom Atmosphere

In order to enhance learner autonomy as a learning theory, teachers as well as learners need the appropriate atmosphere which encourages them to change their perceptions and attitudes towards both of the teaching and learning process. Hence, before any attempt to introduce the concept of learner autonomy, the educational authorities should create a safe, trustful, supportive, and non authoritarian environment which allows teachers and learners alike to practise autonomy through expressing their views, sharing ideas, negotiating and discussing issues freely without any kind of imposed decisions.

Additionally, the physical environment has an important role in offering comfort, relaxation, wellbeing, and thus contributes in improving teaching and developing the sense of autonomy, responsibility, and lifelong learning among learners. In this context, Earthman (2004) argues that: ***“There is sufficient research to state without equivocation that the building in which students spends a good deal of their time learning does in fact influence how well they learn”.*** (Earthman, 2004: 18)

4.2.3.2 Classroom Arrangement

The classroom arrangement is another pedagogical factor that has an impact on teaching /learning processes. According to Siegel (1999):

“The arrangement of space has immediate and far reaching consequences for teacher’s ability to effectively and efficiently accomplish daily activities, the formation of social and professional relationships, and the sharing of information and knowledge.” (Siegel, 1999:4)

That is to say that the EFL classroom arrangement should provide teachers with a clear view of all learners to attract their attention, keep the physical and eye contact with them and to make sure that the teacher’s body language, explanations and instructions are directed to all pupils without exception. Besides, the teacher can observe and evaluate his learners’ efforts by seeing the pupils who work and

participate in the given classroom tasks and those who are doing nothing especially in group and project work. That is why U-shaped desk arrangement is preferred in foreign language classroom. It allows the teacher to be in front of his learners to support the group discussion as students can see each other and encourage them to take part in the learning process. However, the traditional layout still exists in Algerian classrooms where all the tables are facing the board and teacher's desk. This arrangement is appropriate for teacher-centered classroom since it focuses on the teacher as the only responsible for both teaching and learning process.

4.2.3.3 Classroom Size

In fact, it is generally approved that small classes have a positive effect on the students' achievement. This is due to many reasons; first, in small classes, the teacher has a greater opportunity to interact with each learner alone and to devote more time to the teaching/ learning process and less to classroom management. Additionally, the fewer number of students allows the teacher to make all of them engaged and take part in the learning process. On the other hand, with fewer students per class, communication, discussion and sharing become easier and more organized; learners have equal chances to express themselves and to exchange ideas, views and knowledge with each other. Moreover, with a limited number of students, the focus will be on learning rather than teaching. That is to say, within a few community of learners, the teacher can be just a facilitator and a helper for them while the whole learning is mainly centered on the learners themselves.

Unfortunately, the large number of pupils in Algerian classroom is a real obstacle that creates discipline problems and classroom mismanagement. Therefore, it is necessary to reduce the number of pupils per classroom; otherwise, group and project works become impossible tasks to be done in such a classroom, and even EFL teachers may prefer adopting the traditional teaching to keep order and discipline.

Consequently, the Algerian EFL classroom needs great efforts to be adequate to direct learners and teachers towards autonomous learning. However, teachers cannot make these efforts alone. Thus, the whole educational community with all its players including policy-makers, schools' administration, teaching staff, learners and even their parents are required to contribute in achieving the objectives of newly adopted approaches in order to ensure a successful future generation of self-reliant and independent citizens.

4.2.3.4 Reforming Education System for Autonomous Classroom

The notion of learner autonomy is originally a western concept that was appeared in the late of 1970s. Before adopting this approach, many changes and reforms have been made in different educational systems around the world. In fact, the Algerian educational authorities welcome this concept warmly, but without preparing the ground for both teachers and learners to customize themselves to the new approach. . According to Tom (1997), it is important to

“recognize that the problem of reform has political and institutional roots, not just intellectual and conceptual ones...Change is also needed in our work settings, in the way that schools and universities are linked, and in a variety of other arenas.” (Tom, 1997: 2)

Although the Ministry of Education in Algeria has launched a series of reforms (1971, 1976, 2003, 2004), the educational system is still inadequate for the promotion of learner autonomy. Most of these reforms were done on the level of three main cycles' years, the period of compulsory education, the tuition-free instruction and the establishment of private educational institutions. However, in its last educational reform (2003-2004), the educational authorities gave a special interest to EFL when it became compulsory for the four years of middle school and in the secondary education. In addition, a new policy was adopted towards TEFL in order to improve learners' proficiency in English and provide them with the necessary tools to be not only autonomous learners but also independent future citizens able to attain their goals and satisfy their desirable needs.

Actually, the ministry's aims were obviously supporting autonomous learning, but they remain merely theoretical since no great efforts were made to prepare the Algerian classroom for teachers and learners to achieve such objectives and improve the overall education system in Algeria. According to Daniel Ness and Chia-Ling Lin (2013), Algeria, over the coming years and decades, will work on more investment in teacher quality, more incentive for teachers to enter the field of education, and an overhauled infrastructure. Besides, teachers and their working conditions should have the lion's share in the educational system priorities in order to guarantee the desired level of learning and teaching as well. On the other hand, any educational reform cannot succeed without putting learners at its centre and involving them in all its aspects.

4.2.3.4.1 Curriculum

In the educational context, the syllabus or curriculum is concerned with the plan, content and methods of a given work that actually happens at the classroom level. According to Nunan (1999): *“The curricula are concerned with making general statements about language learning, learning purpose and experience, evaluation, and the role and relationships of teachers and learners ...”* (Nunan, 1999:3). However, Nunan (1999) argues that in learning-centered curriculum which, in fact, advocates learner autonomy, the focus is much more on learners and the syllabus is tailor-made for them. In other words, the adaptation of the syllabus is based mainly on the students' aims, needs, interest and according to their proficiency level. Thus, learners are provided with a variety of materials, activities, exercises, tasks, texts, and projects (Jordan, 1997), and they are allowed to select their choices and set their goals. In addition, the learners' views and opinions should be taken into consideration in order to be involved in the curriculum; otherwise, they are merely passive receivers of its content and methods. The learners' involvement in the curriculum helps a lot in discovering their hindrances in learning because only learners have full understanding of their own situation, and their ideas and suggestions may function efficiently in facing those hindrances and improving their learning.

Actually, most of EFL teachers follow the curriculum blindly because they consider it as an official document which is imposed on them. Therefore, The Algerian educational authorities have to review the EFL curriculum as a pedagogical instrument which should be much more related to the Algerian pupils' needs, interests and level. On the other hand, Algerian EFL teachers can adjust the curriculum's content according to their learners' abilities, preferences, choices and even culture. For example, the teacher can present an English grammar lesson within an Algerian context and with the teaching method that suit his learners' level and understanding. Furthermore, the learners' thoughts and remarks can be taken as points of interest to be taken into account in the curriculum.

4.2.3.4.2 Textbooks

Both learners and teachers rely heavily on the course book in EFL classroom since it plays a key role in the teaching learning process. However, choosing a textbook for the appropriate level and target teaching goals is not easy (Nunan, 1997). Thus, the English textbooks in Algerian middle schools should be well designed and more relevant to the Algerian educational context in order to meet the Algerian pupils' needs and help them acquire the English language easily and become more autonomous learners. In addition, the textbook designers should take in account the notion of learner autonomy through providing more self- study tasks in which learners can depend on themselves and be involved in the learning process.

As a result, Algerian EFL classroom is not supporting learner autonomy; it is far from being appropriate to create autonomous environment where learners can think, act and learn independently. Moreover, the physical conditions of the classroom need to be radically refined in order to help both teachers and learners achieve their goals, *“to provide different levels of distance or intimacy, different sizes of groups and different types of task.”* (Walker, 2007: 27). Besides, it is necessary to reduce the number of pupils per classroom because they learn more when the group size is smaller and the teacher can see the needs of each individual student. Furthermore, the Algerian EFL classroom should be well equipped with all the modern means that make it an enjoyable and motivational learning environment.

4.3 Conclusion

As a matter of fact, it is hard to establish learner autonomy in our middle schools since both teachers and learners alike are poorly prepared for the move to such kind of autonomy. Hence, the current chapter focuses on the importance of preparing EFL teachers and learners for autonomy through showing them how to promote it and make it a concrete reality in the Algerian middle schools. In fact, both of teachers and learners need a sort of training towards autonomy; such training should be made before the changes have been occurred in the teaching of English in Algeria.

Teacher training programs should provide teachers with adequate training to foster their autonomy as well as that of their learners. As for learners, learner training may be the solution of their overreliance on the teacher, and prepare them for taking much more responsibility in the classroom by raising their awareness of the importance of autonomy in their learning. Teachers can do this through creating basic motivational conditions, encouraging homework assignments and project works and establishing a persuasive communication to alter learners' beliefs and attitudes.

It is therefore important for Algerian EFL teachers to recognize that their role is not to transmit factual knowledge to the heads of their learners; rather they are required to empower their learners by assisting them acquire the knowledge, skills, and strategies they need to become autonomous learners.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Shifting the focus from teaching to learning is not an easy task that happens overnight. It requires great efforts and radical changes in classroom dynamics and the roles of both teachers and learners. Hence, the whole idea of teaching and learning needs to be reviewed and reoriented. In autonomous classroom, teachers should let go and learners should be willing to take charge of their own learning process; no teacher can force, threaten or beg his learners to learn, it is up to them if they want to learn.

Indeed, learner autonomy is a diverse, dynamic, and difficult concept to define in only a few words, terms, and entities as it is governed by a variety of principles provided by several researchers in this area of investigation, and as it is the case, this research could not probably cover each and every single aspect in this multidimensional topic.

The current investigation seems to endorse the notion of learner autonomy in the Algerian middle schools in general and the EFL classrooms in particular. This dissertation has dealt with promoting learner autonomy in middle education in relation to learners' perceptions and teachers' roles to foster it. In fact, preparing teachers, learners, and the EFL classroom are integral components to this research and constitute a steppingstone to enhance autonomous education in Algeria.

Promoting learner autonomy is a worthwhile aim even though our national language education policies include autonomy as a learning goal. According to the Ministry of Education in Algeria, learner autonomy is one of the general objectives of ELT in middle education. However, after analyzing the data, the research findings confirm that the development of learner autonomy is hardly a reality in Algerian middle schools since both EFL pupils and teachers alike are not familiar with the notion of autonomy and not ready for implementing it. Pupils still consider the teacher as the first and the most responsible for their learning and teachers are still keeping their traditional teaching method and clinging to the traditional focus of teacher centered methodologies.

Thus, this research study provides some recommendations and suggestions that could foster learner autonomy which include motivating pupils and increasing their awareness; motivation is one of the basic features of learner autonomy and it is important to make the students aware of the importance of their autonomy in learning. In addition, group work is a key factor in the learner autonomous classroom and something that many teachers struggle with. This is the part we find teachers need training and preparing themselves for.

On the other hand, reflection on the learning process is another key component of learner autonomy; by reflecting on the learning process, learners become aware of how and why they choose the methods and strategies they use in different projects, and for solving different tasks.

Moreover, evaluation is seen as a collaborative process between the teacher and the learners. The learners take an active role in self-assessment, group work assessment, portfolios and logbooks, which all play a significant part in pupils' autonomous learning. In order to enhance learners' autonomy, all these factors and others need to come together and learners should be well prepared and trained through strategy training and strategy-based instruction which are highly beneficial and more than essential for better autonomous learning.

For teachers, without any autonomy-oriented training may experience difficulties in creating such a classroom culture and they cannot teach learners to become autonomous, but they can create the atmosphere and conditions in which they will feel encouraged to develop the autonomy they already have. This can be achieved only if training programmes include autonomy. It is concluded that autonomous learning can occur when teachers assume the role of facilitator of knowledge and become a supporter to help pupils build self-responsibility, self-confidence and self-direction.

It seems likely that autonomy is the responsibility of both the teacher and the learner, since there are no teachers without learners; therefore they have to plan together for a new vision of today's autonomous class.

Language learning is, now more than before, in a position to encourage learner autonomy. While classroom learning cannot provide all what learners need, autonomous learning may complement this by encouraging the learner to go ‘deep’ and exploit materials to enrich their knowledge and improve their skills. Hence, developing autonomous learning is indispensable as the aim of all education is to help people think, act and learn independently in relevant areas of their lives. Moreover, it is a desirable goal of every EFL teacher for a number of reasons; their teaching process will be valued, their expectations will be guaranteed, their efforts will be considered, and thus their pupils will be successful lifelong learners capable of managing their own learning process.

However, a limitation of this study is that it used only a limited sample of teachers and pupils in middle education in Algeria, and that many aspects are neglected. In fact, a sample of some middle school learners and teachers does not guarantee any attempt to generalize the findings to include a larger population like the one of Algerian EFL teachers and learners. In addition, observing one EFL classroom does not ensure that the same practices are common in other classrooms around the country. Although this study is limited regarding the findings obtained, the researcher hopes that it would provide an example of promoting pupils’ autonomy and would also be useful in helping EFL teachers to promote it in their classes, so that their pupils’ level will gradually progress.

A further research can be carried out as a survey study to investigate the notion of autonomy in EFL classes throughout the country. Such research on learner autonomy may be dealt with from different angles that remain to be explored for instance:

- To which extent are Algerian EFL learners autonomous in secondary schools?
- What are the roles of parents in fostering their children’s autonomy in learning?
- How can the use of the “High-Tech” help learners become autonomous in their learning?

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Appendix A

Teachers' Questionnaire

Dear Teachers,

The purpose of this study is to investigate learner autonomy, the readiness of both teachers and learners for autonomy in the Algerian EFL classroom and how can it be fostered in teaching English in middle schools and more precisely the level of fourth year. Please give your opinion about the statements below by answering all the sections. The statements are not just about your current job, and in answering you should consider your experience as a language teacher more generally. Thank you for your time and collaboration in completing this questionnaire.

1- Gender :

Male Female

2- Qualification :

ITE Licence Master

3- Years of Experience :

Less than 5 years From 5 to 15 years More than 20 years

Section A: Teachers' Attitudes towards Learner Autonomy

1- Do you think that learner autonomy is important in EFL classes?

Yes No

2- Do you think that your learners have a sense of responsibility towards their learning?

Yes No

3- Do you think that your students depend only on what you give them in the classroom to learn English? Yes No

4- Do you give your learners the opportunity to direct their learning process?

Yes No

Section B: Teachers' Readiness to Enhance Autonomous Learning

Questions	Items		
	Always	Sometimes	Never
1- Do you encourage your learners to take part in decision-making?			
2- Do you encourage your learners to work in pairs and within groups in order to enhance their autonomy?			
3- Do you use technology and audio-visual aids in teaching English?			
4- Do you use the English textbook as a tool to promote your learners' autonomy?			

Section C: Teachers' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy

Question1: According to you, what is learner autonomy?

.....

Question2: According to your experience, does learner autonomy exist in Algerian middle schools? Comment

.....

Question 03: Do you think that there is a relationship between learner autonomy and successful language learner?

.....

Question4: According to you, which approach is more adequate to enhance learner autonomy in EFL classroom? Why?

.....
.....
.....

Question05: Do you think that promoting learner autonomy is a challenge for EFL teachers in Algerian middle schools? Why?

.....
.....
.....

Question 6: Basing on your teaching experience, how can learner autonomy be fostered in Algerian middle schools?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your collaboration

Appendix B

Learners' Questionnaire

Dear pupils,

The following questionnaire is submitted to you fourth year pupils, it attempts systematically to collect information about your different perceptions of your autonomy in learning English as a foreign language.

1- Gender :

Male

Female

2- Age:

More than 15years

Less than 15years

3- Do you repeat a year?

Yes

No

4- What is your schooling system?

Day pupil

Boarder pupil

Section A: Learners' Attitudes towards Learning English

1- Are you interested in learning the English language?

Yes

No

2- Are you satisfied with your level in English?

Yes

No

3- Does your teacher motivate you to learn English?

Yes

No

4- Do you prepare your English lectures at home?

Yes

No

Section B: Pupils' Readiness for Autonomy

Questions	Items		
	Always	Sometimes	Never
1- Do you discuss and challenge your teacher's ideas and views?			
2- Do you prefer working within a group in order to be more autonomous?			
3- Do you prepare a project work at the end of each file?			
4- Do you use grammar books, dictionaries, internet, and extra researches to improve your English?			

Section C: Learners' Perceptions about Learner Autonomy

Question1: As a pupil, do you have an idea about learner autonomy?

.....

Question2: How do you like to practise your autonomy in English learning?

.....

Question 03: What type of activities do you prefer to foster your autonomy? Why?

.....

Question 4: According to you, what are the main obstacles that constrain your autonomy in learning?

.....
.....
.....

Question 5: According to you, what are the effective strategies and solutions to overcome these obstacles and enhance your autonomy in learning?

.....
.....
.....

Thank you for your collaboration

استبيان موجه لتلاميذ السنة الرابعة

بمتوسطة قطا ف منصور بالبيض

أعزائي التلاميذ

هذا الاستبيان موجه لكم انتم تلاميذ السنة الرابعة متوسط ،و الهدف منه سبر آرائكم ومعرفة وجهات نظركم المختلفة حول مدى استقلاليتكم أثناء تعلمكم للغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

- قم بالشطب على الخانة المناسبة.

- 1 - الجنس: ذكر أنثى
- 2 - العمر: اقل من 15 سنة أكثر من 15 سنة
- 3 - الحالة الدراسية: مكرر غير مكرر
- 4 - الصفة: داخلي خارجي

الفصل الأول: اجب بنعم أو لا

1 - هل أنت مهتم بتعلم اللغة الانجليزية ؟

- نعم لا

2 - هل أنت راض عن مستواك في اللغة الانجليزية ؟

- نعم لا

3 - هل يقوم الأستاذ بتحفيزك على تعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟

- نعم لا

4 - هل تقوم بتحضير دروس اللغة الانجليزية في البيت ؟

- نعم لا

الفصل الثاني: قم بالشطب في الخانة المناسبة.

الأسئلة		
أبدا	أحيانا	دائما

الفصل الثالث: أجب الأسئلة التالية بناء على رأيك الشخصي و مستعملا أسلوبك الخاص.

1 - في نظرك كتلميذ هل لديك فكرة عن مفهوم استقلالية المتعلم ؟

.....
.....
.....

2 - كيف تفضل أن تمارس هذه الاستقلالية في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية ؟

.....
.....
.....

3- أي نوع من النشاطات تفضل من اجل تطوير استقلاليته في التعلم؟ لماذا؟

.....
.....
.....

4- في رأيك ما هي الصعوبات التي تعيق استقلاليته في التعلم ؟

.....
.....
.....

5 – في رأيك ما هي الاستراتيجيات والحلول الفعالة لتجاوز هذه الصعوبات و لتنمية استقلاليته في التعلم ؟

.....
.....
.....

شكرا لتعاونكم معنا

Appendix C

Classroom Observation

Place: Guettaf Mansour Middle School

Class: 4AM2

Date: .../.../2016

Time: from to ...

I - Teacher's Behaviour in the EFL Classroom

Teacher's Practices		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
The teacher introduces the file's content, objectives and project work.						
The teacher uses ICTs and different teaching aids						
The teacher shares her learners' discussions and decisions.						
The teacher encourages group works and let her pupils learn from their peers.						
The teacher adopts the CBA in teaching English.						
The teacher depends only on the English textbook.						
The teacher acts as a	Facilitator Guide Controller Manager Assistant Counsellor					
The teacher allows learners to make choices and decisions.						
The teachers varies in the learning activities						

II – Learners’ Behaviour in the EFL Classroom

Learners’ Practices	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Learners take part in the learning process.					
Learners prepare their lessons at home and make extra-researches to enhance their understanding.					
Learners depend on themselves in solving learning problem situations and correcting their mistakes.					
Learners are really engaged and interested in the learning activity.					
Learners interact with their teacher and with each other.					
Learners are highly motivated by their teacher and willing to be autonomous.					
Learners work within groups and interact with each other.					
Learners have a good relationship with the teacher.					
Learners can choose their teammates while working on the project and the materials to be used.					

III. The Classroom Setting

The classroom is	Yes	No
Learner- centered		
Overcrowded- Large		
U shaped		
Equipped with ICTs		
Appropriate environment for learner autonomy		

Appendix D

The Inspector's Interview

1. What do you understand by the term “learner autonomy”?
2. As an ex-teacher, did you use to promote your learners' autonomy? How?
3. Is the fourth year textbook helping the pupils to be more autonomous?
4. According to your visits to EFL teachers in different schools, how do you find the pupils' engagement in the learning process?
5. Comparing with the old generation of EFL teachers, do you see that the new teachers are ready to teach with the CBA principles and able to prepare their learners for autonomy?
6. Do you organize study days, workshops and seminars about teacher training programmes which help teachers foster their learners' autonomy?
7. According to you, what are the main constraints of fostering learner autonomy in Algerian middle schools and the best strategies to reduce learners' dependence on the teacher?

Thank you for your collaboration

Appendix E

FILE ONE

IT'S MY TREAT.

Preview

In this file you will learn the following:

Language Learning

- 1. Functions:**
 - Making suppositions
 - Seeking agreement
 - Giving instructions/warning/advice
 - Carrying out a procedure
 - Asking for and giving information
- 2. Grammar**
 - Tag questions
 - The imperative (consolidation)
 - Sequencers (consolidation)
 - Comparatives and superlatives of adjectives (consolidation)
- 3. Words and sounds**
 - Pronunciation of final ed
 - Vocabulary related to street directions
 - Vocabulary related to food, cooking and eating
 - Short and long vowel sounds /ɪ/ and /i:/
 - Vowel sounds /ɪ/ and /e/
 - Silent letters
 - Rising and falling intonation in tag questions

Skills Building

- 1. Primary skills**
 - Listening for gist
 - Listening for specific information
 - Predicting and checking predictions in written and 'spoken' texts
 - Reading and making inferences
 - Writing instructions, a menu, a recipe ...
 - Distinguishing between fact and opinion in a text
 - Checking and interpreting food labels
- 2. Social skills**
 - Dining out
 - Talking about meal times
 - Giving a recipe to a guest
 - Advertising a restaurant
 - Writing a letter of invitation

PROJECT (See p.35):
Designing an advertising leaflet for a restaurant

Appendix F

PROJECT ROUND-UP

▶ Designing a Restaurant Advertising Leaflet

It should include three of the following items:

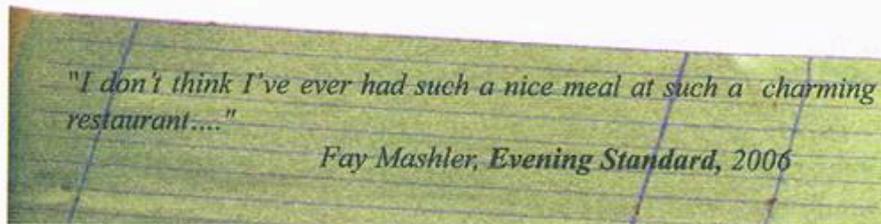
- the name of the restaurant and the date when it was established
- an advertising blurb, e.g.,
Come and enjoy, etc., ...



- "Where to find us" (a map with verbs in the imperative giving directions)
- a typical menu including the chef's speciality
- the recipe of a local dish



- the names of some famous people who have eaten there
- quotes from customers' appreciation in guest book e.g.,



- a short interview of a customer aimed at eliciting her/his opinion of the restaurant (using tag questions; e.g., 'You've liked the food, haven't you?')
- information
 - Then call us at ...
 - Phone/Fax
 - Or e-mail us at ...
 - Or better still, visit our website ...



- ▶ Enliven your folder or booklet with drawings, pictures of local crafts (earthenware, rock engravings etc.,...) and local sayings and proverbs.

Appendix G

WHERE DO WE STAND NOW?

▶ Progress check

Listening and speaking

- ① Read the dialogue below and make the waiter and customer sound more polite.

	2
--	---

Waiter: Yes? What do you want to eat?

Customer: Fillet steak with vegetables and French fries.

Waiter: How do you want your steak, rare, medium or well-done?

Customer: Well done.

Waiter: Fine. Do you want a starter?

Customer: Yes, get me a mushroom soup, will you?

- ② Suppose that the customer wanted to take a drink called *sherbet*. But s/he didn't know what it was. What would you expect him to say to the waiter and how would the waiter respond?

	2
--	---

- ③ Fill in the blanks with sentences containing tag questions which ask for agreement.

	2
--	---

a) You're with a friend outside a fish and chips shop. You're looking at the prices. It's very cheap. What do you say? It's ___?

b) You've just come out of a restaurant with your guest. You have both really enjoyed the meal. You thought it was delicious. The meal ___?

c) You are at the greengrocer's. You're tasting an orange. It's bitter: it isn't really ripe. What do you say to your friend. It ___?

- ④ Study the situations below and fill in the blanks with appropriate tag questions.

	2
--	---

a) You want a chocolate bar. Perhaps Hassina has got one. Ask her.
Hassina, you _____, _____ you?

b) Ali is just going out. You want him to buy you some stamps. Ask him.
Ali, you _____, _____ you?

c) You're looking for your mobile (phone). Perhaps, Karim has seen it. Ask him.
Karim, you _____, _____ you?

- ⑤ Mark the intonation on the question tags in exercises 3 and 4 with appropriate arrows.

	2
--	---

► **Words and sounds**

① **Cross out the silent letter in each of the following words:**

1

lamb - tart - raspberry - sandwich - fork - knife - water

② **Complete the phonetic transcriptions below with a short /i/ or long /i:/.**

1

spelling	Transcription	Spelling	transcription
kitchen lettuce		peas beef	

► **Reading and writing**

① **Read the text on the next page. Then circle the letter (a, b, c) that best completes statements A, B and C below.**

2

People eat different foods in different places. Let's take the example of Nepal. Nepal has no sea. Most people in Nepal are farmers. They grow grains, fruits, and other crops in the lowlands. The temperatures are very warm there. Rice and corn grow in terraced fields in the cooler hill regions. Potatoes and barley are the staple, or chief crops at higher elevations. Temperatures are the coolest there. (§1)

The Nepalese raise goats, cattle and yaks for dairy produce. They eat meat only on special occasions. Religious rules affect which meats people in Nepal eat: Hindus, who make up almost 90 percent of the population do not eat beef, and Muslims do not eat pork. (§ 2)

A. When the author writes that "Nepal has no sea", I understand that...

- a. The Nepalese eat a lot of fish
- b. People in Nepal don't eat a lot of fish
- c. The Nepalese travel long distances to the sea.

B. When the author writes that "The Nepalese raise goats, cattle and yaks for dairy produce", I understand that people in Nepal...

- a. are vegetarians, so they don't eat meat.
- b. don't eat meat because they don't like it.
- c. are poor, so they can't always kill their animals for food.

37

Appendix H

LEARNING LOG

Copy the questionnaire below in your learning log. Fill it in and hand a copy of it to your teacher. Don't write your name on it.

I can...	very well	fairly well	a little
A. use tag questions to ask for agreement.			
B. use tag questions to ask for information.			
C. use appropriate intonation in tag questions.			
D. use polite forms (What would you ...)			
E. Derive adjectives adding the suffix -ed to verbs.			
F. pronounce words containing silent letters.			
G. use the imperative and sequencers.			
H. write instructions for a recipe.			
I. order a meal from a menu.			
J. describe a dish.			
K. speak about nutrients using comparatives.			
L. read and interpret nutrition information on food labels.			
M. pronounce words containing the vowel sounds /ɪ/ and /i:/			
N. cope with difficult vocabulary.			
O. distinguish between opinion and fact in a text.			
P. draw conclusions from stated facts.			

Appendix I

TIME FOR ...

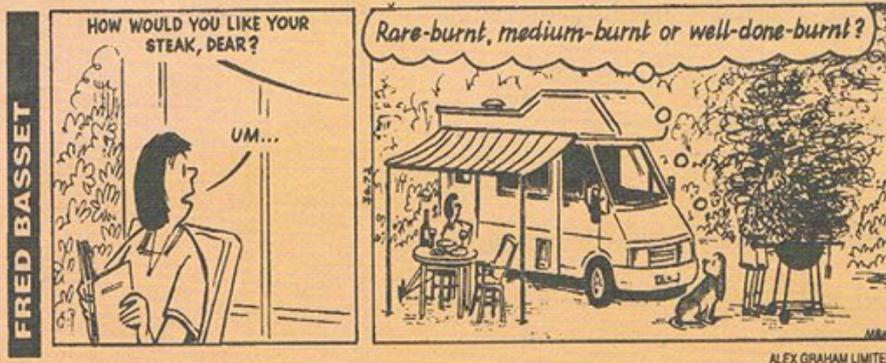


▶ a song **If You're Happy and You Know It**

If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands
If you're happy and you know it
Then your face will surely show it
If you're happy and you know it, clap your hands.

If you're happy and you know it, pat your knees...
If you're happy and you know it, stomp your feet...
If you're happy and you know it, beep your nose...
If you're happy and you know it, shout hooray...

▶ a laugh



Words of wisdom

- Don't cry over spilt milk.
- Don't put all your eggs in one basket.

schools and allow us to confirm our hypothesis made so far in the general introduction of this research.

The EFL teachers' negative perceptions towards learner autonomy show clearly how strong some of them fight against the change and keep enjoying their status of the classroom rulers and knowledge holders. This goes without saying that learners are the first victims and their learning process will be directly affected. Throughout this exploratory study, valuable insights have been drawn regarding the difficulties and obstructions which impede both EFL teachers and learners in Algerian middle schools from reaching the desired level of autonomous learning.

Consequently, we could also gain information about the effective strategies to enhance learner autonomy from teachers' and learners' viewpoints. On the basis of these findings, we devote the coming chapter to provide some suggestions and recommendations that empower our learners to use appropriate strategies and techniques to be successful autonomous learners in and outside the classroom settings.

ملخص

على مدى العقدين الماضيين، اكتسب مفهوم استقلالية المتعلم اهتماما متزايدا وذلك لخلق أقسام تعج بتلاميذ مستقلين و مسؤولين هم محور العملية التعليمية فيها. الجزائر - وعلى غرار البلدان الأخرى- قامت بحركة إصلاح واسعة في منظومتها التربوية، وذلك بهدف ترسيخ وتعزيز مبادئ استقلالية المتعلم من خلال تبني منهجية المقاربة بالكفاءات ، قصد تكوين مواطن مستقل بذاته، قادر على صنع قراراته ومسؤول عن خياراته . وبناءا عليه، يتمثل الهدف الأساسي لهذه الدراسة في الاستقصاء حول مدى استقلالية التلاميذ في الطور المتوسط ومعرفة آراء ومواقف كلا من المعلم والمتعلم بشأن هذا المفهوم، والكشف عن أهم الصعوبات التي تعترض طريقهما نحو الاستقلالية في التعلم.

الكلمات المفتاحية: استقلالية المتعلم - المقاربة بالكفاءات - العملية التعليمية.

Summary

Over the two last decades, the concept of learner autonomy has gained an increasing interest in order to create learner-centered classrooms full of independent and responsible learners. Algeria, like other countries, has launched many reforms in its educational system in the aim of consolidating and fostering the principles of learner autonomy through adopting the Competency-Based Approach which helps a lot in forming an independent citizen able to make his own decisions and responsible for his choices. Thus, the main objective of this study is to investigate to what extent the pupils in middle education are autonomous, to know both of teachers' and learners' perceptions and attitudes towards this concept and to discover the main obstacles they face when moving towards an autonomous learning.

Key words: Learner Autonomy, Competency-Based Approach, the Learning Process.

Résumé

Au cours des deux dernières décennies, il y' avait un intérêt croissant pour le concept d'autonomie de l'apprenant afin de construire des classes centrées sur l'élève et pleines des apprenants indépendants et responsables. L'Algérie comme d'autres pays, a lancé des nombreuses réformes dans son système éducatif dans le but de consolider et de renforcer les principes de l'autonomie de l'apprenant en adoptant l'approche par compétences qui aide beaucoup dans la formation d'un citoyen indépendant, capable de prendre ses décisions et responsable de ses choix . Ainsi, l'objectif principal de cette étude est d'étudier dans quelle mesure les élèves de l'enseignement moyen sont autonomes, de savoir à la fois les perceptions et les attitudes des enseignants et des apprenants sur ce concept et de découvrir les principaux obstacles auxquels ils sont confrontés lors du déplacement vers une autonomie d'apprentissage.

Mots clés: l'Autonomie de l'Apprenant, l'Approche Par Compétences, Le Processus d'Apprentissage