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Abdelhamid Ibn Badis University- Mostaganem
Faculty of Letters and Arts
Department of English

Towards Enhancing EFL Learner Autonomy in the Algerian Secondary School

(The Case of First and Second Year)

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Submitted by: FEDJ Samia **Supervised by: Prof. F. BOUHASS BENAISSI**

Board of Examiners

Prof. Bahous Abbes	**Chairman**	**University of Mostaganem**
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Dr. Ziani Malika	**Internal Examiner**	**University of Mostaganem**
Dr. Bouklikha Wassila	**External Examiner**	**University of Tlemcen**

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TO MY FAMILY

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ABSTRACT

Based upon an educational philosophy that promotes the idea of preparing learners as independent responsible citizens instead of global human capital and following the strong belief in the significance of self-initiated learning in improving the quality of foreign language education, this research aims to explore ways and approaches that can foster autonomous practice in the Algerian EFL context. It intends to lead a controlled group of EFL secondary school pupils gradually towards taking greater responsibility for their own learning and aims to assist them in becoming moderately autonomous. In order to attain this purpose, an action research served as the optimal method owing to its practicality and feasibility. In the course of the investigation, questionnaires, interview and class observation were utilized as data collection instruments in order to enable the researcher analyze and evaluate the findings both quantitatively and qualitatively. Pupils' perceptions and attitudes towards different aspects of autonomous learning were examined prior to and after carrying out the action research. The current thesis consists of five chapters covering both theoretical and practical parts. The theoretical section sheds light on the concept of learner autonomy in relation to the most relevant notions posited in the literature, as it examines the position of autonomy within the Algerian educational setting. Whereas, the practical part attempts to investigate, implement and assess multiple teaching techniques and strategies for enhancing autonomous learning in the immediate class environment. In fact, the obtained findings displayed that most participants did not exhibit a quite remarkable enhancement in autonomy levels. However, they started developing particular basic autonomous skills such as: awareness of the learning goals and strategies, the capacity for detachment in specific learning activities and the practice of some self-evaluation techniques. Consequently, drawing from the study findings and a number of amendments in the implemented pedagogy, a set of recommendations and pedagogical implications were put forward to social agents, curriculum designers and EFL secondary school mentors at the aim of facilitating the gradual integration and development of autonomy in the Algerian EFL classroom.

Key words: Learner Autonomy, English as a Foreign Language, Secondary School in Algeria.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALM: Audio-**L**ingual **M**ethod

CBA: Competency- **B**ased **A**pproach

CBE: Competency- **B**ased **E**ducation

CEFR: **C**ommon **E**uropean **F**ramework of **R**eference for **L**anguages

CLT: Communicative **L**anguage **T**eaching

EFL: English as a **F**oreign **L**anguage

ELT: English **L**anguage **T**eaching

ICTs: Information and **C**ommunication **T**echnologies

GTM: Grammar **T**ranslation **M**ethod

LA: Learne**r A**utonomy

SE1: Secondary **E**ducation **Y**ear **O**ne

SE2: Secondary **E**ducation **Y**ear **T**wo

SLA : Second **L**anguage **A**cquisition

ZPD: Zone of **P**roximal **D**evelopment

General Introduction

Learner autonomy is conventionally recognized as a central pillar to the developmental frame of education. It has widely gained attention and focus from many theorists, researchers and educational practitioners such as: Holec, Little, Gardner, Dickinson…etc. Such emphasis has eventually yielded a load of definitions, notions and models to account for the concept of autonomy as well as to promote it in education generally and in foreign language education more specifically. Yet, the ability to put this extensive range of knowledge and methods into action at the aim of attaining the ideal of autonomy in real class settings remains up to question and stays a challenging target for many teachers all over the world including the Algerian context. Undeniably, there is a considerable amount of empirical studies all over the world that discussed ways and procedures to foster learner autonomy in EFL education. However, less often works seemed to propose practical innovative teaching programs that can be immediately handed to language teachers in the classroom. For this reason, the present research attempts to fill this gap by tackling such a significant notion, from a new perspective, in the Algerian setting.

Initially, my interest in studying learner autonomy derived from a desire to engage into a worldly recognized notion that was proved to be rewarding in the field of language teaching and learning. Alongside this desire, my motive emerged from my own teaching experience. As an EFL teacher at secondary school, I noticed that most pupils have a passive role in the classroom; holding little concern on what to learn why and how to learn. They heavily rely and depend on what is said, done or given by the instructor, they rarely if not never take initiatives into their EFL learning or even think they "should". Most of them believe that it is the teacher's responsibility to plan, to perform and to make all decisions about their own learning. This observation led me to question the undesired situation and to raise the subsequent questions: is it possible to change this belief and make our learners think more responsibly about their own learning? Can we, as teachers, lead them to take initiatives in their own EFL learning? How can we develop an autonomous learning trait in them? Holding such questions in mind, drove me to carry out a research in that area with an aspiration to develop learner autonomy within my own restricted EFL context (class) and hopefully to expand it within a broader EFL scale in Algeria.

Considering the aforesaid concerns about EFL learning in the Algerian context, I believe that there is a need which calls for the adoption a developmental view of autonomy in

the Algerian EFL classroom. Plus, there is a pressing need for raising learners and teachers' awareness about the importance of a deliberate understanding on their own learning/teaching practices. Therefore, the researcher attempts to achieve the following aims:

1) The major and ultimate purpose of this research is to develop a sense of autonomy within English learners at Algerian secondary school level and to challenge their current perceptions and attitudes towards English learning. My aim, therefore, is to help them transform their dependency on the teacher or the ready-made information into higher levels of self-reliance. To put it otherwise, I seek to empower pupils' ability to learn, think and act critically and independently.

2) The second objective of this research is to offer a practical EFL teaching model whose lessons are purposely designed for boosting up pupils' autonomy in the four language skills. Hence, the current research aims to propose a humble contribution to the Algerian EFL education that may be of use in future educational amendments.

By tracing these objectives, two major research questions were addressed to guide this study:

1) To what extent can a teacher help his/her pupils develop some level of autonomy?

2) Is it possible to implement a teaching model that can boost up learner autonomy in the Algerian EFL classroom?

Far from being theoretical, both questions are practical in essence, for they address practical objectives and seek out workable and concrete ways that can be employed in the real learning environments. While the first question is concerned with procedures to develop students' autonomy, the second is questioning the viability and feasibility of designing and implementing an autonomous-directed teaching model in the Algerian EFL classroom. These two broad questions are endorsed by other specific questions which will be explored throughout the study:

a) What specific procedures and techniques can be adopted to enhance autonomous learning in the Algerian EFL classroom?
b) To what extent are Algerian EFL learners ready to be autonomous and what attitudes do they have towards learner autonomy?

c) What are the challenges and potential problems that pupils and teachers may encounter along the road to autonomy?

After setting up the research objectives and questions, the corresponding hypotheses can be stated as follows:

1) The EFL teacher can possibly help learners to enhance their levels of autonomy by shifting progressively their beliefs and attitudes about their EFL learning process. What is more, he/she can use diverse procedures and techniques in the classroom through a flexible and a mixed teaching method.

2) It is possible to design an autonomy-fostering EFL teaching model that contains an assortment of activities to train learners on the use self-directed techniques and strategies both in and outside the classroom. This could be operated while lining up with the objectives of the Competency Based Approach.

In the current study, the researcher utilized action research mainly, because it is a holistic and flexible approach that allows for the use of multiple and different research tools. Unlike other methods that involve a single restricted procedure, in this study, I employed a pre-questionnaire (in the first phase), an interview and a class observation (in the second phase) and finally a post-questionnaire (in the third phase). This enabled me to draw on both quantitative and qualitative data and thus to explore the notion of autonomy from different perspectives and in a more comprehensive way. Full details on the data collection instruments, study participants and research procedures are provided in chapter three of the thesis.

The primary significance of this study lies in the fact that it endeavors to offer innovative solutions for fostering autonomy in the Algerian EFL context. The proposed pedagogy facilitates and enables secondary school instructors to help their EFL learners to gradually and smoothly acquire the critical thinking and independent problem solving skills. By achieving this, learners will eventually gain their confidence back in their EFL learning and might even implicitly or explicitly benefit from the acquired skills when learning other foreign languages. In addition, the research project is worthwhile because it demonstrates the applicability of the construct of learner autonomy in the syllabus. Since, it offers a concrete guide for teachers comprising multiple practical tasks that can aid to boost levels of autonomy. Hence, this study makes instructional practices available to many Algerian EFL

teachers who might be struggling to help their pupils become more self-directed and less dependent on them.

Besides, the study highlights a critical view of the English language educational situation in secondary schools towards learner autonomy, which would expectedly catch the attention of policy makers and ELT practitioners. Because, it adds new understandings about the current practices and consequently may contribute to reformulating future programs towards autonomous learning in Algeria. The value of this study arises also from its practical nature, since, it employed action research which includes an in depth workable teaching plan engaging multiple and flexible research tools, unlike other prior research in Algeria that focused mainly on describing and understanding learners' and teachers' beliefs towards autonomy.

Finally, the findings of my research can benefit multiple communities, such as pupils who are willing to foster their English skills autonomously, mentors who are concerned with shouldering more responsibility upon their learners, and syllabus designers who seek out to nurture independent learning skills within Algerian EFL education. What is more, this study does not serve the educational area only, but it may also have some valuable bearings upon the social aspect of the learners. Because, the latter are likely to transfer the skills of autonomous learning and independent problem solving to real life situations, which would positively impinge on their personal, professional and social life.

To what concerns the structure of the present thesis, it is organized in the form of five chapters. The three first chapters lay the theoretical foundation of the study, whereas chapter four explores the practical section of the work with an analytic and critical view. The last chapter concludes the study by positing important pedagogical implications and recommendations.

The first chapter provides a thorough review of the relevant literature about the concept of learner autonomy. It introduces and defines the basic and most fundamental theoretical concepts, and issues related to this notion, such as learning strategies, teacher autonomy, and cultural concerns. It discusses the various models and versions of learner autonomy, as it highlights the different factors that influence autonomous learning. By considering such elements, this chapter helps to gain an understanding of the notion of autonomy and helps to establish clear conceptions dealt with in the subsequent chapters.

The second chapter is basically a situation analysis. It provides a close examination of the Algerian educational system, English teaching methods in the local context, and the actual challenges faced within the same setting. The purpose of such examination is to offer an insight on the situation of ELT in Algerian schools. Furthermore, it demonstrates the connection that exists between the Algerian EFL curricula and autonomous learning.

The third chapter outlines the methodology adopted in the current research. It demonstrates and explains the choice and relevance of this method to the research scope. Moreover, it accounts for the suitability and effectiveness of the selection of the research methodology, as it thoroughly describes the theoretical framework of action research with its underlying advantages and its limitations. It also depicts, in detail, the journey of the research in developing learner autonomy, including the research subjects, fieldwork, data collection instruments and the cyclic process of implementation. That is, it explains and supplies a narrative of all the various techniques and strategies used throughout the process of inquiry.

The fourth chapter, which represents the core of the study, is a field investigation in which the methodology is carried out and the questions are examined. The two main research questions of how can we develop pupils' levels of autonomy and, whether it is feasible to implement a teaching model – as well as the other specific questions are answered. The research findings are presented and analyzed in detail.

The final chapter concludes the thesis and puts forward suggestions, proposes recommendations and a teaching model that corresponds to the research main purpose leading to an open discussion for further alterations in Algerian ELT pedagogy.

CHAPTER ONE

THE CONCEPT OF AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

1. Introduction

The first chapter is primarily concerned with laying a theoretical foundation for this investigatory research. It seeks to establish a thorough understanding of the notion of autonomy within the literature of language education. Therefore, it traces back the historical basis of learner autonomy, provides a set of definitions, and examines their underlying principles and versions. It also highlights the rationale for integrating autonomy in language education as well as the drives that led to the promotion of multiple autonomy-based approaches. While working on the realm of learner autonomy, it puts into question the main aspects that impinge upon its pedagogical development, such as learners' attitudes and beliefs, their motivation and their socio-cultural context. Inevitably, this chapter emphasizes on the necessity of learning strategies use and reveals their paramount role in fostering autonomous language learning. By tackling these issues, I aim to set clear conceptions of what learner autonomy is, as I attempt to put my own description (far from being idealistic) of an autonomous learner according to the specific Algerian learning context.

1.1. Background of autonomy in language learning

Since the turn of the 21st century, learner autonomy has become a trendy concept that dominated the theory and practice of language education. It came into sight whilst a wave of educational thoughts, emanating from the communicative language teaching approach (CLT), called for a shift of focus from teacher to learner. This ground-breaking idea of adopting a learner centered approach instead of a teacher centered approach in the language classroom, has caught the world's educationalists' attention. As they started believing in the significance of autonomous learning, "You cannot teach a man anything: you can only help him find it within himself." Galileo Galilei (as cited in Benson, 2001, p.23).

1.1.1. Origins of the concept

Autonomy is a word that dates back to the end of the 16th century, it was first used in the European political framework, Berka (2000). It springs from the ancient Greek word '*autonomia'* which is a combination of '*autos*' and '*nomos'*. The former signifying 'self' and the latter denoting 'law'. Their meanings together is interpreted as' living according to one's own rules' or 'setting one's own laws'. According to the diverse dictionary definitions, autonomy is described as being; an 'ability', a 'right' a 'responsibility', and 'a state of freedom or independence'. For example, Oxford dictionary (2015) defines it as: "1.

The right or condition of self-government, 2. Freedom from external control or influence; independence."

Semantically, there is no salient difference between dictionary definitions of autonomy. It has largely been understood as; a capacity for the individual to govern himself by his own principles and rules. As an aptitude that one has in order to be self-sufficient in acting and making decisions. It has also been regarded as synonymous to independence and freedom from the dominance of external forces. For example, Collins dictionary (2015) definition of autonomy is "the freedom to determine one's own actions and behavior", this indicates that autonomy involves the right to freely take personal responsibility for one's own conduct.

Historically, autonomy was not inherent in the field language education; "rather, it is an imported, essentially non-linguistic, concept that has been brought into language teaching, via psychology and educational theory from the fields of moral and political philosophy." (Benson 2009: 16). At its very first use, that is in the end of the 16th century, autonomy was initially a political notion, it served as a 'killer phrase' that indicated an illegitimate wish for religious freedom and freedom of the mind, Berka (2000). It was seen as a disruptive concept that may result in people breaking out the laws and escaping the legitimate power. However, some decades later, it became more common and 'legal', since it had come to refer to the individual's ability to take control of his own affairs by treaty (ibid). Later in time, the term expanded its usage beyond the domain of politics and exceeded to a broader scale, particularly in the field of philosophy.

In moral and political philosophy, autonomy stands for many concepts. Kant (1724-1804) for example, argued that "moral autonomy is a combination of freedom and responsibility; it is a submission to laws that one has made for oneself. The autonomous man as he is autonomous is not subject to the will of another". Feinberg also states; "I am autonomous if I rule me, and no one else rules I" (1980, p. 19). Similarly, Lucas (1966, p. 101) says: "I and I alone, am ultimately responsible for the decisions I make ,and am in that sense autonomous." (as cited in Dworkin 1988, p.6) . Autonomy was used to connote; self-rule, freedom of the will, dignity, integrity, individuality, absence of obligation, responsibility, independence, freedom from obligation, knowledge of one's own interest (Dworkin, 1988). With this broad philosophical conception and considering Kant's (an authority in philosophy) view of autonomy as being the 'ultimate principle of morality', the

term gained a weighty position in philosophy and other social sciences like religion, psychology and education, Berka (2000).

1.1.2. Autonomy Roots in Education

With respect to education, autonomy had long been in pastime highly valued and recognized as a learning principle. Comenius (1592-1670), 'the father of modern education', notably had put children at the center of learning and stressed the importance of their autonomy. According to him, children are naturally born with a desire to search for knowledge, therefore, teachers should consider this nature, and support their natural development. Rousseau (1712- 1778), on the other hand, through his famous treatise Emile (first published in 1762), he advocated this view of respecting children's natural inclination to learning, and put forward that a child learns something better when he is curious about it. When he finds it 'useful' or 'pleasing' and explained that in this way, he will be excited and will develop passion for learning ,and therefore he will educate himself.

Moreover, Rousseau deemed that effective learning is principally informed by action and involvement in personal experiences. Learners should not solely rely on the teacher authority in making sense of the world, instead they should construct knowledge in their own way.

> The only habit the child should be allowed to acquire is to contract none… Prepare in good time form the reign of freedom and the exercise of his powers, by allowing his body its natural habits and accustoming him always to be his own master and follow the dictates of his will as soon as he has a will of his own. (Émile, Book translated by Boyd, 1956, p. 23)

Rousseau's child-centered educational theory has laid a sound foundation to learner autonomy. His thoughts were adopted by many influential theorists who traced the path of autonomy in education such as: John Dewey (1859-1952), Jean Piaget (1896-1980), Lev Vygotsky (1896–1934) and Carl Rogers (1902-1987). Along with Rousseau, they all believed that learning should concentrate on the child rather than on the subject matter, they also maintained that learners 'individualized learning needs should be gratified.

For Dewey, learning is essentially motivated by self-interest, "The actual interests of the child must be discovered if the significance and worth of his life is to be taken into account and full development achieved. Each subject must fulfill present needs of growing children."

(Dewey 1938). He objected an educational system which ignores children's personal needs because involving them in what they need is the only way to make their learning significant and meaningful.

Additionally, the other eminent thinker, Rogers (1969), offered many learning tenets that put the learner at the front. Based on his work in humanist psychology, Rogers in '*Freedom to Learn'* posited a significant humanist learning theory. According to him, effective learning occurs when a learner fully actualizes his capacities and takes responsibility in the learning process. "When he chooses his own directions, helps to discover his own learning resources, formulates his own problems, decides his own course of action, lives with the consequences of these choices, then significant learning is maximized" (Rogers, 1969,p.162)**.** For Rogers, autonomy and self-reliance are facilitated when self-evaluation and self-criticism are of primary importance, while he considers evaluation by teachers or others less essential. The teacher, thus, is seen as a facilitator who should restrict his dominance over learning and rather encourage students' natural inclination to learn; by setting favorable learning conditions, and balancing the cognitive and affective components of learning (ibid.).

1.1.3. Autonomy Roots in Psychology

Piaget agreed with Rousseau's viewpoint (in Boyd, 1956), in that children develop through various natural stages. By means of scientific evidence, he elaborated this idea and proved that children go through different cognitive stages (sensory-motor O-2 years, preoperational 2-7, concrete operational 7-11, and formal operational 11+). According to him, learning cannot occur if the mental structures are not mature to fit that specific learning. In other words, knowledge is restrained by the limitations of the child's cognitive capacities. This suggests that knowledge and meaning are constructed by the child himself , not instructed by the teacher or others, which in turn, displays the central role of the learner in learning .

Vygotsky on the other hand, further elaborated Piaget's thought that children construct knowledge according to their cognitive capacities by adding that they enhance their conceptual understanding by actively engaging in social interaction. For him, children progress through the aid of other social agents like adults and 'more competent peers'. This view is illustrated in the ZPD concept (Zone of Proximal Development), which he defines as:

> …the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (Vygotsky 1978,p. 86)

According to him, peer- interaction and collaborative thinking can lead to an abundance of knowledge, that is, when a child cooperate with adults or his more capable peers, he will gradually develop capacities that enable him to perform tasks without the assistance of others. Therefore, educators should provide the learners with activities within their ZPD, if they are willing to foster their individualized learning. Benson (2011,p. 41), explains within the Vygotskyan frame, that linguistic communication with others helps the child to transform the social directive speech into self-directive inner speech, and this results into reflection which eventually plays a crucial role in the promotion of self-directed learning.

Evidently, the abovementioned theorists' thoughts on self-direction and self-reflection had a significant bearing on setting up the construct of learner autonomy in education, and in the field of language learning most notably. Accordingly, an account of the history of autonomy in language learning will be displayed in the following part.

1.1.4. Autonomy Roots in Language Learning

The history of autonomy in language learning is commonly attributed to the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project (1971) which was concerned with adult education and which had particular concentration on the migrant workers' language needs (Gremmo and Riley, 1995). Within this project, the CRAPEL center *(Centre de Recherche et d'Applications en Langues*), gave foremost attention to self-directed and self-access adult language learning at the university of Nancy, France, where students were expected to self-direct their learning and focus on their own needs and goals. The father of autonomy in language learning was believed to be Yves Chalon, the founder and first leader of this center (Benson, 2013). After his early death (in 1972), Henri Holec, a subsequent leader became a recognized figure in the area of autonomy in language learning, primarily due to his project report to the Council of Europe *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning (1979)* which marked significant contribution to the early literature. His work has intensely led to the propagation of this

concept and has triggered off many academics and theorists to further research in foreign language learning contexts.

Around this particular period of time, major liberation views shaped by a political doctrine were growing in Europe. The political doctrine rests on the idea of creating Western liberal and democratic individuals, as it encourages personal freedom and social progress, in this point Holec (1981) explains:

> The end of the 1960's saw the development in all so-called industrially advanced Western countries of a socio-political tendency characterized by a definition of social progress, no longer in terms of increasing material well-being through an increase in consumer goods and services, but in terms of an improvement in 'the quality of life'-an expression that did not become a slogan until some years later based on the development of a respect for the individual in society. (p.1)

Such emphasis on the individual in society had yielded an interest in individuals' thoughts, values and aims. The notion of respect for the individual was indeed embraced in education and encouraged by many linguists and language philosophers (Austin and Searle, 1962; Hymes, 1972; Labov 1972; Fishman, 1972; Halliday, 1973) who rejected the behaviorist view that devalues human capacity and experience in language learning. Because, they considered language learning as a social act that involves communication and meaning creation, they perceived the learner as an individual with personal needs, motives and purposes, and insisted on his crucial role in the learning process. In fact, such thoughts that concentrate on social interaction, self-direction and learner centeredness had helped in the development of learner autonomy in language learning.

Along with the aforementioned circumstances, seven major reasons were interestingly submitted by Gremmo and Riley (1995). Spelling out the grounds that have contributed to the rise of autonomy in language education, they classified them as follows:

(1) Minority rights movements; ethnic groups' values, motives and aims should be focused on in education, learning and schooling (the CRAPEL was one of its application).

(2) Reactions against behaviorism; opposition against behaviorist views led to a renewed interest in the meaning and value of human experience.

(3) Shifts in educational philosophy; focus on the learners' needs and purposes.

(4) Easier availability of educational technology; technological devices facilitated the implementation of self-directed learning.

(5) Increased internationalism; a huge demand on foreign language learning after World War II.

(6) The commercialization of language provision; the learner is seen as a consumer making particularized choices in the market.

(7) Wider access to education; the growing number of school and university students engendered a requisite for personal engagement in learning.

Those circumstances led to the growing interest in the term over the years, Smith (2006) interestingly, puts forward a historical record of works and publications related to learner autonomy. According to him, the early literature was mainly associated with the Council of Europe and were of Anglo- French origin (Holec 1979, Oskarsson 1980, Riley 1985), " until only 1991 the Council of Europe and the Nordic Workshops had emerged as important international networks concerned specifically with learner autonomy "(Smith, 2006). However, from 1995 onwards, a considerable amount of books and articles around the term learner autonomy was delivered over the globe (Dam, 1995; Little, 1995; Littlewood, 1996; Nunan 1997; Breen & Mann1997 ; Benson,2001…). It continued to grow to the point that in the year 1997, every published book in the educational literature embraced this concept (ibid) and it is still increasing in which more than 20 book-length publications have been published since the turn of the century (Benson 2007). Interestingly, in all this huge body of literature, there is a common belief and a broad consensus on the idea that there is a solid correlation between successful foreign language learning and learner autonomy.

1.2. Defining Autonomy in Language Learning

One of the major issues in learner autonomy literature is defining the concept of autonomy in language learning. It is not unproblematic to pinpoint one single definition for the term, for it has been acknowledged as a highly intricate and multidimensional construct whose systematic accounts can be approached from divergent perspectives (Knapp & Seidlhofer, 2009). Because it is approached differently, autonomy theorists could not reach a universal consistent definition, and they "agree to disagree" as Benson states (2001,p. 1). For example, Holec (1981) who is said to be the father of autonomy in language learning, views learner autonomy as a *capacity* to take charge of the learning process. Little (1991) on the other hand,

sees it as psychological relation with the learning process, whereas for Dickinson (1987) it is a learning situation that involves complete responsibility and decision making. Each of these and other definitions which will be further discussed, allow for a broad room of debate and reflection. Therefore, light needs to be shed on the analogous as well as the differing versions of the term so as to construct a comprehensive understanding of the concept.

At the outset, autonomy discussion in foreign language learning's point of departure belongs to Holec (1981) who has been a major reference in the ongoing debate. In his article; *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning* first published in 1979, Holec describes autonomy as 'the ability to take charge of one's won learning' (1981,p. 3 cited in Benson 2013, p. 59). On the basis of this definition, he argues**:**

> 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; i.e.;
>
> - Determining the objectives.
> - Defining the contents and progression.
> - Selecting the methods and techniques to be used.
> - Monitoring the procedure of acquisition
> - Evaluating what has been acquired."
>
> The autonomous learner is himself capable of making all these decisions concerning the learning in which he is or wishes to be involved (ibid.)

According to Holec, autonomy is a matter of the learner's capacity to manage the different aspects of his/her own learning, bearing a large part of responsibility in determining what is to be learnt, how it is going to be learnt and what for it is learnt. Even assessment of the acquired knowledge and skills is to be carried out by the learner himself. This suggests the learner's predominant role in driving the learning path, and implies joint responsibility with the teacher.

Holec's definition of autonomy as a capacity for making decisions was characterized as problematic for not clearly stating the nature of such capacity, and not highlighting its important underlying cognitive processes (Benson 2013,p. 60). Although criticized as such, Benson recognized the significant aspect which points out that 'autonomy is an attribute of the learner, rather than learning situations**,** this implies that learner's ability for self-direction

is not restricted to particular learning situations, it is rather accredited to the learner himself, which tends to increase the possibility for taking control. In addition, Holec's definition that identifies autonomy as an ability conceals an underlying thought that this capacity is not fixed or predetermined but rather expandable and can be further developed. This vital feature offers a broad space for shaping thoughts on ways to develop autonomy in language learning.

Similar to Holec's conception, Little (1991),also argues for the ability to make decisions over one's own learning. Nevertheless, he elaborated a further definition pointing out that autonomy is not essentially concerned with self- monitoring, rather it

> … is a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts. (Little, 1991, p.4)

Little, thus, advanced a broader view of autonomy by bringing the cognitive dimension into light. He regards the autonomous learner not just as being capable to manage his own learning but also as competent enough to associate the acquired knowledge with his actual environment. In this way, "the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of learning" (Little 1990,p.7). This psychological relation to how and what is learnt, in Little's view, boosts the learner's capacity to take control over their language learning. Benson (2001) and Wenden (1995) take a similar position in stressing the crucial value of meta-cognitive processes in learner autonomy. The main distinction between Holec's and Little's definitions of autonomy, is that the former describes "What autonomous learners are able to do", whereas the latter "explains how they are able to do it" (see Benson, 2007,p. 23) .

Another powerful dimension implicated in learner autonomy definitions refers to the socio-cultural dimension of learning. Drawing on basic socio-interactive approaches to learning mainly, on the vygotskyan principle of ZPD, many researchers grant high merit to the social dimension which, in their view, extensively stimulate self-directed learning capacities. Little, for instance, argues that "Autonomy is not synonymous with autism: it is not a matter of learners working on their own; like all other culturally determined human capacities, it develops in interaction with others" (Little, 2004,p. 17). In a similar direction,

Benson (2001) and Kohonen, (1992,p. 19) maintain that learners' interdependence is a necessary component in developing autonomous language learning, Benson further argues that control over learning cannot be reached individually, it rather entails a cooperative decision making (1996,p. 33). Furthermore, Dam (1995) believes that autonomy entails "a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others, as a socially responsible person" (p. 102). Accordingly, autonomous language learning involves not only individualistic attitudes to learning but also requires a collaborative learning network that helps learners use and reinforce their capacities within and beyond their immediate context of learning.

Benson's (1996) view, discussed above, does not seem to concur with Dickinson's individualistic interpretation that discounts the socio-interactive aspect of learning**.** For Dickinson autonomy is a "complete responsibility for one's learning, carried out without the involvement of a teacher or pedagogic materials". (1987,p. 11). No assistance from the teacher or curriculum is called for. Besides, autonomy is conceived as "a situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions" (ibid.). To him (ibid.), partial responsibility for decision making and learning management is not autonomy; it is rather a preparatory stage for autonomy labeled semi-autonomy.

In a similar line of thought, Littlewood (1999) made an approximate analogous division about the level of control over learning in the practice of autonomy, in that he distinguished between two types of autonomy; proactive and reactive autonomy. The former refers to taking charge of a learning whose objectives are set by the learners themselves, implying their full engagement in decision making, whereas in the latter, learners react based on preset goals (proposed by the teacher or the curriculum) therefore, reactive autonomy is the type in which learning is not expected to be self-initiated, it is rather seen as a an introductory phase to proactive autonomy. These distinctions (semi-autonomy /autonomy; reactive/proactive) have important pedagogical implications, allowing language practitioners to view learner autonomy as an evolving process with varying degrees, and leads them to make corresponding teaching decisions.

Carrying different ideas on learner autonomy, many scholars present the political dimension in their definitions such as; Benson, 1997; Pennycook, 1997; Young (1986); and Huang & Benson (2013). They all advocate the idea of autonomy as a right to take control and to be self-sufficient in the learning process at the aim of creating freedom and social

change. For example, Benson's conception of learner autonomy stands for "..a recognition of the right of learners within educational system" (1997, p. 29). Benson (1997) addressed the issue of power and authoring one's own learning, and emphasized the extent to which both learners and teachers are allowed to practice their freedom in taking control of the learning process; he also discussed the internal as well as the external restrictions (like institution policy , rigid curriculum , governmental policy and power differences) that may hamper the exercise of autonomy. For Pennycook (1997) learner autonomy is " the struggle to become the author of one's own world, to be able to create one's own meaning, to pursue cultural alternatives amid the cultural politics of everyday life" (p.39). While for Young (1986), it is "authoring one's own world without being subject to the will of others" (p. 35). These views are congruent with philosophical thoughts about autonomy, that advocate individual freedom and the right to live according to one's own purposes, not submitting to the will and authority of others.

As can be noted from this discussion, learner autonomy engrosses diverse aspects including the cognitive, psychological, socio-cultural and political dimensions which makes it "a complex and multifaceted concept" Benson (1997,p. 29). In order to put the concept in a lucid way, Benson & Voller (1997) interestingly clarify that autonomy definitions fall under at least five headings in which the term is taken,

> for situations in which learners study entirely on their own; for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning; for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education; for the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning; for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning. (1997,p. 2).

Likewise, Sinclair (2000) proposed in a more detailed way a list of thirteen features for learner autonomy which seem to be widely acknowledged and agreed upon by language scholars:

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

Sinclair (2000)

So far, we can conclude that autonomy in language learning is more than just the freedom to learn independently or the capacity to take control. It is rather an intricate concept with differing conceptions related to the learner's cognition, emotion, environment (both inside and outside the class), culture and socio-political context.

One potential way of defining the concept according to the research purpose is: "Autonomy is the condition in which the learner becomes, in varying degrees, capable to command the learning process by setting goals, selecting materials, methods and evaluating their outcomes. It engages firm willingness, responsibility, self-reliance, critical reflection, freedom of choice, effective strategies, independent action and knowledge transference. It can be developed in communicative contexts; through direct interaction with language users or indirect interaction with the learning content (books, newspapers…etc)".

This definition remains up for discussion, however, what seems to be important about it is that it recognizes autonomy not solely as a learning situation (as suggested by Dickinson,p.1987) but also considers the significant construct of capacity (which emanates from Holec 's 1981 definition). In other words, learner autonomy is the state of being able to make learning decisions ;to shape objectives, make plans, organize resources, select methods,

and assess one's own learning. All of these acts necessitate a good deal of attributes such as positive attitude, cognitive and meta-cognitive knowledge, and effective interaction.

In point of fact, the current research is in alignment with the above definition's sense of the term. While making such sense, I opted for Benson's kaleidoscopic strategy in defining autonomy that admits the legitimacy of all definitions and follows Oxford's (2003) view that " no single perspective should be considered antithetical to any other perspective" (See Benson cited in Pemberton, Toogood, and Barfield 2009,p. 19-20).

1.3. The rationale for Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy is considerably central to efficient learning; this belief has currently gained wide approval in the field of education. Nevertheless, it is not recent for it has long backwards existed in human history, particularly with reference to Chinese philosophy where we come across the famous statement "Give a man fish and he will eat for a day, teach a man how to fish and he will eat for a lifetime" Confucius (551-479^{BC}). This essentially implies that self-oriented action and understanding of how things are done independently, eventually ensures lifelong proficiency. Based on such argument and manifold (psychological, socio-political, philosophical, pedagogical and practical) reasons, several scholars are stressing the need to encourage learners to become progressively more self-directed and independent in their learning. For example, Crabbe (1993) suggests three important types of arguments in favor of developing learner autonomy:

> The ideological argument is that the individual has the right to be free to exercise his or her own choices, in learning and other areas, and not become a victim […] of choices made by social institutions. […] The psychological argument is simply that we learn better when we are in charge of our own learning. […] The economic argument is that society does not have the resources to provide the level of personal instruction needed by all its members in every area of learning. Crabbe (1993,p. 443)

Even though these arguments are pragmatic and highlight key advantages of autonomy, they do not seem to be fully illuminating; they necessitate an expanded clarification which will expectantly be provided in this part. Dickinson (1987), interestingly, provides under five categories more detailed justifications: *1.practical reasons;* independent learning skills are more convenient and practical for certain situations; e.g. when students

for many possible reasons, cannot learn adequately in formal settings .2. *Individual differences among learners*, are effectively dealt with by teachers who apply self-instruction in the class since not all learners will need to use a single learning style or work at the same rate. *3. Educational aims;* are fulfilled when autonomous learning skills are acquired and developed *4. Motivation*; increases if learners get involved in making decisions. 5. *Learning how to learn foreign languages ;*occurs when three conditions are met; first, if the learner knows about himself and the learning processes, second if he plans and uses suitable strategies to reach the desired goals, and third if he finds opportunities to practise the foreign language. In the same line of thought, Cotterall (1995a) puts forward another classification under the headings of philosophical, pedagogical and practical reasons:

The philosophical reasons lie in the idea of preparing individuals for effective functioning in society, by developing their critical awareness, and the right for exercising their freedom of choice in every area of their lives including the learning aspect. While for pedagogical reasons, he considers that discussion over the content, rate, order and procedure of learning, makes learners feel more confident and secure about their learning, which will increase their motivation to learn and will in turn result in better learning outcomes. Whereas in the practical reasons he explains that developing autonomous learning skills is necessary because it can be a good alternative strategy when traditional teaching situations are not available or suitable for the learners. The tutor may not be able to support all students in doing their tasks, due to time or large number classes constraints, therefore, it is indispensable for learners to find other ways on their own in order to fulfill their tasks. Moreover, as pointed out previously in Crabbe's (1993) economic argument, the government may not sufficiently supply all the fundamental resources to learning, for example, if there is deficiency of technical material in the class (ICT's; computer, internet…etc), learners will need to act autonomously and take personal responsibility in their search for knowledge outside the walls of the school.

All of these arguments are important, however, the main sort of justification, according to Little (2009), derives from a psychological stance which explains the autonomous nature of human beings. According to him, independent learning skills should be promoted because they are part of the natural learning process. Right from early childhood, babies and small children; have their own wills, demands, and protests, they make their own voices heard so parents and family members must consider and negotiate that (Salmon, 1998 cited in Little 2009). Children "… are cognitively and emotionally autonomous. Their

perception of and response to the world around them is theirs alone, and their thoughts and emotions can never be directly accessible to parents, siblings and caregivers." (Little, 2009). This autonomous quality is inherent in every individual, it is a basic human need that cannot be overlooked, it should rather be catered for in all areas of one's life including the learning process. For this reason, it is vital to support our autonomous character and promote learner autonomy so as to obtain positive learning outcomes.

Additionally, Little (2002) proposes three other important advantages of autonomy in learning. Firstly, he holds that, learners' reflective engagement leads to more efficient learning , since learning becomes more meaningful and personal, it can be applied beyond educational contexts and extends to broader settings. Secondly, he adds that learners who willingly take the initiative to learn, have the enthusiasm and the meta-cognitive skills to handle their motivational hindrances, and therefore, the problem of motivation is already resolved. Thirdly, he specifies in the field of second and foreign language learning, that effective communication is facilitated for autonomous learners who practise social learning skills, because they have developed a range of ways to use the language and to master a variety of discourses in different social contexts.

Dickinson (1995) posits that learners' personal engagement in making decisions is regarded beneficial to learning. When a learner is an active participant in determining the learning objectives, content and procedures, he is more likely to develop responsibility in his own learning; tends to take the initiative to improve his abilities and overcome the difficulties, and eventually tends to be a better learner. Next to that, Holec (1981); Dickinson (1987); and Little (1991) as well consider that, having responsibility as an autonomous learning trait, barriers that usually arise between learning and living within traditional teaching schemes, are elevated. Autonomous learners should easily transfer their autonomous competence and behavior to other parts of their lives, which should make them more valuable as social agents and "more effective participants in the democratic process" (Little, 1991,p.8).

In summary, learner autonomy benefits are multiple, diverse and have long-term positive effect. That is why many scholars insist on promoting it in learning generally and foreign language learning particularly. Among the main arguments in favor of developing learner autonomy one can list the following:

- Autonomy in learning is vital for effective functioning in society. Knowles (1975)
- Most of the significant learning occurs outside of the school; far from the teacher's assistance. (Altman cited in Dickinson 1987)
- Maintaining personal agendas makes learning more focused and purposeful, consequently more effective. Little (1991)
- Learners have the right to make choices over their own learning. They are more satisfied with free choices rather than controlled constraints. Crabbe (1993)
- Learners' self-assessment help out to critically reflect on their own performance Haswell (1993)
- Personal engagement in making decisions about the various aspects of learning leads to more effective learning. Dickinson (1995)
- Autonomy is a human right. Benson (2000)
- Autonomous learning opens opportunities to use a wide range of resources in acquiring knowledge, and encourages learners to think over its applicability in broader contexts.
- Learners who enjoy a certain degree of autonomy can easily manage their technical and emotional setbacks.
- Setting one's own learning objectives gives a measure of control over learning.
- Awareness and critical reflection enable learners to monitor and adjust their learning strategies and thus help them advance towards their learning objectives.

Therefore, fostering autonomy has been extensively recognized as a worthwhile goal, since it raises learners' chances for a great educational success. Doing so in the Algerian EFL context will most reasonably result in parallel optimal end results. Certainly, the current research is oriented in its course towards this aspiration.

1.4. Version and Models of Learner Autonomy

With the ongoing discussion about the concept of learner autonomy, many variations have emerged and interesting ideas that perceive the term from divergent perspectives have developed so as to clear up some of the complexities and ambiguities inherent within it. Therefore, we can identify many proposed autonomy versions and models for promoting it in the EFL context.

1.4.1. Versions of learner autonomy

In the last couple of decades, several scholars brought into the literature an assortment of versions and ways of examining the construct of autonomy; Benson (1997),Oxford (2003), Smith, (2003), Kumaravadivelu, (2003), and Holliday (2003). These are driven by distinct assumptions on the conceptualization of the notion of learner autonomy, within each version there is a specific outlook towards this multifaceted idea. In this part, I have considered dimensions of autonomy that are widely cited in the literature, and which have congruent orientation with this study. The table below illustrates these versions of autonomy and their basic tenets:

Benson (1997)	**Technical:** learning management **Psychological:** cognitive processes **Political:** control over learning
Oxford (2003)	**Technical:** focus on the physical situation **Psychological:** characteristics of learners **Socio-cultural**: focus on mediated learning **Political-critical:** focus on ideologies, access, and power structure
Smith (2003)	**Weak pedagogies:** students lack autonomy **Strong pedagogies:** students are autonomous
Kumaravadivelu (2003)	**Narrow autonomy:** academic autonomy **Broad autonomy:** liberatory autonomy
Holliday (2003)	**Native–speakerist**: students are outsiders to the native speakers' culture **Cultural–relativist:** autonomy is a Western construct **Social autonomy:** autonomy is a social phenomenon

Table 1.1: Versions of autonomy

1.4.1.1. Benson (1997)

At the start, Benson (1997) pioneered the discussion of different versions of autonomy in the theoretical literature of language learning. He distinguished between three diverse perspectives of the concept of autonomy; technical, psychological, and political. The technical version is concerned with the learner training and learning strategies. It focuses on the technical skills required to manage an autonomous learning within and beyond the classroom setting, yet, without teacher intervention. Benson associated this version with 'positivistic' approach to language learning, because the latter supports independent language acquisition rather than "direct transmission from teacher to learner" (ibid, p.23), as it encourages drill and practice methods to language learning**.**

The psychological version, on the contrary, considers the learner's internal mental capacities, attitudes, and behaviors. It holds that learners' knowledge is constructed within their own social world, jointly with their teachers, this eventually leads to take a shared responsibility for learning between teacher and learner. In view of that, this version is constant with basic thoughts of the 'constructivist' approach to language learning, which attaches great importance to individual responsibility for decision-making on learning and "tend to value interaction and engagement with the target language" (ibid, p. 24).

Finally, the political version refers to learners' control over the internal and external learning contexts, the learning content and processes as well as their right to do so. Besides, it emphasizes on second language learners' critical awareness of the social context, and calls attention to the potential hurdles between learners and the target language community. This version, as suggested by Benson, corresponds to the critical theory of knowledge which presumes the crucial impact of political and social ideologies on knowledge construction and deals with issues of control, power and social change.

By implication, Benson's three versions of learner autonomy can be analyzed and examined in different ways according to different contexts and purposes. If learning is viewed as the acquisition of the immediate necessary skills to gain knowledge, then the technical version of autonomy will seem appropriate and rather selected. But, in contexts where learning is seen as an individual or social construction of meaning, the psychological version tends to serve the research ends better. Lastly, when there is a focus on the socio-political dimensions of learning, the political version will preferably manifest.

1.4.1.2. Oxford (2003) and Smith (2003)

Subsequently, Oxford (2003) recognized Benson's technical, psychological, and political versions of autonomy and extended the model by adding a further outlook; the 'socio-cultural' perspective. The latter recognizes that autonomous learning is a 'socially mediated' process that can be promoted through shared interactions among learners, as well as practical integration with their social and cultural context. Smith (2003) on the other hand, in conceptualizing the term, made a different twofold division; weak pedagogies and strong pedagogies. In the former, "…autonomy is seen as a deferred goal and as a product of instruction rather than as something which students are currently ready to exercise directly." (Smith, 2003,p. 130-2). It presupposes students' low level of capacity to direct their own language learning autonomously, and intends to provide them with the appropriate strategies that help them become autonomous in fulfilling objectives that are set by their institution, since curriculum and syllabus design are created by the instructors or the institution, leaving very little room for learners to make choices and decisions.

This type of autonomy can be linked to Benson's technical version of autonomy given that they both contend with learning strategies to promote autonomy. By contrast, the latter focuses on "co-creating with students optimal conditions for the exercise of their autonomy". In this kind of autonomy, learners are seen as already autonomous and capable to cooperate with their teachers in fundamental decision making processes such as syllabus design. In this way, they become active participants who play a crucial role in the creation of a self-directed learning space. With an involvement of collaboration and interaction, Smith's strong pedagogy can, in turn, be associated with Oxford's socio-cultural version of autonomy.

1.4.1.3. Kumaravadivelu (2003)

Additionally, Kumaravadivelu (2003) made a distinction between narrow and broad approaches to autonomy; the difference between the two versions lies in outlining the goal of learner autonomy. The narrow form sustains that autonomy in learning is meant to help students to *learn how to learn* by providing them with the essential resources to learn on their own and by teaching them how to use suitable cognitive, meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies to accomplish their learning objectives, it is referred to as 'academic' autonomy. Whereas in the broad version, the goal of learner autonomy is directed towards *learning to liberate*, therefore, it is called 'liberatory' autonomy. In essence, this type of autonomy "...actively seeks to help learners recognize sociopolitical impediments placed on their paths

to progress and to provide them with the intellectual tools necessary to overcome them" (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). Distinct from academic autonomy, where learning to learn is seen as an end in itself, liberatory autonomy regards learning to learn merely as a means to an end (which is learning for liberation). In this respect, Kumaravadivelu (2006) argues "if academic autonomy enables learners to be effective learners, liberatory autonomy empowers them to be critical thinkers".

1.4.1.4. Holliday (2003)

From a distinctive perspective, Holliday (2003) categorized three other approaches to autonomy namely; 'native–speakerist', 'cultural–relativist' and 'social' autonomy. In the native-speakerist approach, learners are perceived as culturally outsiders to their 'native speaker' teachers' own culture. So, autonomous learners are expected to perform in ways that "conform to an image of the native speaker and his or her culture" (Holliday, 2003,p.115). In the cultural relativist approach, autonomy is represented as a Western construct that should not be embraced by non-native learners due to their cultural non-conformity. Holliday associated this version with Benson's political autonomy which is concerned with issues of power. While the first two approaches are culture-related, the third category; social autonomy, characterizes autonomy as "a pre-existing social phenomenon" that perceives members of the society as equal people (Holliday, 2003,p. 118). It considers autonomy as a universal concept that is inherent in all members of the society regardless of their cultural similarity or disparity.

In conclusion, it may be worth noting that such distinctions, as represented in the literature, ought not to be identified as separate entities, for they all relate to form a comprehensive understanding of the broad concept. They should rather be utilized to determine particular orientations that may suit every research area. Hence, in order to make a relevant connection between the aforesaid theoretical versions and the current research context, it should be noted that the adopted conception of autonomy in the present research has a coherent orientation with Benson's psychological version, Oxford's socio-cultural version, Smith's weak pedagogy, Kumaravadivelu's academic autonomy and Holliday's social autonomy. To put it otherwise, I assume that these particular approaches to autonomy tend to better fit the developmental course of learner autonomy within the Algerian context. Because, whilst Algerian EFL learners generally lack the basic autonomous learning traits such as critical reflection, choice making and responsibility taking, these versions bear a

moderately lower levels of autonomy and stress the gradual acquisition of these traits, leading learners from varying degrees of dependence to greater degrees of independence.

1.4.2. Models of learner autonomy

The purpose of boosting up autonomy in language learning brought in several educationists a need to create paradigms whose concepts can be well exploited and reflected on the practical ground. In the literature, Littlewood (1996, 1999), Macaro (1997), Nunan (1997), Scharle and Szabo (2000), and Benson (2001) have put forward diverse models to account for the process of autonomy development. According to Dang (2012), these models can be grouped, based on their focus, under two headings. In the first set of models, emphasis is laid on the diverse stages of autonomy development, whereas the second collection underlines autonomy in terms of its areas of control.

1.4.2.1. Nunan's (1997), Littlewood's (1999) and Scharle's and Szabo's (2000) models

What essentially congregates the three models together is the common premise that autonomy has degrees and levels. Each model seemingly provides a particular description of the gradual levels of learner autonomy development. Initially, Nunan (1997) proposed a model that consists of five levels:

Level	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Learner action	Awareness	Involvement	Intervention	Creation	Transcendence

Table 1.2: Five-level model of learner autonomy (Nunan, 1997)

At the first level, students are made aware of the educational aims and content of their learning, they are expected to identify their most suitable learning strategies and styles. This preliminary stage is, in fact, a requisite component for the enhancement of autonomy, because understanding the pedagogical objectives makes learning, right from the onset, more meaningful and purposeful. It gets the learners to recognize their learning requirements and in due course it helps them monitor and adjust their learning strategies. In Nunan's second stage of development, learners are allowed to independently select, out of a range of options, their own learning goals. At the next level, they can intervene in modifying and adapting their learning objectives and content. Such involvement in making crucial decisions over their learning tends to increase a good sense of freedom, responsibility, and assurance within them. It allows them to smoothly shift to the subsequent stage of creation, where they can create their own learning goals and tasks. Eventually, this leads them to the last stage and the

highest level of autonomy; transcendence, in which they excel in their performance and become able to make connections between their learning and the real world beyond the classroom. This model offers a sound and coherent order for the levels of autonomy development that "could inform the sequencing of learner development activities in language textbooks" (Benson, 2007).

From the perspective of autonomy as a self -regulation process, Littlewood (1999) has split the development of autonomy into two levels, *reactive* and *proactive autonomy*. At the former stage, students are able to manage and regulate their learning process by strictly following their instructors' guidelines about how a learning procedure can be carried out, so as to attain the prearranged learning objectives. At this level, students depend on teachers' assistance in outlining directions for their learning activity, therefore they execute a moderate level of autonomy. Conversely, at the later stage, learners pro-act, they take the initiative to set up academic goals and instructions on their own, without necessarily involving teachers' guidance. This, in fact, reveals and confirms that students, at this stage, have achieved an elevated level of autonomy, that they are capable to reach their own educational purposes. Reactive autonomy, in my viewpoint, is generally the type which is likely to take place in most classrooms, because it has more realistic requirements and attributes for common learners. Unlike proactive autonomy, which is attributed to the minority of learners who tend to be effective researchers or teachers.

Scharle and Szabo (2000) submitted a three- levels model of autonomy, which comprises, first *raising awareness,* second *changing attitudes*, and finally *transferring roles*. Awareness raising refers to the mental state of being conscious and informed about the learning objectives, content and succession. Changing attitudes applies to a constructive behavioral shift from unhelpful traditional learning manners to a new expedient conduct. Transferring roles, as the consequential stage of changing attitudes, denotes students taking full responsibility for their performance, advancement and outcomes of their learning. Scharle and Szabo's raising awareness, changing attitudes, and transferring roles concepts evidently, overlap with Nunan's awareness, intervention and transcendence stages respectively.

With regards to language learning, these models seem to imply a congruent correlation between the gradual stages of autonomy development and the progressive levels of students' language proficiency. Some researchers (Littlewood 1996; Nunan 1997) argue that the more proficient language learners are, the easier it becomes for them to make independent choices over learning tasks and to carry them out. However, Kumaravadivelu (2003,p. 144),

maintains that 'it would be a mistake to try to correlate the initial, intermediary, and advanced stages of autonomy ... with the beginning, intermediate, and advanced levels of language proficiency' for the reason that, it is the linguistic and communicative requirements of specific learning tasks that determine levels of autonomy. Rivers (2001) also contradicts with the view that learner autonomy is necessarily connected to language proficiency, since students who have previously learned more than one language, may have developed a wide spectrum of self-regulation skills even at preliminary levels.

1.4.2.2. Littlewood's (1996), Macaro's (1997) and Benson (2001)'s models

The second set of learner autonomy models is based on students' areas of control. Initially, Littlewood (1996) proposed three distinct types: *autonomy as a communicator; autonomy as a learner,* and *autonomy as a person*. According to Benson (2007), these aspects correlate with the contextual dimensions of *language acquisition, learning approach* and *personal development r*espectively. Autonomy as a communicator, in the frame of language acquisition, involves "an ability to operate independently with the language and use it to communicate personal meanings in real, unpredictable situations" Littlewood (1996). From the perspective of the learning approach**,** autonomy as a learner requires students' "ability to take responsibility for their own learning and to apply active, personally relevant strategies" (ibid)**.** In autonomy as a person, students stretch their learning objectives to wider scales; they can use their individual skills and adapt the learning environment according to their needs. The division of three categories, indeed, does not completely separate forms of autonomy, because they can meet up simultaneously within a single learner.

Next, Macaro (1997) advanced a tripartite framework for learner autonomy in the second language classroom consisting of :*autonomy of language competence, autonomy of language learning competence,* and *autonomy of choice and action*. This model is concerned with how learners engage with the target language rather than how they develop their learning strategies. The first stands for "communication in the target language with a reasonable mastery of L2 rule system largely without the help of a more competent speaker" Macaro (1997,p. 170). At this phase, learners become linguistically competent and can produce an accurate discourse in the target language independently from the teacher's assistance. The second category of the model refers to the capacity to transfer the language learning skills and strategies to other learning contexts, and to use "cognitive and meta-cognitive strategic behavior" Macaro (2008,p. 55) to prevail over external restrictions that may inhibit language learning. It also involves "the ability to cope with access to the target language sources... not

planned or 'mediated' by the teacher" Macaro (1997,p.171). The third type is concerned with the learners' ability to make independent choices when organizing their language learning activity and objectives. It is this type, in Macaro's view (2008,p. 60), that exceedingly strengthens language learner autonomy, because with the freedom of choice over little tasks, learners can build up "a lifelong attitude and motivation for learning".

Lastly, Benson (2001) has drawn a model that is based on "dimensions of control over learning" (2001, p. 50), it springs from the description of autonomy as the ability to take control of one's own learning. This model identifies three interdependent levels over which learners exercise control, namely *learning management, cognitive processes* and *learning content*. The first attribute relates to the technical version of autonomy that emphasizes the organization of learning strategies and assessment of language learning outcomes. The second category is constant with aspects of the psychological version that highlight learners' control over their cognitive capacities, attitudes, and behaviors. While the last level of control associates with the political version that involves control and freedom of choice over the content of learning. This level of autonomy is somehow challenging at the practical ground. It actually, bears a close resemblance to Macrao's (1997) view of 'choice and action' whose application may also be hampered by institutional, socio-cultural and political constraints. Additionally, Benson tends to overlook in his model the socio-interactive aspect of learning, which soundly impinges on students' capacity to foster their autonomy.

Eventually, each of the aforementioned models embraces fundamental aspects of learner autonomy such as: raising awareness, shifting attitudes, making choices, controlling the learning activity, adapting the learning approach and transferring skills to broader contexts. They, indeed, succeed in categorizing the levels and stages of learner autonomy development in a systematic manner, however they fail to spot and implicate teachers' crucial role in boosting up students' autonomy, because promoting autonomy is, by no means, an isolated or an independent process, but rather one that can be constructively shaped through informed purposeful teaching. Therefore, in this section, the researcher attempts to propose a model for fostering autonomy in the EFL context, which includes not only learner's actions and behaviors but also teacher's active engagement in the learning activity.

1.4.2.3. A suggested model for promoting autonomy in the EFL classroom

The suggested scheme is another developmental model that can be categorized under the first abovementioned set. It is labeled 'two-handed model' because it takes into account both learners' and teachers' fundamental functioning in enhancing the level of autonomy in the EFL classroom.

Stage	Learner Role	Teacher Role
1. Awarness	-Of the learning purposes, program, materials, conditions, and duration.	-Of the teaching methods that can be applied to develop LA, according to the given context.
2. Planning	- Selecting and making decisions over the language learning objectives, content and material.	-Opening up multiple options over goals, contents and methods of learning. - Providing chances for negotiating language learning.
3. Monitoring	- Learning strategies, styles and motivation.	-Learning progress (observing students' strengths and weaknesses) -Supporting the less autonomous learners.
4. Assessing and Regulating	- Performance in language (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation...etc) tasks in and out of the class.	-The extent to which independent decision and action are taking place inside the class.
5. Outclassing	- Excel in their language performance and cultivate it in new contexts (interacting with native speakers, reading authentic material). –Overcoming hindrances.	-Guiding learners towards more challenging and demanding tasks (e.g. creative essays , poem writing…etc). -Directing students to use their autonomy for lifelong goals.

Table 1.3: A Two-handed Model for Promoting Learner autonomy in the EFL class

As can be seen, this model is a chain of five progressive stages that serve to increase autonomous language learning. Each level paves the way to the next but does not necessarily lead to it. The primordial stage refers to learners' and teachers' awareness that needs to be raised about distinct matters. From the learners' part, this stage is not dissimilar to Nunan's (1997) first level because they seem to represent approximately the same concept. The second and third stages of the model involve crucial aspects of autonomy and the relationship between teachers' and students' role is mutually dependent, because, for example, learners

cannot make a selection of learning goals or materials if instructors do not make them available, and teachers should also be willing to positively respond to their students' choices and decisions if they aim at increasing chances to foster their autonomy. The other important stage concerns learners' evaluation of their linguistic abilities, communicative skills and learning strategies inside and outside the classroom. Teachers are also required to assess the learners' language performance as well as their autonomy progress. They are supposed to help them to regulate the weaknesses and to reinforce their strengths. Because this will unquestionably facilitate their transfer to the last level named outclassing. It is at this final stage that students become more self-confident about their learning and gain the audacity to engage in new learning situations. They excel in various aspects of their language learning and can benefit from this potential in fulfilling their lifelong objectives. The teachers' role is no less important at this point, since with their structured knowledge and valuable experience they can direct students and open up large doors that even the most autonomous ones may not perceive. Probably, the interesting point about this model, is not that it provides a reasonable index for promoting autonomy, but in that it explicates teachers' course of action in addition to learners'. It is certainly not meant to present an ideal model for language educators or learners to follow in their quest for autonomy, but it is rather intended to help them rethink about the missions and responsibilities they need to undertake so as to boost up language learner autonomy.

1.5. Learner autonomy and language learning strategies

Promoting language learner autonomy entails helping students learn how to learn, to develop their learning capacities, attitudes and to enable them to think critically and independently. Holec (1981), in this regard, argues that learners necessitate practical training for self-directed learning and this comprises a facility in learning strategies use. Hence, learner autonomy can possibly and partly be developed through the good use of a range of cognitive and meta-cognitive learning strategies, especially the latter as Westhoff (1993, p.13) maintains "for an autonomous learner, the meta-cognitive domain is most important." On the importance of learning strategies in language learning, Chamot and O`Malley (1994,p. 58) declare:

> There are two major reasons why we integrate learning strategies into the instruction of academic language and content. The first is the theoretical consistency of learning strategies with the cognitive view of learning which

underlies CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach). The second is the impressive amount of research that supports using learning strategies with academic language and content information.

Initially, the pedagogical interest in learning strategies aroused from two major conditions (Little, in Byram & Hu (Ed), 2013,p. 666). The first was in the 1970's, 1980's, it was associated with researchers' attention to communicative strategies of second language users and learners, which derived from research in the area of inter-language. Studies on the strategic behavior of second language learners/ users have put forward the idea that explicit instruction can possibly boost second language learners' performance, and that strategy training might also be of advantages to second language learners. Interestingly, a few decades later, an assortment of studies at the universal scale, Watanabe (1990) in Japan, Yang (1993) in Taiwan, Wharton (2000) in Singapore, and Anderson (2002) in USA have confirmed with evidence the strong correlation between language learning strategies use and successful language learning,

The second condition under which focus on learning strategies have come to light is the growing interest in learner autonomy. Proponents of learner autonomy such as Little (1996) argue that encouraging autonomous learning necessarily entails the promotion of an explicit strategic control of the language learning process. Nunan, (1988, 1999) believes that awareness of language learning strategies helps to activate a learner-centered approach and results in more effective learning. Other autonomy supporters, such as Oxford (1990a) and Wenden and Rubin (1987) reveal a desire for learner autonomy and taking control in learning by means of language learning strategies.

1.5.1. Definitions of language learning strategies

Educationalists and researchers' impressive interest in language learning strategies has yielded an extensive amount of definitions and ways for conceptualizing the term. For example, Tarone (1983) describes language learning strategies as "an attempt to develop linguistic and sociolinguistic competence in the target language -- to incorporate these into one's interlanguage competence" (p. 67). For Oxford, they are "any specific action taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective, and more transferable to new situations" (1990). According to her, these strategies allow learners to become more self-directed, and therefore more autonomous, they are problem-

oriented, flexible and teachable, they also involve many aspects, not just the cognitive one (Oxford, 1990a). In the same vein, Chamot and O`Malley (1994) state that:

> Learning strategies are defined as thoughts or activities that assist in enhancing learning outcomes. Strategies by definition are probably performed with awareness or else they would not be strategic, although the same mental operations can be performed without awareness once they are proceduralized and have the same beneficial results with learning.
>
> (Chamot and O`Malley, 1994,p. 60-61)

According to Chamot and O`Malley's definition, learning strategies are perceived as both mental (i.e. concealed) and behavioral (i.e. noticeable) processes that are carried out deliberately, yet with repeated practice they can become instinctive. However, some researchers regard learning strategies as fundamentally conscious behavioral operations such as Oxford who describes them as:

> … specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques that students (often intentionally) use to improve their progress in developing L2 skills. These strategies can facilitate the internalization, storage, retrieval, or use of the new language. Strategies are tools for the self-directed involvement necessary for developing communicative ability. (1992/1993,p.18)

In the following table, some important definitions given by other scholars are listed:

Researcher	**Definition**
Bialystok (1978,p. 71)	"optimal means for exploring available information to improve competence in a second language"
Seliger (1984,p. 4)	"basic abstract categories of processing by which information perceived in the outside world is organized and categorized into cognitive structures as part of a conceptual network"
Chamot (1987,p.71)	"techniques, approaches, or deliberate actions that students take in order to facilitate the learning and recall of both linguistic and content area information"
Wenden &	"… any sets of operations, steps, plans, routines used by the learner to

Rubin (1987,p.19)	facilitate the obtaining, storage, retrieval, and use of information"
O'Malley & Chamot (1990,p.1)	"the special thoughts or behaviors that individuals use to help them comprehend, learn, or retain new information"
"Weaver & Cohen (1997)	"specific behaviors, steps and actions taken to enhance one's own learning, through the storage, retention, and use of new information about the target language. They are conscious thoughts and behaviors used by the learners with the explicit goals of improving their knowledge and understanding of a target language." (p. vi).

Table: 1.4: Definitions of language learning strategies

Apparently, the most commonly accepted view in the literature holds that language learning strategies are a set of psychological processes and physical actions consciously selected and carried out by the learner to foster the second or foreign language competence. However, Ellis (1999) noted four main problems arising from these various definitions. First, he questioned the nature of language learning strategies, whether they are to be conceived of as behavioral or mental means. Second, he casted doubt on the precise meaning of the term, because some researchers consider learning strategies as a general approach to learning whereas others view them as precise behaviors performed in particular leaning tasks. Third, he marked out the issue of whether learning strategies should be perceived as conscious behaviors and 'deliberate actions' Chamot (1987) or subconscious processes and 'basic abstract categories' Seliger (1984). Fourth, he found it problematic to think of learning strategies as having whether a direct, or an indirect impact on interlanguage development.

Even though, the wide range of learning strategies definitions is not uniform and bears some contrasts (such as mental versus behavioral process), it certainly involves many commonly accepted features such as having the aim of fostering the second or foreign language competence. In order to evade any confusion caused by the various definitions, it is worth noting that this work adopts Oxford's previously mentioned definition (1992/1993,p. 18), because it appears to be more comprehensive, precise and congruent with the research ends.

In conclusion, it should be noted that language learning strategies differ from language learning styles, they certainly do not stand for the same construct, as the latter generally refers to "… personal qualities that influence a student's ability to acquire information, to interact

with peers and the teachers, and otherwise to participate in learning experiences" (Grasha, 1996,p. 37). Though learning strategies and learning styles stand for distinct concepts, they do not function independently from each other, because the latter determines the use of the former (Ehrman & Oxford, 1990). Besides, they both impinge on the learners' cognitive, affective and social aspects of learning. They control the way in which new information is internalized, organized, stored, perceived and transmitted by the learner.

1.5.2. Taxonomies of Language Learning Strategies

Consideration as well as classifications of learning strategies had significant bearings upon the development of thoughts in the field of second/foreign language education. They served as important orientations for educators to follow in their quest of developing autonomy in the language learner. Many researchers and scholars (O'Malley et. al, 1985; Wenden and Rubin, 1987; Oxford, 1990; Stem, 1992; Ellis, 1994, etc.) differentiated between learning strategies through a set of categories. However, probably the most influential and referenced classification system in foreign language learning literature is Oxford's (1990) taxonomy and her Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL).

A. Oxford (1990)

Oxford distinguished between two main broad classes: direct and indirect strategies comprising different sub classes. The direct strategies include memory, cognitive and compensation strategies, whereas the indirect strategies consist of metacognitive, affective and social strategies. The following diagram clearly illustrates this particular division.

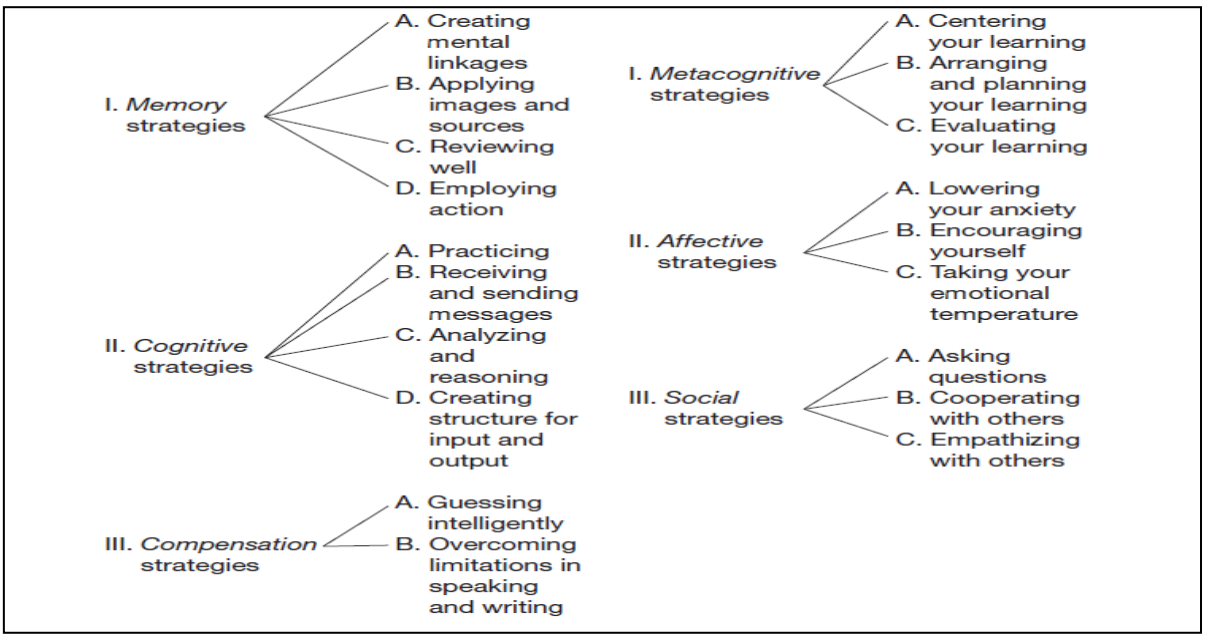

Figure 1.1: Oxford's Strategy Taxonomy (Cited in Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 136)

According to Oxford (1990), direct strategies are "directly related with the issue or the content" of learning. They involve memorizing, analyzing, reasoning, creating structures and overcoming limitations. These particular processes are directly used to foster the target language skills. In contrast, indirect strategies are "the strategies which are necessary for active learning even though they are not directly related with the field of the issue" (ibid.). They involve actions such as: planning, evaluating, encouraging oneself, asking questions and cooperating with peers or proficient users. These strategies are used to facilitate language learning tasks without being directly related to the target language. After gaining approval, validity and reliability, Oxford's detailed 'Strategy Inventory for Language Learning' was used as an effective tool in several learning researches for measuring learners' strategy preferences and usage.

B. O'Malley and Chamot (1990)

Another central classification of language learning strategies was posited by O'Malley and Chamot (1990). It encompasses three types of strategies: cognitive, metacognitive and social/affective. The cognitive strategies refer to specific learning processes such as resourcing, translation, and note taking which intend to internalize new information, words or phrases…etc. Metacognitive strategies entail a deliberate reflection over the learning process, they involve steps like: selective attention, self-management, self-monitoring and self-reinforcement. The social/affective strategies are also used to reinforce the learning activity through learners' interaction and cooperation with others, and control over the affective state towards language learning.

C. Wenden and Rubin (1987)

In addition, Wenden and Rubin (1987) drew another distinction in which they grouped language learning strategies under three major headings: learning, communication and social strategies. First, learning strategies contribute directly to the enhancement of language learning, they involve cognitive and metacognitive strategies such as: memorizing, guessing and monitoring. Second, communication strategies are less directly associated with language learning, they operate mainly for transmitting and getting conversational meaning when communicative limitations arise. Third, social strategies include actions which provide opportunities to practice the target language, they indirectly relate to language learning since they do not directly aid the acquisition, retrieval and storage of language.

It can be seen from the three taxonomies that there is no clear cut between the types of strategies. On the contrary, they all bear more or less similar categorizations. Every category of O'Malley and Chamot's strategies is integrated in Oxford's classification (cognitive, metacognitive and social/affective). In Wenden and Rubin's classification, social strategies are not distinct from Oxford's. However, the cognitive and the metacognitive strategies are grouped under a single category, unlike Oxford and O'Malley and Chamot who separated them. Besides, when referring to the dichotomy direct/ indirect strategies in Oxford's and Wenden and Rubin's sense, concepts are perceived quite differently. (e.g., the meatacognitive strategies are regarded indirect in Oxford's system, whereas direct in Wenden and Rubin's classification.)

1.5.3. Strategies for promoting language learner autonomy

As discussed beforehand, learners' strategic behavior plays a primordial role in the processes of language learning and learner autonomy development. Therefore, students are greatly encouraged to be aware of the power of strategy use and the imperative impact it has on their autonomous language leaning. Nevertheless, to be more successful and more independent, they are required not only to recognize the various learning strategies but also to determine the most appropriate ones that fit to their own learning styles and the ones which help them boost their self-directed learning behavior. In this regard, Oxford (in Hurd and Lewis, 2008) has thoroughly designed a set of practical strategies (as shown in the following table) that are aimed at promoting language learner autonomy.

Type of strategy	Strategy	Tactic
Metacognitive	Plan	I set realistic objectives for this weeks' two major writing tasks.
	Organize	I organize my computer files on my laptop before doing anything else.
	Monitor	During, the reading task, I monitor my energy level and clarity of thought every 20 minutes or so.
	Evaluate	I compare my current listening performance a month ago to evaluate progress.
Affective	Build positive	I search for something about the task that excites my interest.
	Maintain	I use positive self-talk to keep going.

	Deal with negative emotions	I lower any unhelpful anxiety by deep breathing, music, humour, relaxation…etc.
Cognitive	Combine	I combine this week's new phrases to write five different sentences.
	Group	I group the new material I find about the topic and put in the various files so I can find it.
	Analyze	I break today's multisyllabic words into component parts so I can understand and remember them.
	Synthesize	I use topic sentences in paragraphs to help me write a summary of the essay I just read.
Social-interactive	Ask questions	I ask the tutor the questions and listen well to the answers.
	collaborate	I respond to other students' postings in the discussion forums.
	Notice socio-cultural factors	I ask myself the meaning of certain social behaviors that I encounter by video.

Table 1.5: Oxford 's strategies for promoting language learner autonomy (in Hurd and Lewis; 2008,p. 52-54)

This detailed categorization and explanation of strategies offers a useful guide for learners to take control, monitor and evaluate their own language learning process. Employing the tactics, such as setting realistic objectives, controlling the affective factor, and interacting with teachers and students, makes learning more focused and definite, consequently more effective. This might also raise learners' level of motivation and help them shoulder more responsibility for their own language learning.

What is more, such strategies are not inherent in learners, they are rather learned as Oxford maintains "L2 learners, no matter how autonomous they wish to be, are not born knowing all the strategies and tactics they need. They must learn about these strategies and tactics." (Oxford, in Hurd and Lewis, 2008,p. 54). Therefore, these strategies are learnable and more importantly, they are teachable. Hence, in order to make them well grasped and implemented, learners can be trained on their use. This is referred to as 'strategy training' or

'strategy instruction', it is a technical approach executed by instructors for developing learner autonomy, in which they take action to aid their learners identify and apply the strategies that help them become more independent.

An example of this is provided by Sykes (2004), where he proposed four useful strategies that can be adopted by tutors to develop an autonomous conduct within learners. It is briefly illustrated and summarized in the following table:

The Strategy	The Steps
1- Identifying and sharing preferences	-What kind of class work do you prefer (e.g., individual, pairs, groups)? -What kind of class activities do you prefer (e.g., lectures, discussions, projects)? -What sort of materials do you prefer to learn with (e.g., books, handouts, videos, games)?
2- Encouraging Self-monitoring	-How did you prepare for the assignment? -What materials did you use for the assignment? -Did you discuss the assignment? -How much time did you spend on the assignment?
3- Summarizing and Sharing Texts	-The facilitator identifies relevant texts, e.g., book chapters articles, reports and case studies, for learners to read. -Learners are divided into pairs or small groups and are assigned one of the identified texts to read. -Individually, learners read the texts and summarise the key points. - Learners share their summary with their partners and compose a shared version of their summaries. - Learners present their summary orally or in writing to the rest of the group.
4-Creating Learner-generated Quizzes	- The facilitator asks learners to identify parts of the course material they want to review. (Alternatively, the facilitator can make this decision.). - In pairs or small groups, learners review the material and prepare a set of questions to quiz their classmates.

	- The pairs or groups share and answer each other's quizzes. - The learners check their classmates' answers to the quizzes. - Each pair or group reports on the questions that received the lowest number of correct answers. - With the help of the facilitator, the learners compile a list of problem areas that need to be reviewed further

Table 1.6: Four Strategies for Promoting and Developing Learner Autonomy (Sykes, 2004)

To sum up, the strategies used for enhancing learner autonomy can be handled on two levels. First, they can be utilized by learners, through individual reflection and action. Second, they can be implemented by instructors who tend to provide guidance and assistance in order to boost learners' independent capability to use them. However, no matter which form is utilized in the learning process, both are proved to be effective in enhancing language learner autonomy.

1.6. Factors influencing learner autonomy

In the process of acquiring the autonomous learning approach, diverse factors seem to intervene exerting an influence, some of which are internal and some external. First, there are factors associated with the inner world of the learner himself/herself, for example: motivation, attribution, self-esteem, learning beliefs and attitudes, learning experiences, learning styles, and learning strategies. Second, there are factors that relate to the learners' external surroundings for example: the school environment, the teaching approaches, and the social culture. Such features can, to a certain extent, either enhance or restrict students' autonomous learning capacity. In this section, I will try to cover the most dominant and recognized influential factors in the literature such as: attitudes, beliefs, motivation and learning environment.

1.6.1. Beliefs and attitudes

The concept of beliefs denotes a key parameter that shapes one's own learning conduct. Beliefs are engaged in conceptualizing and making sense of the world, they are involved in understanding thoughts and internalizing information. They represent the mental state which takes ideas as being true (though they may not be). Thus, learners' beliefs about any aspect of their language learning are remarkably influential and determinant of how it will

be approached. For example, learners with positive beliefs about taking the initiative and responsibility in their language learning "tend to develop a more active and thus, autonomous attitude that allows them to take charge of their learning whatever the situation may be" (Victori & Lockhart, 1995 as cited in Thanh Nga, 2014). However, if learners hold mistaken negative beliefs about their capability to learn a foreign language with a certain degree of self-reliance and independence, they become unlikely to "adopt a responsible and active attitude in their approach to learning and may never become autonomous"(ibid). Fortunately, such unconstructive learning beliefs are adjustable and can be modified particularly by instructors. For educators have the chance and capacity, during class time, to dig out, discuss, and alter those misleading convictions. Therefore, they might redirect them towards new constructive directions. Accordingly, teachers can play a central role in reconstructing and implanting worthy beliefs within learners, which may possibly help them embrace learner autonomy principles. However, this might only be expected to occur, if teachers themselves hold constructive and optimistic beliefs about autonomy. Because, the latter's teaching practices are fundamentally based on their beliefs too.

Learning attitudes are by no means less influential than learning beliefs in determining learners' actions. A study conducted by Charney, Newman and Palmquist (1995) demonstrated that learners' attitudes and beliefs influence their thought, their actions while reading and writing, and their achievements as well. The word attitude means, "a favorable or unfavorable evaluative reaction toward something or someone, exhibited in one's beliefs, feelings, or intended behavior" (Myers, 2003, p. 36). Ajzen (2005) describes it as "a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event" (p.3). While, Brown (1987) defines it as 'part of one's perception of self, of others, and of the culture in which one is living [or the culture of the target language]'(p,126). Hence, learners' conceptualized attitudes towards the idea of autonomy impinge on their choice of learning action, on their response to challenges and consequently on their decision making. The more students perceive independence in learning as valuable and rewarding, the less they are likely to reject its adoption for their learning approach. Whereas, negative or indecisive perceptions of taking control and responsibility in learning, might create psychological and cognitive barriers towards autonomy.

If autonomy is taken as a learning end, it is then necessary to alter learners' negative attitudes into positive ones. Yet, to do so, one must recognize the various parameters that

could have direct or indirect impact on such attitudes. According to Wenden (1991), learner attitudes towards autonomy can be affected by seven factors: socialization process, conflicting demands, complexity of roles, lack of metacognitive knowledge, learner helplessness, self-esteem and self-image. Cotterall (1995), on the other hand, identified six factors affecting students' attitudes towards autonomy that are based on learners' beliefs about the: role of the teacher (director vs. facilitator), role of feedback (informative vs. evaluative), learner independence (classroom learning vs. self learning), learner confidence in study ability (motivated vs. unmotivated) experience of language learning (experience vs. inexperience), and approach to studying (learn the language vs. use the language). In view of that, instructors can focus on the internal as well as the external elements that shape students' attitudes, in their endeavor to create an optimal attitudinal change.

1.6.2. Motivation

The term motivation has long been tightly tied to second language acquisition and foreign language learning. Most educationalists regard it as one of the most central affective factors that influence the success or failure of language learning. They also agree that motivation has significant bearings upon learner autonomy. Dickinson (1995,p. 14) argues that "learning success and enhanced motivation is conditional on learners taking responsibility for their own learning". Hence, motivation appears to be a precondition leading to learner autonomy. As, it provides them with the driving force that helps them to take action, to seek out learning opportunities, to shoulder responsibility for their own learning and therefore to be autonomous. Besides, motivation directs learners to use metacognitive strategies, this metacognitive engagement in learning implies self-action which is in turn central to learner autonomy. If learners lack motivation in their language learning, it will be most likely challenging for them to experience or develop autonomy. They will be reluctant towards choice making and self-directed practices, thus will lack autonomy traits. Hence, there is an undeniable solid correlation between motivation and autonomy.

In fact, learners can be intrinsically or extrinsically motivated to learn a second or a foreign language. In the intrinsic motivation, the desire to perform a particular learning task arises from within the learner, it is stimulated by the pleasure and the satisfaction gained from the learning activity per se. Deci and Ryan (1985) maintain, with respect to their SDT theory (self-determination theory), that intrinsic motivation stands on individuals' psychological and intrinsic needs for knowledge and self-determination and argue that the most positive

outcomes relate to the most self-determined orientations. This suggests the strong connection between learners' intrinsic motivation and their sense of self-determination which can be seen as linked to the concept of autonomy.

However, in the extrinsic motivation, learners are driven to act due to external measures. Such as, getting a job, high grades, and academic recognition, or avoiding failure and punishment. The former kind of motivation is claimed to be more beneficial and rewarding, than the latter. Because, it derives from a natural internal interest and core beliefs that are deeply rooted in the learner's character, it is learner-regulated. As opposed to intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation is activated only with external intervention; it is conditioned by the presence or the absence of the extrinsic motivators. This eventually can control learners' motivation and thus probably undermine their autonomy in leaning. In this case, teachers can make use of extrinsic motivation by providing motives such as praises, rewards and positive feedback to stimulate their desire for taking action.

1.6.3. Learning environment

Any form of language learning, be it autonomous or not, is bound to a certain learning surrounding which could either encourage or restrain it. The learning environment is naturally a broad concept that comprises various elements. These are mainly external to the learner such as: the classroom context (syllabus, examination systems, peer collaboration, teachers roles, etc) as well as the social and the cultural contexts. With respect to the learning cultural context, Holliday (1994) interestingly specified several learning sub-cultures like the: national culture, professional academic cultures, international education-related cultures, host-institution culture, classroom culture and student culture. They are all, more or less, involved in the overall process of language learning.

Some learning environment parameters are seen as favorable to the cultivation of autonomy because they tend to facilitate it. For example, syllabuses which provide rich learning opportunities for responsibility taking and shared decision making, or teachers acting as counselors instead of knowledge resources allowing some space for freedom of pedagogical choices, are likely to yield responsible and independent language learners. However, classroom culture is not contextually sufficient for fostering autonomy according to Ushioda (2011b, as cited in Tatzl, 2015). Because, the latter depends heavily on the social learning environment as argued: "students' readiness to internalize curriculum goals and values depends to a large extent on the degree to which the social learning environment

supports their sense of autonomy" (p.224). This suggests the primordial role of the social learning situation in the adoption of autonomy principles.

Furthermore, Tatzl (2015) raised an interesting point about Lier's (2004) notion of "relations of possibility" that concerns learners' perceptions of the environment, in which he puts forward that:

> Learners make use of resources and contexts in ways that they perceive as being personally meaningful and relevant. The important point to stress here is that it is not the contextual structures and resources per se that facilitate autonomy, but it depends on how learners interpret these. Learners do not just react to contexts and their resources but they make their own meaning out of their own perspectives. (p.43)

The viewpoint held here posits that the contextual learning parameters are not directly linked to an autonomous learning action. It is rather students' psychological conception of those environmental resources that determines the learning practices.

1.7. Teacher autonomy

In the course of working on the worthwhile goal of learner autonomy in language education, teachers need not only to play the role of facilitators, counselors or monitors, but need also to be effective decision makers, responsible leaders, and independent professionals at schools. Those roles, in effect, are focal conditions for academic autonomy. This implies that teachers are presupposed to be, in some degree, autonomous. With this regard, Little (1995) argues "the promotion of learner autonomy depends (in fact) on the promotion of teacher autonomy" (1995,p. 179) and adds that learner autonomy is more likely to be developed if teachers have themselves received an autonomous encouraging education (ibid: 180). Furthermore, Breen and Mann (1997) maintain that "an essential precondition for the teacher to be able to foster autonomous learning is an explicit awareness of the teacher's own self as a *learner*" (1997,p.145). So, teachers ought to conceive themselves as learners not only of the teaching craft but also, of the foreign language they teach or even of their students' first language, Smith (2003).

The construct of teacher autonomy has initially been used, in the field of language education, by Allwright (1988) and subsequently elaborated by Little (1995) who defined it as "teachers' capacity to engage in self-directed teaching.". It generally embodies learner

autonomy tenets, in assuming responsibility, self-directedness, taking control, and freedom of choice. In this sense, Aoki (1999) supposed that if learner autonomy is: "The capacity, freedom, and/or responsibility to make choices concerning one's own learning . . . teacher autonomy, by analogy, can be defined as capacity, freedom to make choices concerning one's own teaching". (Aoki, 1999,p.111)

Benson (2000,p. 111), defines teacher autonomy as "a right to freedom from control (or an ability to exercise this right) as well as actual freedom from control"**.** Richard Smith (2000) on the other hand, explains it "as the ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge and attitudes for oneself as a teacher, in cooperation with others" (p. 89). While, Thavenius (1999) describes the autonomous teacher as one "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" (1999,p. 160). As can be seen, the term teacher autonomy, akin to learner autonomy, has been described in several ways; as a capacity, a set of skills, and a right for freedom. To make it easier for users to employ the term , Smith (2001,p. 5) has made an interesting list out of the various dimensions of teacher autonomy that are presented in the educational literature, in which he summarized six points in relation to two main categories, one associated with professional action and the other linked to professional development:

In relation to professional action:

A. Self-directed professional action

B. Capacity for self-directed professional action

C. Freedom from control over professional action

In relation to professional development:

D. Self-directed professional development

E. Capacity for self-directed professional development

F. Freedom from control over professional development

What can be drawn from the above distinction is that, the first set concerns the teacher's action solely, that is, the autonomy of the teacher is experienced while exercising the teaching activity regardless of the proceeding effect, therefore, it sees autonomy as a 'state'. Unlike the second set, that takes autonomy as an 'ongoing process', and emphasizes on the developmental dimension of the autonomous teacher. By inference, the two categories imply different degrees of autonomy, teacher autonomy in the first sense tend to bear a lower level of autonomy if compared to the second, because the act of developing an action entails

higher autonomy and is more demanding than the act of doing the action itself. Besides, teachers who have the capacity and freedom to take control of their professional development are certainly well able to take self-directed professional action, but the other way around is not necessarily true.

From a relational perspective, La Ganza cited in Lamb and Reinders (2008,p. 71,72) marked the notion of teacher autonomy in terms of four principal dynamic dimensions:

1. Teacher autonomy in relation to internal dialectics with peers and other mentors
2. Teacher autonomy in relation to learners
3. Teacher autonomy in relation to potential decision makers inside the institution
4. Teacher autonomy in relation to potential decision makers outside the institution

This view of teacher autonomy as an inter-relational construct suggests that the four dimensions "are interconnected socially and culturally, as part of the same society, and psychologically, through the common element of the teacher" (ibid). They all impinge on the autonomy of the teacher; the social and psychological interactions with peer teachers, learners, internal and external decision makers can either support or hamper the teacher's freedom to be creative, to act on their thoughts, and to attain their targets. In fact, such model has not just profitably contributed to broaden our understanding of the term, but it has also, displayed important aspects embedded in teacher autonomy that can be pedagogically useful.

With this interdependent relational aspect in teacher autonomy, external control is unavoidably self-imposed. For the reason that, the relating individuals (colleagues, administrative staff, learners, parents, legislation and policy makers) can directly or indirectly restrict the teacher's choice over the teaching content, instructions or evaluation. For example, teachers may be required to follow certain course sequence from a particular designated textbook. If such curriculum guidelines are strictly mandated, then teachers' freedom to amend or to make choices over the content, arrangement and assessment of teaching activities, is therefore very limited. Accordingly, curriculum policies in particular, and educational as well as political environments in general, can to a greater or a lesser extent influence the autonomy of the teacher.

External control can be undesirable for some teachers since it hampers their freedom to act independently, however such restriction on independent action is sometimes essential to prevent the misuse of teacher autonomy. Indeed, this has been stressed by Cohen (1981) on the significance of teacher evaluation by others so as to prevent the profession from being 'fossilized'. Because, teacher autonomy is a double edged sword, it can positively create life-long learners, effective decision makers, as it can potentially result in random detrimental

teaching. Therefore, righteous control over teaching performance should be carefully maintained to ensure desired learning outcomes.

1.8. The cultural dimension in learner autonomy

Being aware of the significant value of the cultural impact on autonomous language learning, many researchers (e.g. Riley 1988, Little & Dam, 1998 ; Benson et al, 2003; Holliday, 2003; Palfreyman , 2003 ; Oxford, 2003; Riley, 2003; Smith, 2003) drew careful attention to it within diverse countries and cultural contexts.

For example, Riley's (1988) research work somehow validates the viewpoint which takes learner autonomy as 'culturally-bound', it showed that students' readiness to take on an autonomous learning mode depends on their cultural background. "if we accept that autonomy takes different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different context of learning, we may also need to accept that its manifestations will vary according to cultural context." Benson (2001, p. 55). Therefore, a need for investigating learner autonomy in different cultural settings was called for, so as to examine the adaptability of the concept within diverse cultures (Cotterall, 1995; 1999 ;Bullock, 2011) .

This concept of culture has actually been highlighted in various educational settings. Because learning occurs in essence within specific cultural contexts which inevitably shape the form of learning, in a way that is compatible with the cultural norms and practices of a particular community. If learning is notably influenced by the learners' cultural background, potential questions, then seem to emerge: is learner autonomy suitable as an educational goal for all cultural contexts? Is it appreciated in particular cultures and devalued in others? If possibly integrated in all educational settings, does it take equal implementation and promotion pace across worldwide cultures? Regarding such concerns and particularly issues of cultural appropriateness towards learner autonomy, there seems to exist two major views in the literature, one standpoint advocating the generalizability of learner autonomy in worldwide cultures, and another emphasizing the learners' cross-cultural particularity.

On the one hand, some researchers hold that learner autonomy is a concept that can feasibly be discussed, instigated and developed in every corner of the world. Little (1999), for example, strongly assumes the universality of learner autonomy "learner autonomy is an appropriate pedagogical goal in all cultural settings" (Little, 1999b,p. 15). Because, for him, it basically involves an individual's ability to take responsibility for one's own learning, which makes up part of any human being's overall capacities. Likewise, Benson (2001) and Sinclair

(2000) are of the same mind in describing some commonly recognized features of autonomy, "Autonomy is about capacity therefore is a learner attribute rather than learning situation" Benson (2006a,p. 23). This, indeed, implies the applicability of the concept in any learning context no matter what cultural background it belongs to. Even though this view is sensitively soothing; since all learners, as presumed, share equal possibility to become autonomous, it appears to discount the effect of social and cultural factors on learning. Nevertheless, the cultural dimension of autonomy is definitely not denied; " ... autonomy may mean different things to different people in different settings" Benson (2007,p. 2) in other words, "autonomy has cultural interpretations" Sinclair (2000,p. 6).

On the other hand, it has been pointed out that learner autonomy may not be appropriate, due to some cultural constraints, in some societies as it may, on the contrary, well be fitting to other ethnic cultures (Benson 1997; Pennycook 1997; Sinclair 1997). This claim corresponds respectively to the 'non-Western cultures' versus 'Western cultures' opposition. Littlewood (1999) for example, holds that autonomy might be unsuitable for non-Western contexts, since most of autonomy reported definitions are typically connected to Western individualism. In addition to that, Western societies are often characterized as upholding a good sense of individualism, self-confidence, self-expression, personal independence and critical thinking, which are key characteristics of learner autonomy, therefore, they are most likely to be appealing to Western values.

However, "doubts about the cultural appropriateness of the goal of autonomy for Asian students have been mainly based on a view of Asian cultures as collectivist and accepting of relations of power and authority" (Benson, 2001,p. 56). Accordingly, power gaps between teachers and learners cause one of the main obstacles for developing autonomy in collectivist cultures. Because in Asian cultures, 'knowledge is power', therefore, people conveying knowledge (teachers) are ranked in a higher position than people who are less knowledgeable (learners). For that reason, respect for authority is fundamental and learners who tend to discuss, contradict or criticize their superiors' (teachers) knowledge, may appear to be disrespectful and impolite, this evidently indicates bad education in the society's eyes . Furthermore, the Asian 'culture of learning', as articulated by (Palfreyman , 2003), tends to cherish certain qualities such as, group work, memorization, imitation, theoretical knowledge and a receptive learning style, which actually mismatch the essential conditions for cultivating learner autonomy. As a result, it might be uneasy to manifest autonomy in such learning contexts. Nevertheless, despite such cultural constraints, Ho and Crookall (1995) have successfully shown the viability of promoting learner autonomy in an Asian context by

engaging learners into a project that enabled them to develop certain autonomy-based capabilities, skills and attitudes.

In this respect, Littlewood (1999) interestingly puts forward two forms of autonomy ,as mentioned previously, 'proactive' and 'reactive'. He describes the former as "the form of autonomy that is usually intended when the concept is discussed in the West" while he presents the latter as the type of autonomy which "does not create its own directions" and which is most readily conveyed by Asian learners. In proactive autonomy, the learning objectives are autonomously set by learners. That is, without external intervention, learners are able to make deliberate efforts and purposeful contribution in fixing their own learning goals. This form is assumed to be compatible with the Western tradition. While in reactive autonomy, learners organize their resources to achieve learning objectives that have already been set. Being as such, it is believed that reactive autonomy can correspond with the East Asian context. What is more, Littlewood proclaims reactive autonomy to be a preliminary stage for Asian learners that can mature to become proactive in the Western sense.

As for the Algerian context, there seems to be a set of cultural traits that can be regarded as inhibiting in the road to autonomy. Sonaiya (2002), for instance, believes that the idea of autonomy is unsuitable to African settings. In fact, this is assumed mainly because we tend to find within African or Algerian learners, in particular, certain educational beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that are not very far from the aforesaid Asian style. Such beliefs and attitudes stem from notions like; collaboration, authority's control, indirectness and social status that are deeply rooted in the national cultural background.

For example, members of the Algerian society tend to follow parents and society conventions Benaissi (2015), because an Algerian student "progresses in a culture of the group, the family, the community; takes decisions with the parents (family); shares experience with others." (ibid). This sense of collective involvement in one's own life is, thus, reflected in students' approach to learning, in that, they readily accept teachers' full command in outlining their learning path, in determining the 'what', 'how 'and 'why' of their learning. As they show little capacity to take the initiative and suppose that their learning progression and outcome are in a large part their teachers' responsibility.

Indirect communication is another cultural feature that defines Algerian students' learning attitude. With a habitual tendency to communicate ideas and information around the point or in a vague manner, generally to save face and to maintain the honor of both interlocutors or to seem polite and respectful, Algerian learners tend to find difficulty in describing directly what seems relevant, beneficial or redundant to their learning in front of

their educators. As a result, they may not be able to express with full clarity and precision their learning needs and expectations. This eventually may hamper student's freedom of self-expression and personal independence, and may implicitly discourage and reduce their capacity for autonomous learning.

Moreover, social status is important in the Algerian society and showing respect for members in a powerful position, is generally assumed. Therefore, learners (being in a less powerful place than instructors who are masters of the class), often find it embarrassing to question the content of their learning or to discuss the knowledge conveyed by their superiors. Likewise, students' intellectual disagreement and detection of what is right or wrong is sometimes seen as challenge and effrontery. This has in some way resulted in a tendency towards a conservative approach to learning, where many learners lack a level of rational skepticism and critical thinking, which are key components of learner autonomy.

Although the Algerian cultural tradition holds some constraints that can cause uneasiness and reluctance towards autonomous learning, it is certainly not impossible to adapt ways and strategies that can cope with conditions of this particular context as, Holliday (2003) maintains, autonomy resides in students' social worlds and learners from different cultures can be autonomous in their own way. Therefore, with the great variation in cultures, autonomy in learning can still be achievable since its core components seem to be universally inherent and shared.

1.9. Conclusion

All things considered, this chapter was basically about examining the theoretical part of learner autonomy. It tried to provide a comprehensive review of the concept referring to the most dominant works in the literature of language education. Thus, it described the history of the term, defined it after reviewing several accredited definitions and highlighted major concepts related to it. Besides, it discussed focal components of learner autonomy such as: the capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action. These features are influenced, according to several scholars, by a number of conditions and parameters which have been explored as well such as: teacher autonomy, learners' beliefs and the learning context. Since promoting learner autonomy is the ultimate goal of this study, the chapter unavoidably revealed strategies and ways of fostering it in the language classroom, as it proposed a personal model for that. In the following chapter, I will try to relate the concept of learner autonomy with the Algerian educational context.

CHAPTER TWO

ELT IN THE ALGERIAN SECONDARY EDUCATION AND LEARNER AUTONOMY

2. Introduction

Educational systems unquestionably play a paramount role in molding learners' achievements and building their success. Through its objective-based curricula, education has the potential of shaping learners' emotions, thoughts and attitudes. For example, curricula that instigate learners' intellect and curiosity towards world exploration are likely to stretch their independent learning skills and thus tend to boost their opportunities for higher achievements. Learners who are introduced to different kinds of knowledge, competences and skills from a prescriptive base would differ in their outcomes from peers developing from an evocative and expressive pedagogy. Thus, implanting particular concepts, mind-sets and pedagogies has great bearings upon students' learning performance.

It is important to note that the primary purpose of education in present-day societies is to endow learners with the essential skills and aptitudes for an effective functioning in the career world. Efficient educational systems are generally more concerned with meeting up jobs requirements, rather than enlightening the learners' minds with a static body of knowledge and competencies. Therefore, educational systems ought to instill certain behaviors, attitudes and values within learners that can align with those expected demands in the professional world. Acting and thinking as critical, free and autonomous learners are amongst the basic requisites for the preparation of individuals who would belong to the society's labor force. Therefore, it is indispensable for any educational system to adopt those mind-sets, if it is willing to fulfill its main objective; that of ensuring the learners' success.

Highlighting the importance of education and regarding the educational sector as having such an imperative power on the learners' prospect, it is extremely vital, thus to consider, in this study, how the Algerian educational system works. This is to understand its functioning before trying to implement an aspect that is not quite retained in the traditions of the national education. Hence, in this chapter, I believe that it is worth, at first, to look back at the Algerian educational recent history and reforms so as to set the ground for a better understanding of the undergoing changes the system had witnessed and consequently to figure out the current educational situation in Algeria vis-à-vis learner autonomy.

2.1. An overview of the Algerian educational system

As indicated in the introduction, it is crucial to shed light on the background of education in the Algerian context for the two following reasons. First, to provide an insight on the Algerian education mechanism from the post-independence era till the present time. Second, to examine foreign languages teaching policy, precisely to reveal the importance given to English via its instructional approach along this period.

2.1.1. Educational reforms

Since Algeria's independence in July 1962, the national educational system has undergone an assortment of changes and reforms. The initial significant reform experienced in this sector was the Arabisation policy of the school system. It was initiated in 1963 then lasted till the 1990's. Arabic became the primary language used in school curricula, programs, and manuals while French was to be gradually diminished from the educational sector and to be taught only as a foreign language. Implementing this policy meant to fight against the French language and to restore the status of Arabic in the educational sector. Thus, at that point of time, teaching Arabic was mandatory at all levels and in all syllabi, since Arabic monolingualism was a major end for the schooling system. By 1975, all subjects were fully arabised in primary schools, nearly totally arabised in secondary schools, while French was taught as a foreign language starting from the fourth grade of the primary level, with lessened teaching hours. With regard to higher education, in 1980, almost all university humanities fields were arabised (philosophy, law, history, geography, sociology and political sciences), whereas in scientific disciplines like (engineering, mathematics medicine…etc) French was still kept as the language of instruction. (Ayat-Benmati, 2008)

The Arabisation strategy is actually one of the major linguistic moves that marked Algeria's language policy in education. Nonetheless, it has been extensively criticized for falling short to face different obstacles and for meeting the essential demands of such reform. For example, it failed in dealing with the lack of the amount of Algerian teaching workforce. The authorities in 1964 seemingly managed to find a solution to this issue by recruiting one thousand Arabic language instructor from the Middle East mainly from Egypt and Syria. Yet, the problem was still entirely unresolved, because these teachers' pedagogy proved to be ineffective in the Algerian educational context (Grandguillaume, 2004).

After maintaining an educational system that lasted until the 1970's (consisting of a five-years instruction in the primary school, four years in the middle school and three years in the secondary school), the national authorities reestablished, in 1976, another reform mainly characterized by a nine-year fundamental education program that fused the primary and middle schooling together (made up of six years of primary education pursued by three years of middle schooling). In that fundamental system, Arabic was still dominant in all subjects instruction except in foreign languages. English was taught at the level of middle school for pupils generally aged thirteen years (Benrabah 2007a).

In 1976, the government proclaimed that education should be ruled only by the state; consequently all educational institutions held a public status. However, in 2004 this decision has been amended when the government allowed the foundation of private schools. As a result of this verdict, over the past decade the number of private primary, middle and secondary schools has multiplied. In spite of that, the private sector's outcomes still remain trivial to the overall Algerian education aspirations.

The ongoing educational change process records another prominent reform launched in 1993, when the educational managers mandated the teaching of English as the first compulsory foreign language at the level of primary education (grade four). This decree did not exclude French but rather maintained it as an optional substitute for English. Thus the foreign language to be taught at that stage was based on the pupils' choice. In reality, this process discontinued for it did not spread out, since it covered a small number of primary schools across the country, because most parents' language preference was principally French not English (Benrabah, 2007a).

Probably, the most distinguished amendment among the recent education reforms belongs to higher education. It is the LMD system which was initiated in 2004. Compared to the traditional system, this new system has brought some notable modification with regard to the studies duration, evaluation methods, and degrees types. The system is designed in terms of three basic levels conferring the following qualifications: Licence, .Master, and Doctorate. The first degree (Licence) obtainment involves three years of study (corresponding to 180 credits), the second degree (Master) is granted after two years of study (corresponding to 120 credits), while the third degree Doctorate is awarded after at least three years of research plus a thesis defended. From this reform, it was hoped that the Algerian university meets the international higher educational standards. That is to say, it was aspired that Algerian

universities become more congruent with European/world universities systems by having compatible programs and thus Algerian students will be able to enter the world universities with higher possibilities of success.

All in all, in its quest for recovery and enhancement, the Algerian educational system had to undergo many transformations over time. Some of which might have been fruitful and rewarding to the academic sector, while others are thought to be hasty and ineffective leading to an urgent need for renewal or restitution. Even though such reforms may seem different in their character or outcomes, their directions and purposes are certainly in motion towards improvement.

2.1.2. An overview of the current Algerian educational structure

The present Algerian educational system is divided into four educational levels: primary, elementary, secondary and university. While the three first levels are directed by the Ministry of National Education, university falls under the management of the Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research. Each level terminates with an official national examination except university education that obviously ends up with degrees granting.

2.1.2.1. Primary education

As previously mentioned, every child at school age (generally six years) ought to be enrolled in primary school. Education at this level is carried out within five years of studies, during which pupils learn all subjects in Arabic beside the subject of French (starting from the second year) as the first and single foreign language. Neither English nor any other foreign language is taught at this stage. In the fifth year, pupils are supposed to take an exam called the Fifth Grade Exam (le 5eme) in order to shift into the subsequent cycle. Otherwise pupils would pass from primary to elementary school on the basis of their yearly evaluation (of three trimester examinations).

2.1.2.2. Middle school education

Elementary education engages four learning years to pupils generally aged between 11 and 15 years old. During their first year, they start learning English as the second foreign language in addition to French. At the final year, pupils conclude their basic education with the *Brevet d'Enseignement Moyen* (BEM) examination. Learners who pass this examination can have access to secondary education.

2.1.2.3. Secondary school education

High school education lasts over a period of three years time (for pupils usually aged from 15 to 18 years). At the first year, it consists of two main streams: *scientific* and *literary* leading in the subsequent year to other sub streams: scientific*; experimental/maths/technical maths/management and economy* and literary: *literature and philosophy and foreign languages*. Selection of the latter is based on pupils' grades, their own choice plus instructors' opinions about their actual aptitude. At the end of the third year, students sit for the baccalaureate (BAC) exam. Success in this exam is the key to higher education entrance; that is it is the learners' single means to guarantee admission to the university.

2.1.2.4. Higher education

The baccalaureate holding students can register in one of the university disciplines on the basis of the following criteria: their own selection, their BAC stream and the scores obtained in the BAC exam. According to Oxford Report (2014), the number of university student population has notably increased in the recent years. It was reported that an enormous number of students enrolled in human sciences (commerce, language studies, economy, sociology, law…etc). Unlike human sciences, the field of exact sciences and technology attracts only the small minority of students (ibid). The academic year at university lasts from September to June (excluding mid-term holidays) during which Licence and Master students have to sit twice for exams. The evaluation system rests on the number of credits gained from the different learning units (basic unit, methodological unit, discovery unit and cross-section unit).

2.1.3. Advantages and drawbacks of education in Algeria

For the sake of educational improvement, the Algerian state has devoted considerable human and financial resources to this sector. The authorities pronounce firmly that schooling is a legitimate free and compulsory right for all children aged between 6 and 15 years. Parents who deprive their children from attending school are penalized by the law. This is to ensure equal learning opportunity for each and every Algerian child. Additionally, pupils' exclusion from school has been prohibited in the recent years, presumably for the purpose of preventing child-labor and for protecting the young from the many outdoor-dangers they may confront. Moreover, at the beginning of every school year, the government dispenses annual funds to support low-income parents' children with some school stuff, books and three thousands

Algerian dinar for each needy pupil. According to various media reports a great deal of public investment has been allocated to the construction of five thousand new schools (covering primary, middle and secondary schools) in the years 2010-2014.

As far as higher education is concerned, the Algerian state offers considerable facilities to university students in order to help them enhance their learning conditions. Unlike most countries of the world, Algeria provides free education to all university students under the public system. Accommodations as well as transportation are gratis for students who reside in the university campus. The very best students are generally granted multiple type scholarships in different countries across the world so as to enable them expand their education and excel their proficiencies. Through the National Research Project, considerable budgets are devoted to scientific research and innovation. Thus, under this framework many university researchers can benefit at the aim of updating their professional knowledge, reinforcing their competencies and fostering the local teaching quality.

The dark side of education in Algeria conceals some constraints that are seriously hampering this sector's progress. Algerian education is suffering from mass school dropouts particularly for pupils aged between 14-17 years. Thus, keeping learners in schools has become a true challenge. The reason behind this phenomenon can be partially attributed to the educational system's ineffectiveness as well as parents'/family's careless conduct towards the children' schooling. In addition, one of the obvious obstacles that come out within all levels of education relate to the large number of students per section/class. It is undisputable that large classes impinge negatively upon the quality of teaching and learning. In addition to that, the lack of technical equipments that are required for an adequate teaching within various disciplines pauses a real problem to education. As a result, most curricula appear to fail in providing the learners with the know-how and consequently fail to train them for future employment. Indeed, the unemployment crisis somehow relates closely to the inappropriate academic training in different sectors. With the raising demands, education does not guarantee job enrollment most probably because of the inconsistency between the national curricula and the skills and competencies required in the professional world.

2.1.4. Outlooks on Algeria's schooling system

Academics' judgments over the contemporary educational changes show a discrepancy. Whilst some researchers believe that the educational system is advancing and

bringing many objectives to fruition, others assume that it is sadly becoming more and more a dreadful failure and a serious setback for the socio-economic development of the nation.

From the one hand, a number of researchers view the overall change optimistically, that is, they consider it as gradually improving and progressing, partly due to the remarkable decrease in the illiteracy rate and the considerable increase in the employment ratio that Algeria has achieved.

> Algeria has made significant progress with regards to education. According to UNESCO figures, unemployment has been reduced from 27% in 2001 to 12.3% in 2006, and literacy rates have increased from 50% for adults and 74% for youths in 1987 to 75% and 92% in 2006, respectively.
>
> **(The Report: Emerging Algeria, 2008)**

Moreover, it is also viewed as doing well for having reached the objective of enrolling 99% of the children in primary education, and having filled the gender gap at the primary school with higher rate of girl's enrolment than boys and in secondary and higher education (ibid).

On the other hand, some scholars undervalue the amendments and feel upset about them. They regard such change as a decline and a regression to the educational sector specifically and to the nation building process generally, especially in the recent years.

> According to the 2008 World Bank report "The Road Not Travelled" on education reform in the Middle East and North Africa region , the current level of education in Algeria is not making a sufficient contribution to economic growth. Overall, the quality of teaching in Algeria remains below par across the board, and failure and repetition rates for secondary and higher education entrance exams remain high, resulting in many students dropping out of school.
>
> (ibid.)

In addition, Benrabah (2007a) confirms in his paper the detrimental functioning of the educational system concerning the era of the 2000's, by stating that:

> In fact, the Algerian government has come to admit that education has "failed"… in June 2005, ten classes in the city of Mascara took their final examination at the end of the primary cycle (Sixth Form examination for 11-12 years old) and not one single pupil succeeded. … In mid-November 2005, the

> minister of Higher Education declared that 80% of first-year students fail their final exams because of linguistic incompetence. Benrabah (2007a, p.226)

Indeed, one of the central factors to such failure can be attributed to the Arabised educational system, as stated by Benrabah: "the imposition of an exclusively Arabic monolingual schooling system implemented during the nationalist phase is considered to be a major source of its current failure" (2007, p.226). Because, the rejection of other languages and the dominance of monolingualism in teaching, has led to an educational conservatism (Grandguillaume, 2004). This has eventually contributed in weakening the learners' linguistic aptitudes. Another potential cause of the system's malfunction is the spoon-feeding teaching method that is currently adopted by many Algerian instructors, in spite of the CBA official implementation, which primarily rests on the principle of building competencies and autonomous knowledge construction.

2.2. English Language Education in Algeria

Given that English has increasingly become a lingua franca and a vital means of communication across the globe, it has eventually gained recognition within the Algerian educational curricula. Hence, to what extent has English been maintained and emphasized by the ministry of education and how was it implemented in the Algerian educational system?

2.2.1. The status of English in the Algerian schooling system

Since Algeria's independence to the present time, the subject of English has been taught as a foreign language in schools, yet it did not hold the same position. In other words, English was considered as the first foreign language at particular points of time, and second at others. In the early years of independence, English gained the status of the first foreign language. Mainly, because the authorities aimed to diminish the French linguistic impact on the Algerian society. Therefore, English was taught starting from the third grade of middle school (for pupils aged 13) until the final year of high school. This yearly distribution has lasted up to 2004. Till then, the status of English has been altered from first to second position, as higher priority has been given to French rather than English. Exceptionally, within the reform of 1993, English was introduced as an optional alternative for French to the fourth grade at primary education.

Currently, English stands as the second official foreign language in schools. Its instruction begins at the first grade of middle school (i.e. at the age of 11) and ends in the final year of secondary education. Thus, pupils learn English over a period of seven years (4 at middle school and 3 at high school). However, in the recent times, English is becoming of paramount importance to many communities at different levels. It has gained a prestigious image in the society's eyes, to governmental authorities, to the media and to politicians as well. Pupil-Parent associations have demanded the ministry of national education to incept English as the first compulsory foreign language at primary school instead of French in the school year 2016/2017. Holding the belief that mastering English is more important to the coming generations than French, since the former is considered universally as the language of science, research and technology. They sustained that emphasizing French does not serve anymore their children's future requisites both intellectually or economically. In the following table, a more succinct illustration of the status of English is presented:

	-1962	**1962-1975**	**1975-1993**	**1993-2004**	**1993-2003**	**2003-**
English as FL1	Intermediate Cycle (4 years) + Secondary Cycle (3 years)				Primary Cycle (3 years) + Intermediate Cycle (3 years) + Secondary cycle (3 years)	
English as FL2		Intermediate Cycle (2 years) + Secondary Cycle (3 years)	Intermediate Cycle (2 years) + Secondary Cycle (3 years)	Intermediate Cycle (2 years) + Secondary Cycle (3 years)		Intermediate Cycle (4 years) + Secondary Cycle (3 years)
Total	**7years**	**5 years**	**5 years**	**5 years**	**9 years**	**7 years**

Table 2.1: The status of English at the Algerian school (adopted from Ayat-Benmati, 2008).

2.2.2. Methodologies of ELT in Algeria

As part of Algeria's education reforms, modernizing teaching was one of the most pressing priorities. Thus, the Ministry of National Education started reviewing the textbooks, curricular and the teaching approaches, as an attempt to improve the quality of teaching and to renovate the structure of the educational system. English language education, inevitably, took an important part in the overall process. The Algerian EFL specialists, following, the universal trend of the so-called most excellent language teaching methods, opted for various teaching approaches starting from the traditional classical method; the grammar translation method (GTM), moving to the audio-lingual method (ALM), then to the communicative approach (CLT), coming up at the 'most contemporary' one; the competency based approach (CBA). Actually, these many alterations in English language teaching methods did not occur haphazardly or just for the sake of variation, but rather due to some imperative factors or obstacles that authorities had to confront and for the ultimate purpose of adapting and coping with the emerging needs of the Algerian ELT field. According to Richards (2015) there are five major factors upon which the adoption of new curriculum innovations in teaching depends:

> 1- The extent to which an approach or a method is officially adopted by educational authorities, and educational organizations.
>
> 2-The support it receives by authority figures or experts, such as academics and educational specialists.
>
> 3- The extent to which it can provide the basis for educational resources, such as textbooks and educational software.
>
> 4- The ease with which it can be understood and used by teachers.
>
> 5- The extent to which it aligns with national curriculum and assessment guidelines.
>
> Richards (2015, p. 94)

2.2.2.1. The Grammar Translation Method

The very early method employed in English language education since Algeria's independence, was the Grammar translation method. As its name suggests, this method rests on two basic learning activities: grammatical knowledge and translation practice. Hence, EFL teachers' primary role was the deductive teaching of grammar structures through a direct translation from first language to English. Consequently, students who were taught under this method framework used to learn the grammatical rules of the target language overtly. These grammatical features were not concealed; on the contrary, the teacher explicitly used the technical grammatical terminology. Students were expected to memorize the new grammar points after exercising a number of translation activities from target language into the first language or vice versa, Stern (1983, p.454). Rote learning, translation of written texts, and the study of a bilingual vocabulary lists are the fundamental practices of this approach. It was believed that this way is beneficial to learners as it enables them to form accurate sentences in English and helps them enhance their lexical repertoire.

At the expense of listening and speaking, reading and writing are the language skills that gained much emphasis, because the basic aim was not communication but the mastery of grammar rules and translation from the foreign language to the mother tongue. That is why accuracy had higher priority than fluency, whereas effective communication and correct pronunciation were neglected. As a result of this rigid approach, even the most competent and most skilled learners in grammatical structure, in writing or in understanding texts, had difficulties when communicating in English. This is obviously because of a lack in the speaking and listening practice. In this regard, Clark (1987) states that "experience has shown that despite the linguistic competence built up by high achievers in grammar-translation courses, the expected by-product -a communicative ability- has not materialized" (p.11). This reality had led to one of the principal attacks against the Grammar translation method as it had accused the latter for failing to develop learners' communicative competence.

If we go back in time (to the 1960's) trying to picture the English class in the Algerian schools, we would observe the teacher starting the lesson with a reading passage in English, requiring the learners to read it, then translate it into the mother tongue. Then, learners would endeavor to answer a number of questions (usually in a written form) about the text (e.g. making inferences, finding data from the text, extracting synonyms and antonyms). After that, we would notice the instructor emphasizing one grammar point by explicitly explaining it and comparing it to the rule of the mother tongue. By the end of the lesson, we would see learners

attempting to demonstrate their understanding by making their own sentences in which they employ the newly learnt grammar rules.

Sadly enough, although this traditional method seem to belong to an old time, its traces are somehow still retained in the Algerian contemporary EFL teaching practice. As we can still observe the effect of rules memorization and translation principles in some (middle/high school) EFL teachers' instruction. This might well be perceived in the reading comprehension classes, where the instructor deals with the English reading passage in a similar way to the classical one. As an attempt to facilitate English learning, they tend to explain the text in the first language. They assist learners to find English words' synonyms or antonyms in Arabic, for memorization purposes. Besides, much of the lesson time is devoted to read and written English, while little attention is paid to communication skills. Bringing the tenets of the Grammar translation method into play till the present is probably due to the uneasy application of this method in foreign language classes.

2.2.2.2. The Audio-lingual method

After a wide recognition of the classical method's (GTM) failure in developing the learners' aural-oral capacities for communication in the foreign language, Algerian EFL educators recognized the necessity for a method-based change. Thus, they strongly advocated an alternative method called the Audio-lingual method, in the hope of mending the shortage caused by the preceding. It was implemented in the local English curriculum through "Success With English" Course book I in 1970 and "Success With English" II in 1971. The audio-lingual method, as it was hoped for emphasizes on the students' ability to acquire communicative skills. It attaches great importance to the listening and speaking skills, while it strictly avoids the use of the mother tongue in class. This method took its principles from the disciplines of structural linguistics and behavioral psychology (Skinner, 1957), in that it was inspired by the objective formal description of language patterns and the Stimulus-Response-Reinforcement model of learning. Moulton (1961) summarized the principles of the ALM in the form of five slogans demonstrating the linguistic and psychological features:

1. Language is speech, not writing
2. A language is what its native speakers say, not what someone thinks they ought to say
3. Languages are different
4. A language is a set of habits

5. Teach the language, not about the language (as cited in Nagaraj,1996)

In this method, the EFL teacher introduces the language point to be taught in a contextualized dialogue with an emphasis on correct pronunciation, stress and intonation. Learners are expected to repeat and memorize the dialogue presented, because language learning is believed to be primarily habit training. Learners, then, are supposed to do pattern-practice activities that concentrate on specific grammatical structures chosen from the given dialogue. The teacher plays a central and dominant role, because he / she controls the learning direction and pace, chooses the relevant language model for imitation, monitors learners' performance and corrects their mistakes made in the target language.

In the late 1960's, educational practitioners discredited this approach to learning, because they found out that its learning and teaching outcomes fell short of expectations. As Stern (1983) puts it: "In the early sixties, audio-lingualism had raised hopes of ushering in a golden age of language learning. By the end of the decade it became the whipping boy for all that was wrong with language teaching"(p.465). Learners, though having acquired the grammatical competence, were often found to be unable to form new sentences in untried situations; they lacked the capacity to communicate effectively and appropriately in various contexts. This has naturally resulted from the mechanical practice (repetition, drilling and imitation techniques) of linguistic structures. Thus, innovation and creativity in using the target language were very restricted, because both participants (teacher and learner) knew what was expected. Another unsatisfactory issue with this method, is that it is very teacher-centered, the learner has little control over his/her learning process, almost every learning decision or procedure (such as: language content choice and material selection) is carried out completely and solely by the teacher. Hence, the practical downsides of this approach called Algerian EFL educators to reconsider the method being applied and made them shift their attention to a more efficient one.

2.2.2.3. The Communicative Language Teaching

In light of the emergence of new educational thoughts in the field of foreign language learning mainly within the communicative language teaching approach in the 1970's, "a period when everyone was 'going communicative'" (Richards, 2001) and at the turn down time of the audio-lingual method, Algerian ELT decision makers opted for CLT as the method required for developing English language education. Implementation of this approach started in the early 1980's, in which various English textbooks were outlined on the basis of the CLT

principles and views: such as Newlines (1981), Midlines (1981), Think it Over (1982-1983) and later, My New Book of English, New Midlines, and Comet in the 1990's (Hadi, 2012).

The CLT approach stands on the tenet of communication; it gives paramount importance to the communicative aspect of language. Precisely, it advocates the viewpoint that learning a language is synonymous to learning to communicate. A CLT based syllabus draws its principle from the notional functional categories of language. It emphasizes on activities that engage social interaction processes, sharing ideas and negotiation of meaning within different contextual situations through the use of discussion, interviews, role plays, quizzes, pair and group work...etc. The primary aim of this approach is developing the learners' communicative skills in the target language. Therefore, it seeks to enhance the communicative competence rather than the grammatical competence. Within this approach, learners' errors are tolerated and considered as an unavoidable part of the communicative process.

Unlike the preceding methods (GTM and ALM) which allow high authority and dependability on the teacher, the CLT approach discourages the teacher's over-dominance in class. The instructor is assumed to have different and multiple roles, as mentioned by Breen and Candlin (1980): a facilitator of communicative interaction, a needs analyst, a counselor, and a process manger (as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 1986). Thus, the teacher is supposed to manage the learning process, assist learners when communicative problems arise. Plus, he is expected to reveal the learners' needs and interests and respond accordingly.

It is worth noting that CLT is deemed a success, as it received a broad acceptance and support from creditable language theorists and practitioners (Widdowson, 1985; Harmer, 2003). It has brought several gains to foreign language teaching and more importantly to English language education, as it takes into account the communicative functional dimension of language. In other words, it enables the learners to use the language in real-life communicative situations, the thing that naturally instigates their motivation and increases their confidence. It is also honored because it centralizes the learners and sees the teacher only as a catalyst and advisor. What is more, it considers learners interests and needs and creates a harmonious teacher-learner relationship which is interactive and devoid of strict control or dominance.

Nevertheless, despite its numerous merits and widespread approval in the world of language education, CLT has been criticized for a number of issues. Some of which can be

attributed to the fact that it puts much emphasis on meaning at the expense of form. Additionally, some pronunciation and grammatical errors are left uncorrected, because fluency is more valued than accuracy. This has eventually generated "fluent but inaccurate" learners (Hughes, 1983). CLT was also attacked for placing heavy demands on the learner, since the latter is expected to plan the language program, interact with others in the target language, negotiate meaning and monitor their own progress. Such challenging duties are placed on a learner whose knowledge could be largely deficient.

Such CLT limitations came into view within the Algerian educational context, where EFL learners, who seldom utter or hear English outside the class, were confronted with interactive situations that entail a certain level of grammatical and communicative competences that they often lacked. Besides, EFL learners in Algeria failed to meet the inductive approach requirements, in terms of using effective strategies to notice and find out the targeted language structures. Most likely, because they were comfortable with the habitual deductive way of learning. From the teachers' part, it was also challenging to effectively apply this method within the Algerian EFL context, especially in large classes where the instructor needs to check and monitor the language use of every learner within a limited amount of time. The deficit in a strategic preparation for implementing CLT and the lack of teacher training appear to be the major reasons that led to unsuccessful communicative language learning. Finally, the CLT method proved to be so inadequate to the Algerian educational system, that the academic authorities withdrew its use from the English language curriculum after launching the 2003 educational reform.

2.2.2.4. The Competency-Based Approach

As the educational reform movement went on in Algeria, the Ministry of national education undertook another amendment procedure marked by the adoption of the competency-based approach (CBA). Attracted by its renowned success in the field of education and believing that it is the efficient way to revive the schooling system quality, the CBA has been introduced to all disciplines at three educational levels: primary, middle and secondary schools. It was first initiated in middle schools in 2003, before reaching secondary schools two years later. The CBA is still sustained in the Algerian educational system till the present time. It is the most recent teaching approach applied in the national curriculum**,** also the approach being studied within the research scope. That is why it will gain an in-depth discussion and more emphasis than the preceding methods.

The competency based approach to language teaching stems from the competency based education (CBE), which is a broad concept that emerged in the United States of America during the 1970's. It symbolizes a notable educational movement that concentrates on learning outputs rather than learning inputs (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). One of the basic definitions of Competency based education is delivered in the Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics:

> An approach to teaching that focuses on teaching the skills and behaviors needed to perform COMPETENCIES. Competencies refer to the students' ability to apply different kinds of basic skills in situations that are commonly encountered in everyday life. Competency based education is based on a set of outcomes that are derived from an analysis of tasks learners are typically required to perform in real-life situations. Competency Based Language Teaching is an application of the principles of CBE to language teaching and has been widely used for the development and teaching of work-related and survival-oriented language teaching programs for adults. CBE is believed to improve the quality of teaching and learning because of its focus on learning outcomes. (Richards and Schmidt, 2013, p. 104)

Initially, it is crucial to determine the meaning of the key term 'competency', which might be confused with or interchangeably used with the concept of 'competence'. In fact, several definitions have been suggested to provide a basic signification for the term. For example, competency has been referred to as "any attribute of an individual that contributes to the successful performance of a task, job, function, or activity in an academic setting and/or a work setting. This includes specific knowledge, thinking processes, attitudes, and perceptual and physical skills." (Docking 1994, as cited in Richards and Rodgers, 2001,p.145). In a similar vein, Bunk (1994) describes a competency as: "the necessary knowledge, skills and capacity to perform in a profession,… to solve occupational problems in an autonomous and flexible manner and…to contribute to his professional environment and the organization of work." (Bunk, 1994, p.10 as cited in Cañado, 2012).

Moreover, Hedge (1996 as quoted by Hyde) defines a competency in term of "superior performance. It is a skill or characteristic of a person which enables him or her to carry out specific or superior actions at a superior level of performance" (p.4). As can be seen from the above definitions, the notion of competency is conceptualized as an integration of specific

advanced knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow a successful execution of particular tasks in particular settings. While, the term competence, which is most frequently cited via Chomsky's conception, refers to "the speakers' knowledge of the sentences of his language and constitutes a generative device for the production and reception of correct linguistic forms" (Chomsky as cited in Widdowson, 1983). Accordingly, competence is seen as a mental potential that allows the conception and construction of learning elements. It should be noted that the term competency/competence is used in this work as explained beforehand.

In view of that, each of the terms competency/competence holds a somehow distinct conception. The main difference between the two lies in the fact that the latter is purely cognitive, it refers to an abstract knowledge instilled in the mind that cannot be directly tested. Whereas, the former goes beyond the cognitive dimension as it comprises knowledge, attitudes and skills which are observable and measureable. Moreover, another basic difference refers to the fact that having a particular competence does not necessarily lead to performance, as opposed to a competency which allows for an immediate effective use. What can be drawn from the above discussion is that, a competency is a comprehensive term that consists of three interconnected components: competence, skill and behavior. Additionally, a competency bridges the gap between competences, skills and a successful performance or problem resolution in real world contexts.

According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (2001), the notion of competency in the arena of CBLT is categorized under two main headings subdivided into further competencies. An illustration is presented in the following table:

<table>
<tr><td rowspan="4">Language Competencies</td><td rowspan="3">Communicative Language Competencies</td><td>Linguistic competencies: lexical, phonological, and syntactic knowledge</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sociolinguistic competencies: language use in socio-cultural contexts</td></tr>
<tr><td>Pragmatic competencies: mastery of discourse, cohesion and coherence.</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2"></td><td>Knowledge (savoir): empirical and academic knowledge</td></tr>
<tr><td>Skills and know how (savoir-faire): the</td></tr>
</table>

	General Competencies	ability to carry out procedures
		Existential competencies (savoir-_être) : personal attitudes
		Ability to learn (savoir-apprendre): knowing how…to discover 'otherness'

Table 2.2: Competencies Components based on The CEFR for Languages (2001,p. 11-12)

The general competencies as described in the CEFR, are usually transferable not only to language, but rather to any type of activity in any field of life (be it personal, academic, professional or social). While, the communicative language competencies clearly appear to be built upon Hymes' (1972) communicative competence which comprises; the grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competences. Communication in CBLT is, thus, based on the functional (i.e. expressing and interpreting functions) and interactional (i.e. creating and maintaining social relations) views of language. This, in fact, shows that CBLT is basically concerned with developing the learners' communicative skills so as to train them for real-life communicative situations. This is plainly shown in the Algerian secondary school program of English, where the overall competencies, aimed to be developed, are narrowed down into three major communicative competencies, worded in the syllabus as follows:

1- Interacting orally in English

2- Interpreting oral and written texts

3- Producing oral and written texts

Teacher's guide, Secondary Education Year one (SE1), (2005, p. 4)

The competencies listed above are the rigorous outcomes that Algerian EFL learners are expected to achieve. Mastery of these competencies requires an integration and mobilization of a set of skills and competences (linguistic, sociolinguistic, pragmatic and strategic). For this reason, learners need to be prepared, equipped with a wide range of intellectual, behavioral and socio-cultural tools and techniques that teachers must afford in class through an effective competency-based training.

2.2.3. Characteristics of Competency Based Education

The CBA is frequently identified as an outcome-based, learner centric, and vocational-oriented approach. The emphasis on the 'know how 'skills, lifelong learning and the building

of autonomous self-directed characters, is what really characterizes this approach and distinguishes it from the other teaching methods and approaches. In this respect, Harris, Hobart and Lundberg (1995,p. 29) notably explain the competency based approach distinctive features by pointing out a succinct contrast between competency based education (CBE) programs and the traditional teaching programs, some of which are stated in the table below:

Traditional Programs	CBE Programs
- Content-focused	- Competency-based
- Time-based	- Workplace-performance based
- Emphasis on inputs	- Emphasis on outputs
- Group needs	- Individual needs
- Group-paced	- Individually paced
- Delayed feedback	- Immediate feedback
- Narrow range of learning approaches and styles (e.g. textbook focused)	- More flexible delivery approaches
- Teacher/ trainer as expert and provider of lectures, demonstrations	- Teacher/ trainer as resource person and mentor: one of many resources
- Learner as receptacle	- Learner more self-directed and responsible for own learning
- General aims/general objectives	- Specific learning outcomes
- Norm-referenced assessment	- Criterion-referenced assessment
- Subjective criteria, often unstated	- More objective criteria, publically stated upfront
- Emphasis on assessment of knowledge	- Emphasis on assessment of competence
- Final grades	- Competent or not yet competent (or grades of competence)

Table2.3:Traditional versus competency based programs (adapted from Harris, Hobart and Lundberg, 1995, p. 29)

The above distinction provides useful information and a comprehensive illumination on what competency based education is actually about. Because, it contrastingly tackles several facets and principles of CBE, which leaves little room for perplexity or misapprehension.

As applied to language education, the competency based approach (CBLT) has a number of significant features, it considers essentially what the learner can do with the language rather than what he knows about the language, as Docking (1994) point out:

> … it is designed not around the notion of subject knowledge but around the notion of competency. The focus moves from what students know about language to what they can do with it. The focus on competencies or learning outcomes underpins the curriculum framework and syllabus specification, teaching strategies, assessment and reporting. Instead of norm-referencing assessment, criterion-based assessment procedures are used in which learners are assessed according to how well they can perform on specific learning tasks. (p.16)

Accordingly, the fact of acquiring grammatical structures, lexical items and pronunciation rules of a language without being able to apply them in authentic situations, does not actually refer to a competency based practice. Because in a competency-based classroom, learners must make their learning outcomes explicit, they have to prove their grasp of the learning material and ought to demonstrate a certain level of competency. In other words, they have to display their capacity to accomplish specific tasks using the target-language.

In addition, CBLT is mainly characterized by transferring competencies. To put it otherwise, learners should be able to transfer the acquired knowledge into practice within different authentic situations. The latter are likely to be encountered either inside the classroom or in everyday life situations. For example, when making a phone call, writing an email or a job application letter, using a road map...etc. This aspect, in fact, allows students to reinvest their knowledge beyond the classroom walls and permits them to build lifelong skills.

Furthermore, personalized language learning is another key feature which is at the heart of CBLT, and which encourages autonomous learning. Because, it is based upon consideration of learners' needs and interest. CBLT targets tasks and skills that are relevant and meaningful to students in various contexts. It provides flexible learning opportunities, inside and outside of school time, in which students can freely reveal their mastery of a competency, in a variety of ways, including: role plays, poems, portfolios, projects…etc. This way of learning, indeed, leads to an effective engagement and increased motivation.

Auerbach (1986), interestingly, points out eight fundamental features that characterize the CBLT:

1. ***A focus on successful functioning in society:*** the goal is to enable students to be autonomous individuals capable of coping with the demands of the world.

2. A focus on life skills: rather than teaching language in isolation. CBLT teaches language as a function of communication about concrete tasks. Students are only taught those language forms/skills required by the situations in which they will function. These forms are normally determined by needs analysis.

3. ***Task- or performance- orientated instruction:*** what counts is what students can do as a result of instruction. The emphasis is on overt behaviors, rather than on knowledge or the ability to talk about language and skills.

4. ***Modularized instruction:*** language learning is broken down into meaningful chunks. Objectives are broken down into narrowly focused sub-objectives so that both teachers and students can get a clear sense of progress.

5. ***Outcomes are made explicit****:* Outcomes are public knowledge, known and agreed upon by both learner and teacher. They are specified in terms of behavioral objectives so that students know what behaviors are expected of them.

6**.** ***Continuous and ongoing assessment*****:** students are pre-tested to determine what skills they lack, and post-tested after instruction on that skill. If they do not achieve the desired level of mastery, they continue to work on the objective and are tested.

7. ***Demonstrated mastery of performance objectives.*** Rather than in the traditional paper-and pencil-tests, assessment is based on the ability to demonstrate pre-specified behaviors.

8. Individualized, student-centered instruction. In content, level and pace, objectives are defined in terms of individual needs; prior learning and achievement are taken into account in developing curriculums. Instruction is not time-based; students progress at their own rates and concentrate on just those areas in which they lack competence.

(Auerbach, 1986, p. 414-415)

With regard to the local context, the Ministry of National Education depicts the competency based approach in the first year secondary school syllabus of English through the teachers' guide (2005), as follows:

1. Action-oriented: it gears language learning to the acquisition of know-how embedded in functions and skills. These allow the learner to become an effective/competent language user in real-life situations outside the classroom.

2. Problem-solving approach: it places learners in situations that test/check their capacity to overcome obstacles and problems. Languages are learned most effectively and lastingly when they are used to solve problems through hypothesis testing.

3. Social-constructivist: it regards learning as occurring through social interaction with other people. In other words, learning is not conceived of as the transmission of predetermined knowledge and know-how to be reproduced **in-vitro** (i.e., only within the pages of the copybook or the walls of the classroom), but as a creative use of newly-constructed knowledge through the process of social interaction with other learners.

4. Cognitive approach: it is indebted to Bloom's taxonomy. According to Bloom, cognitive objectives form a hierarchy by which the learner must achieve lower order objectives before s/he can achieve higher ones.

At the Crossroad Teachers' Guide (SE1, 2005, p.12)

The three first attributes mentioned in the SE1 syllabus seem to match up respectively with Auerbach's (1986) seventh **(**demonstrated mastery of performance objectives). First (A focus on life skills), and second (a focus on successful functioning in society) CBLT features. While the last attribute stresses the cognitive aspect of learning and follows Bloom's structured view that advocates a gradual attainment of six learning objectives from lower to higher levels namely: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. That is, in a competency based approached classroom, "a learner will need to know a principle before s/he can understand it. S/he must understand it before s/he can apply it. S/he should be able to cut it into smaller fragments and relate it to other principles (analysis) before s/he can summarize it and draw conclusions, and thus evaluate it." (SE1 Teachers' Guide, 2005, p.13).

2.2.4. Learners' and teachers' roles in CBA

2.2.4. 1.Teacher's roles

A great deal of students' success in a competency-based framework rests upon the instructor's role in the classroom. Although the approach has a learner centered mode, the teacher's job remains crucial and influential. Within CBLT, the teacher has to give up many dominant traditional roles (such as: knowledge holder, controller, directive …etc), he has, instead, to play the flexible roles of an observer, a researcher, an effective planner, a manager, a counselor, a guide and a motivator. The teachers' starting point is to identify the students' needs and interests, in order to adapt and adjust the learning objectives accordingly. On this basis, he/she can design a syllabus with specific and appropriate learning activities that match up with the targeted competencies. He has to provide clear instructions in each task, and has to make sure that learners have well grasped what is required. At the mean time, he has to explain the significant contribution of each part of learning in building the specific skills in order to increase their motivation and to give value to their learning. During that process, students should not be constrained by time, because a competency-based approach is not time-based; it rather focuses on learners' progress. Additionally, prior to the assessment phase, teachers must demonstrate what students should master (specific competencies) and how they do it (strategy training) to achieve a certain learning goal. Criteria for competency evaluation must be made public and very clear to all learners from the start of the lesson (Auerbach, 1986; Richards & Rogers, 2001). The instructor should provide positive, constructive and personalized feedback to all students, because this enables them to overcome their weaknesses, and to boost their learning skills and strategies.

Furthermore, the teacher's major task in CBE is not delivering information nor transmitting messages. The instructor's true role is a facilitator who assists students in achieving specific competencies (del Bueno, 1978). This does not mean that he/she is completely banned from giving data. On the contrary, he does so but in a distinct manner from the traditional way. He/she is expected to set up an autonomous learning context, where learners are surrounded with learning materials (videos, pictures, interviews…etc) and opportunities that allow them to understand, discuss, interpret, analyze and use authentic language in different contexts.

2.2. 4.2. Learners' roles

As opposed to traditional classrooms where learners are generally passive recipients of information, the CBA classroom entails active engaging students who assume responsibility for their own learning, who no longer rely entirely on the instructors' lesson. But rather search independently for information in order to be able to construct meanings. To do so, they draw from multiple learning resources using their critical thinking, negotiation and experimentation. Thus, learners' main role in the CBA is to *build* rather than *receive* new knowledge and skills. In this process, they need to develop capabilities such as: internalizing, understanding, analyzing, and synthesizing information. Plus, they are required to engage in planning, in deciding whether the predetermined competencies are relevant to them or not. After making such decisions, they are supposed to work on each competency trying to apply it through problem solving. Furthermore, CBA learners are supposed to share, discuss and exchange data with peers and instructors. This eventually helps them, to a great extent, become more self-directed and more autonomous.

It is widely acknowledged that learners do not hold similar learning capacities or share the same learning pace. That is why, they generally do not attain their learning objectives at equal points in time. Therefore, this non time-based approach (CBA) allows the slow learners to take sufficient time in order to improve and to join up the majority. Being as such, slow learners can accept the challenge and may well find ways to solve learning problems by themselves.

In the foreign language classroom particularly, the CBA learner is supposed to master the following specific competencies:

> -Achieve purpose of exchange and provide all essential information accurately,
>
> -Use appropriate staging, for example, opening and closing strategies,
>
> -Provide and request information as required,
>
> -Explain circumstances, causes, consequences, and propose solutions as required,
>
> -Sustain dialogue, for example, using feed-back, turn taking,
>
> -Use grammatical forms and vocabulary appropriate to topic and register; grammatical errors do not interfere with meaning,
>
> -Speak with pronunciation/stress/intonation that does not impede intelligibility,
>
> - interpret gestures and other paralinguistic features. (Adult Migrant Education Service, 1993, cited by Nunan, 2002, p. 4)

2.2.5. Pros and cons of CBA

To ensure a good understanding of the competency based approach, it is vital to shed light on its strengths as well as its weaknesses. One might assume that in the educational literature, the advantages of CBA are more prevailing than the pitfalls. Up to now, there is a considerable amount of support and appealing praises attributed to the competency based education. It has become 'the state of the art' teaching approach (Auerbach, 1986,p. 411). This, actually, results from an educational breakthrough, the CBE is believed to be making. Many foreign language educators and curriculum designers confidently acknowledge the multiple benefits and merits that this approach provides. For example, Docking (1994), one of the CBLT advocates, argues that:

> Competency based approach to teaching and assessment offer teachers an opportunity to revitalize their education and training programs. Not only will the quality of assessment improve, but the quality of teaching and student learning will be enhanced by the clear specification of expected outcomes and the continuous feedback that competency based assessment can offer. These beneficial effects have been observed at all levels and kinds of education and training, from primary school to university, and from academic studies to workplace training.
>
> (Docking 1994, p. 15)

The good point about CBLT is that, learners can consciously target clear specified competencies. This precision and narrowness in determining learning outcomes eventually makes the accomplishment of the task easier. Because, learners' focus becomes more fixed and restricted to a particular set of competencies. This will naturally reduce their distraction, increase their concentration on valuable skills and enhance their confidence about what they are learning. What is more, learners' familiarity with their own roles and the goals they have to achieve, may possibly facilitate their identification of what is needed from them and will possibly help them empower their sense of self-discipline and responsibility in meeting those needs, which will consequently boost their levels of autonomy.

Another advantage of CBLT, is that "it seeks to improve accountability in teaching through linking instruction to measurable outcomes and performance standards." (Richards, 2001, p.128). This implies a kind of credibility in assessment procedures; it suggests that

evaluation is reliable and valid, because it is clearly based upon defined measurable behaviors and competencies. In addition, CBLT aims at using language as a communicative tool, rather than collecting knowledge about the language, (Nunan, 2007, p. 425). That is to say, it looks for the functional utility of language in real life contexts, rather than the mastery of sterile latent knowledge. Furthermore, Richards and Rodgers (2014) puts forward four benefits from the learners' perspective:

> 1. The competencies are specific and practical and can be seen to relate to the learners' needs and interests.
>
> 2. The learner can judge whether the competencies seem relevant and useful.
>
> 3. The competencies that will be taught and tested are specific and public-hence, the learner knows exactly what needs to be learned.
>
> 4. Competencies can be mastered one at a time, so the learner can see what has been learned and what still remains to be learned.
>
> (Richards and Rodgers, 2014,p. 153)

Despite the numerous advantages that the competency based education endows, it is undoubtedly devoid of shortcomings and controversies as many criticisms seem to arise. For example, Sotto (2007) questions the validity of competencies, arguing that the prescriptive nature of competencies weakens the competency itself. That is to say, learners are 'given' prearranged competencies to be learned; this commanding norm makes the approach authoritarian, though it seems to be "transparent and egalitarian" (p. 251). In point of fact, this reflection appears to contradict with the view holding that a competency based approach promotes self-direction and autonomy. As, it seems to reduce learners' freedom in making personal choices over predetermined outcomes. In a similar line of thought, it is believed that instructing overt skills and behaviors seems mechanical and impeding learners'critical thinking. As a result, innovation and creativity might be restrained. Another controversy with competency based learning is that, it claims to be learner-centered, while it takes control of many learning procedures such as: setting the learning objectives, selecting the learning material and tasks…etc.

In addition, it is assumed that the competency based education entails learners' active engagement in developing competencies, which actually demands highly motivated and self-

directed learners. In this regard, Del Bueno (1978) casts doubts on whether this requirement can be ensured. Since not all learners are autonomous or enthusiastic about their own learning. He adds that not all learners will be comfortable with a demanding learning approach, as some may resist the new method and prefer instead a more guided and traditional way. Besides, teachers' roles as mentors and facilitators might be hard to take on. The responsibility to provide optional learning styles, multiple learning resources, personalized feedback and sufficient support can be quite challenging and difficult to implement. Furthermore, Tollefson (1986) argues that "no valid procedures are available to develop competency specifications." (as cited in Richards, 2001, p. 131).

To put all things together, we have considered in this section, the various English teaching approaches that have been adopted by the Algerian educational authorities across distinct points in time. Certainly, each implemented ELT approach was claimed to be more effective than its former. However, considering the current study's scope, the questions that may be raised are: did any of the approaches really contribute in enhancing the quality of ELT education? Was there any room for the promotion of learner autonomy in ELT pedagogy? The following section seeks to answer the latter question by exploring the notion of autonomy in contemporary EFL education.

2.3. Autonomy in the English curriculum of secondary education

In line with the aims of this study, it is indispensable to examine the extent to which learner autonomy gears to the objectives of ELT in secondary education. Hence, it should be noted that developing autonomy is actually one of the English curriculum important goals. Yet, it is not plainly emphasized in the official teaching resources and documents. From an observational outlook, one can note in teachers' guides and pupils' textbook that it implicitly embeds three major autonomy-based principles namely: learner centeredness, reflection and self-evaluation.

2.3.1. The notion of reflection

According to the second year curriculum of English, reflection is considered as one of the general objectives. It falls under the heading of methodological purposes that advise learners to reflect on all learning stages: "encourager la réflexion à tous les stades de l'apprentissage" (English curriculum for 2AS, 2006, p.5). Thus, decision makers seek to build English learners who are capable of forming deep thoughts on the various procedures of their

language learning. In fact, this is quite supportive to the development of meta-cognitive awareness which consequently leads to self-directed and autonomous practice. What is more, reflection manifests throughout the textbook in a form of a specific activity involving the act of checking answers. That is to say, pupils have to think about their own replies (which could be right or wrong), then compare them after reading a text or listening to a script. This particular assignment, in fact, demands the learners to be attentive to their random responses, causing a kind of self-dialogue about their own learning performance. This type of reflective tasks encompasses every learning unit. It constantly follows an anticipatory task and precedes the principal assignment (an example of it applies to task two in 2SE textbook, p.38).

As a matter of fact, reflection as set in the curriculum is not intended for learners only, but it targets instructors as well. Since, the latter are also encouraged to make reflections on their own teaching practices for the betterment of their future actions.

> The Competency-Based Approach in its emphasis on cognition also demands a style of teaching based on reflection. Reflection on what, why and how you should teach / or you are teaching in the classroom (reflection in action) implies, among other things, planning ahead your lessons, fixing objectives for each lesson, adjusting your teaching strategies so as to cope with the unexpected, giving time for your learners to reflect on what they are learning and checking that the objectives are reached. (Teacher's book At the Crossroads, 2005, p. 22)

As discussed earlier in chapter one, this insightful aspect of teaching would naturally stimulate teacher autonomy since it leads them to develop their critical thinking skills and to take control of their own teaching.

2.3.2. The notion of learner centeredness

The most evident sign of fostering learner autonomy in the English curriculum is basing its design on the notion of learner centeredness. Believing in the merits of putting the learner at the heart of the instructional procedure, curriculum designers have thoroughly emphasized on the significant role of pupils in constructing their own English language learning. They endeavored to provide multiple opportunities to facilitate independent learning. One of the principal means to this end is implementing project works.

> The rationale for the inclusion of substantial project work in *At the Crossroads* has much to do with the fact that it is through the completion of projects that competence really makes itself visible and measurable. Project work is learner-centred in that it allows enough elbow room both inside and outside the classroom for the learners to exercise their cognitive skills. It boosts the learners' sense of achievement resulting in an increasing sense of responsibility, self-esteem, self-confidence, and autonomy in learning. Above all, project work encourages learners to make one step outside the textbook and the classroom into the real world where they will be called later to use their competence to understand, speak, read and write in English. (Teacher's book *At the Crossroads* 2005, p.21)

Additionally, this assignment provides flexibility and adaptability for pupils to perform projects in different ways.**"***At the Crossroads* offers the possibility for the teachers and learners to undertake other projects than those suggested in the textbook as long as the projects are well devised and keyed to the skills, functions and language forms covered in the rest of the unit." (Teacher's book *At the Crossroads*,2005, p.20). This statement implies that learners are encouraged to detach themselves from the course book and from the teacher. This way helps them to start taking personal responsibility in the fulfillment of the English language assignment. Besides, they have the freedom to make selection on the form of their projects, according to their own preferences and styles. "The project works can take the shape of video-taped / taped or recorded performances in class sessions, a live stage debate, a talk show or a theatrical stage performance" **(**Teacher's book *At the Crossroads*, 2005,p.20). As for Benson (2001) engaging learners in the learning process and offering them the opportunity of choice and change fosters autonomous learning.

2.3.3. Self-evaluation

Integrating self- assessment in the textbook is another way of helping pupils learn English on their own. This autonomous feature is placed in the concluding part of each unit, that is, directly after the "project workshop" assignment. It takes the form of a section named "Check your progress" in 1SE and "Where do we go from here?" in the 2SE textbook. After completing each learning unit, pupils of first year level are voluntarily expected to assess knowledge and competences that were acquired throughout the unit, by doing a set of activities either in or outside the classroom. Additionally, they are supposed to fill in a checklist of competences that start with "I can" to evaluate their own improvement in

particular language areas. Furthermore, this self-evaluative grid, is also found in second year textbooks, because, equipping learners with self-assessment strategies is one of the general objectives of the second year English curriculum:"*Promouvoir chez l'apprenant des stratégies d'apprentissage et d'auto-évaluation lui permettant d'approfondir et d'élargir ses connaissances"* (English curriculum for 2AS, 2006, p. 5). Hence, this tool is presented in the textbook for the purpose of training learners on the practice of self-evaluation and for giving them useful insight on their own learning strengths and weaknesses.

2.4. Conclusion

In this chapter, my ultimate purpose was to deal with the main circumstances of the Algerian educational ground; where learner autonomy was meant to be cultivated. Because, this can reveal somehow the provisions as well as the problems inhibiting autonomy from fostering. As this might well enable us to understand better the overall situation. Therefore, I attempted first to present a synopsis of the Algerian educational system, describing its different stages and going back to the various implemented reforms. Then, I restricted my attention on English language education in Algeria with its different teaching methodologies. Yet, I gave foremost focus on the CBLT, since it is the current utilized approach that applies to the research concern. After tackling the basic elements of the present state of education generally and ELT particularly, and hopefully after constructing a clear picture, it was essential to examine the notion of autonomy in the first and second year English curricula and textbooks.

The observations made from examining the official ELT documents (teachers' guide and curricula) of the two levels revealed that autonomy is eventually maintained as an important learning objective. Curricula designers' endeavors to promote this notion manifest indirectly throughout the textbooks in the form of project workshops, in self-assessment rubrics and in reflective tasks. However, despite its theoretical incorporation in the curricula and textbooks, learner autonomy has not gained much focus and importance on the practical ground. Overall, many inspectors, educators and even pupils do not seem to really care about developing autonomous skills as they might care about increasing the English subject grades. Therefore, a need calls for a thorough consideration of this construct in order to find out strategic ways and methods to develop learner autonomy in the Algerian secondary education. To reach this purpose, an attempt was made, via this study, and explained in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3. Introduction

The third chapter aims principally to portray the methodological framework of this study. It endeavors to provide a thorough account of the research implementation by explaining, in detail, the method being applied "action research". Thus, for clarification purposes, it comprises the method's definition, scope, different models and the rationale for employing it. Besides, it displays comprehensively the fundamental stages of the research methodology and supplies their chronological order. Furthermore, this section presents a detailed description of the research fieldwork, i.e. the research setting, duration, participants and data collection instruments. As a matter of fact, data gathering was carried out by means of different tools: pupils' questionnaire, classroom observation, learners' interviews and diaries. However, the later fell short to serve its objective of generating relevant data due to reasons that are discussed throughout the chapter. What is more, in this chapter, I attempt to review the research questions and objectives at the aim of finding their answers and to examine the various factors and conditions that relate to the integration of autonomy in the current study.

3.1. Research Aims and Questions

As indicated in the general introduction, my initial interest in learner autonomy rose primarily from a reflection upon a problematic issue related to learners' dependent mode of learning. Throughout my English teaching practice in the secondary school, I observed pupils' common reluctant learning attitude in class, i.e. their tendency to rely entirely on the instructor in providing information, in posing questions and in making all the decisions. Directing the whole course of action, thus, engendered within me a kind of frustration that caused me to wish to see more responsible English learners who are capable to exercise a level of autonomy in their English learning. Thus, on the basis of this concern, the idea of exploring this particular issue in a systematic way was born. As an EFL practitioner researcher, I decided to take action in the classroom to seek answers for my inquiries. My hope as a researcher was mainly to develop autonomous English language pedagogy in the local context. As a teacher, I intended to help my learners become more self-directed in their English study. Accordingly, the current study is hoped to achieve two major purposes:

1- In relation to the learners: to challenge learners' current perceptions and passive attitudes in their English learning. It aims to help them transfer their over dependency on the teacher to a reasonable level of self-reliance and responsibility. To put it differently, the objective is to develop a sense of autonomy within English language pupils at secondary school in the Algerian context.

2- In relation to the research: to put forward an adequate autonomy-oriented pedagogy for ELT in the Algerian context. In other words, this study endeavors to provide a practical teaching model that is purposely designed to boost up students' levels of autonomy along with their English language proficiency. Plus, to make an attempt to contribute in improving the quality of English language education in Algeria.

As can be noticed, the objectives are meant to bring about changes in the pedagogy of foreign language education within the Algerian context. To reach such objectives, two main questions are raised and need to be answered throughout this study:

Question 1: To what extent can I help my secondary school pupils develop some level of autonomy in their English learning process?

Question 2: What are the workable techniques and strategies that can be used in the Algerian EFL class to foster learner autonomy?

Both questions seek out practical and efficient ways that can be implemented in the EFL classroom. Whilst the first question addresses the teacher's role in enhancing learner autonomy, the second is concerned precisely with procedures and strategies to develop students' autonomy. These two broad questions are endorsed by other subsidiary questions which will be explored in chapter four:

Sub-questions

a) To what extent are the learners ready to be autonomous and what attitudes do they have towards learner autonomy?
b) How would pupils react in the process of becoming autonomous language learners?
c) What are the challenges and potential problems that pupils and I may encounter along the road to autonomy?

The three sub-questions are fundamental and relevant to the study. Hence, at the aim of answering them, it is necessary to formulate a research framework.

3.2. Research framework: action research

In order to conduct any type of research or systematic inquiry, three minimal basic elements ought to be involved, as Nunan (1992, p.3) states: (1) a question, problem or hypothesis, (2) data and (3) analysis. In the case of educational research, these components are directed towards the understanding and explanation of existing issues/ phenomena, or the development of educational practices for the purpose of improving the quality of learning and teaching.

Many educational researches have been undertaken by instructors who attempt to find solutions themselves to the problems they face in real classroom contexts. Following the same track i.e.“ the need for practitioners themselves to be at the heart of the research process, identifying questions of significance for the learners in their care, conducting their own enquiries for their own professional purposes” as stated Dadds (2002 , p.12) and based on my research focus, questions and aims, I decided to address my educational concerns via action research approach. Mainly because, it allows the researcher to have a direct intervention and active participation in the class since he/she is the teacher himself/herself. In other words, I will adopt what is termed as action research, for I believe it echoes my research trend in the multiple ways that are discussed in the following part.

3.2.1. The selection of the research methodology: Why action research?

Regarding the choice of methodological approach, action research seems to be the most fitting method to be utilized in this study. This assumption is, in fact, based on three key reasons:

Firstly, action research serves properly the study purposes in the sense that it helps me to go smoothly in the direction of attaining the research objectives. For it gives me the possibility, as a teacher-researcher, to have an immediate and a direct access to make changes, adjust practices and execute new plans in the class in order to help my learners develop higher levels of autonomy (the first research objective). Consequently, it would become more likely, to design innovative and convenient autonomy oriented pedagogy (the second research objective) after gaining practical insights drawn from real experience. Besides, by means of reflection, self-awareness and cyclic informed action, action research helps me to improve my performance, to enhance my teaching skills and allows me to refine my English instruction.

Secondly, being of practical flexible and dynamic nature and due to its diversity in data collection sources, action research has the potential to offer an extensive prospect to explore the issue of learner autonomy thoroughly. It tends to increase the opportunity to utilize multiple techniques and strategies in the class which allows me to review their efficiency and to make modifications whenever necessary. Thus, it helps me to continuously collect data about classroom events and to have a deliberate control over the conditions of intervention. As a result, it enables me to undertake a relatively rich investigation.

Thirdly, from a methodological standpoint, action research has widely been recognized as a renowned mode of academic inquiry (Hui and Grossman, 2008, p.2). According to many worldwide studies, action research was proved to be valuable and gratifying. It has brought noteworthy changes to the field of English language education. For example, Gow, Kember and McKay (1996) in Hong Kong have been working on encouraging students' independent learning and reported better learning outcomes due to their action research project. Similarly, Curtis (2001) also reported satisfactory results with reference to increasing and improving the quantity of spoken English among EFL Chinese learners. Another example refers to Stewart's (2001) study which was carried out in a Japanese university context where he came up with positive conclusions about his use of action research (as cited in Farrel, 2007).

With regard to the Algerian EFL educational context, action research is hoped also to bring about positive results, as it is meant to fill a gap in the literature in relation to learner autonomy. Through action research, I intend to deal with the issue from an original perspective which may possibly shed new light on the problem in a fresh way. The description of the research process and its findings will hopefully be useful for other Algerian EFL practitioners and researchers concerned with the challenging area of language learner autonomy.

3.2.2. Action Research

An account of how action research emerged, what scope it has, how it has been defined in the literature and what characteristics distinguish it from other types of research are fully described in this section.

3.2.2.1. The emergence of action research

The concept of action research was first coined by Kurt Lewin during the first half of the twentieth century within the field of social psychology in America. "Lewin is credited with coining the term 'action research' to describe work that did not separate the investigation from the action needed to solve the problem" as stated (McFarland & Stansell, 1993, p.14).

However, although Kurt Lewin's work (entitled '*Action research and minority problems'*) (1946) has been recognized as the starting point of action research, its radical roots can be traced back to John Dewey. For Dewey's (1910) philosophical thoughts emphasize on "the importance of experience as a continuous transaction and interaction between human beings and their natural and artistic environment" Maksimović (2010, p.1). According to Dewey, human beings are not isolated individuals, who need to build bridges to relate to other human beings and things in nature, but they are rather humans that are constantly connected with their environment which is modifying and modifying them (ibid). Argyris et al (1985) also state that:

> Action science is an outgrowth of the traditions of John Dewey and Kurt Lewin. Dewey was eloquent in his criticism of the traditional separation of knowledge and action, and he articulated a theory of inquiry that was a model both for scientific method and for social practice. He hoped that the extension of experimental inquiry to social practice would lead to an integration of science and practice. He based this hope on the observation that 'science in becoming experimental has itself become a mode of directed practical doing. (as cited in Adelman,1993).

Drawing on Dewey's ideas, Lewin, the German social psychologist, realized the ineffectiveness and unsuitability of experimental methods in many research cases, and thus attempted to find out a method that is more efficient and based on real world experience (Hien ,2009). After a series of practical experiments, he concluded that "no action without research; no research without action" Adelman (1993). This thought has eventually generated what is termed as action research.

In the 1950's, this concept gained large popularity in the USA but not for a long time, because of cultural, political and economic alterations (McNiff, 2002). However, two decades later, the notion of action research became more influential, it expanded particularly in Britain

where it has evolved through several works done by researchers like John Elliott, Wilf Carr, Jack Whitehead, Stephen Kemmis and Lawrence Stenhouse. One of the most significant contributions that marked the development of action research, owes to Stenhouse, who was the Director of Humanities Curriculum Project. He posited that curriculums must be designed in academic institutions in order to be appropriate and relevant to the learners' experience. He furthermore initiated the concept of 'teacher researcher' (ibid.). What is more, Whitehead added remarkable ideas to action research when he held the view that teachers are well able to formulate their own theories on the basis of a systematic study on their own teaching practice (Nasrollahi & al, 2012). Over the years, such fundamental tenets and innovative ideas have allowed to make of action research a legal educational research methodology.

3.2.2.2. Definition of action research

The term 'action research' has gained a large amount of explanations and definitions in the educational literature. One of its earliest and most basic definitions was held by Lewin (1946) who describes action research as: "a comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action". It utilizes "a spiral step" which is "composed of a circle of planning, action and fact-finding about the result of the action" (ibid). Thus, according to Lewin, action research involves a methodical examination of both actions and their results, through a process, which is not linear but rather cyclic, including: first a plan, second acting on the plan and third finding the outcomes of the executed plan.

In addition, Corey (1953) defines action research as **"**the process by which practitioners attempt to study their problems scientifically in order to guide, correct and evaluate their decisions and actions". This denotes that action research is carried out by actual practitioners in the field, not merely by researchers who are distant from the practical ground. In other words, it is driven by the practitioners' concern about a specific problem and their need to find out practical solutions, rather than researchers' thirst for gaining abstract knowledge about the issue. Thus, the emphasis, in action research, is not on gaining generalized knowledge or formulating theories but rather on the change that results from the research findings. In the field of education, Mills (2003) state that:

> "action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers to gather information about the ways that their particular school operates, how they teach, and how well their students learn. The information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment and on educational practices in general, and improving student outcomes" (p.4)

As can be drawn from the above definition, action research is a thorough investigation about ones' own practice and it is essentially oriented towards a positive change. This view is shared by Bogdan and Bicklen (1982, p.162) in their definition: "action research is the systematic collection of information that is designed to bring about social change" (as cited in McKernan, 2013). Calhoun (1994), on the other hand, offered a succinct definition that summarizes the concept of action research smartly: "let's study what's happening in our school and decide how to make it a better place". The key idea is that action researchers identify local educational problems, and try to upgrade the learning-teaching environment with systematic efficient decisions.

With regard to action research purposes, Rapoport (1970, p. 499) points out: "action research aims to contribute both to the practical concerns of people in an immediate problematic situation and to the goals of social science by joint collaboration within a mutually acceptable ethical framework" (as cited in McKernan, 2013). Moreover, Carr and Kemmis (1986) maintain that action research is "a form of self-reflective enquiry undertaken by participants in social situations in order to improve the rationality and justice of their own practices, their understanding of these practices and the situations in which the practices are carried out" (p.162). Accordingly, unlike many other research types that seek to broaden insight on particular issues or phenomena, action research aims to solve problems that are directly experienced by practitioners in the fieldwork, trying to improve the quality of practice and increase its effectiveness.

3.2.2.3. The scope of action research

There is a remarkable broad range of possibilities for the application of action research in the world of social and academic studies. Since it is essentially concerned with real life problem solving, numerous areas can make use of it such as psychology, health, economics

and education. In education, it can be applied to a variety of subject areas, for instance: learning strategies, school policies, curriculum development, assessment methods, students' attitudes, classroom management, improvement of oral skills, students' motivation, teachers' choice of material, professional development, learner autonomy...etc. Participants in an action research project could be pupils, teachers, parents, head teachers, university professors and other members of the community.

Under an action research paradigm, the investigation can be carried out by an individual teacher working on a specific issue with a particular class in a local setting (for example; enhancing students' writing skills), or a group of instructors in a single school working in collaboration to improve learners' practices (such as; implementing a project for reading in foreign languages), or a whole school that has a common focused objective to solve a local problem (e.g. school discipline concerns). Hence, action research "should be addressed to practical problems and should have practical outcomes" (Wallace, 1991). Its results are to be assessed in terms of local applicability and progress in institution practices.

3.2.2.4. Characteristics of action research

Drawing from its methodological description, a number of scholars endeavored to pinpoint the defining features of action research. For example, McDonough (1997) proposed four characteristics as follows: *1.It is participant-driven and reflective; 2. It is collaborative; 3. It leads to change and the improvement of practice not just knowledge in itself;* and *4. It is context-specific*. Moreover, Creswell (2005) puts forward six main features: *1. a practical focus 2. The educator-researcher's own practices; 3. Collaboration; 4. a dynamic process; 5. a plan of action and 6.sharing research.* While, Gummesson (2000, p.16) provides in a clearer way a comprehensive list of characteristics that are applicable within any context:

1. Action researchers take action: Action researchers are not merely observing something happening; they are actively working at making it happen.

2. Action research always involves two goals: solve a problem and contribute to science.

3. Action research is interactive: it requires cooperation between the researchers and the participants

4. Action research aims at developing holistic understanding: during a project and recognizing complexity. action researchers need to have a broad view of how the system

works and be able to move between formal structural and technical and informal people subsystems.

5. Action research is fundamentally about change: Action research is applicable to the understanding, planning and implementation of change in groups, organizations and communities.

6. Action research requires an understanding of the ethical framework: values and norms within which it is used in a particular context.

7. Action research can include all types of data gathering methods: Action research does not preclude the use of data gathering methods from traditional research. Qualitative and quantitative tools, such as interviews and surveys are commonly used.

8. Action research requires a breadth of preunderstanding: of the corporate or organizational environment, the conditions of business or service delivery, the structure and dynamics of operating systems and the theoretical underpinnings of such systems.

9. Action research should be conducted in real time: though retrospective action research is also acceptable. While action research is a live case study being written as it unfolds, it can also take the form of a traditional case study written in retrospect.

10. The action research paradigm requires its own quality criteria: Action research should not be judged by the criteria of positivist science, but rather within the criteria of its own terms.

(As cited in Coghlan and Brannick, 2004, p.11)

3.2.3. Models of Action Research

Several action research models have been proposed in the literature of language education, in order to guide practitioners and to help them work methodically in their exploratory process. Such as: Lewin (1946), Kemmis and McTaggart's (1988), Nunan (1993), Wallace (1993), Stringer (1999), McNiff (2002), Mills (2003) and others. Most of them share the basic spiral phases as follows: (1) *the specification of problem, (2) planning, (3) taking action,* and finally *(4) reflection on the action.*

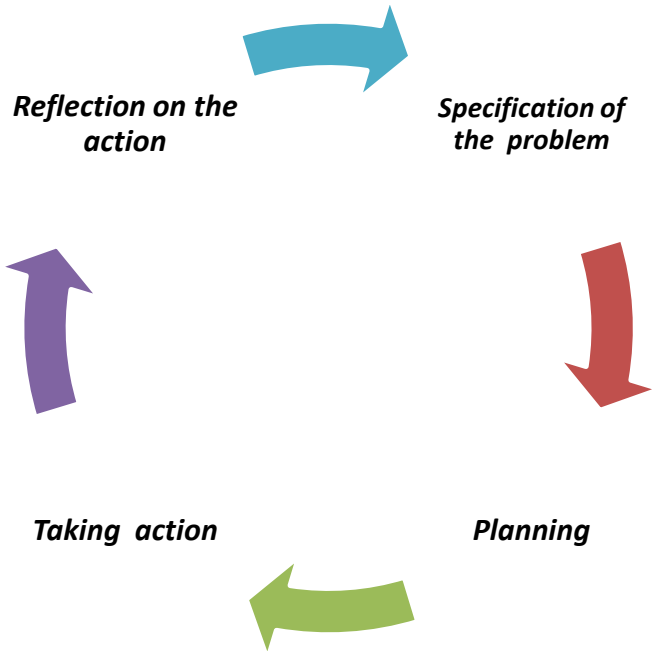

Figure: 3. 1: A basic action research cycle

A common model of action research in language education conforms to Nunan (1993)'s cyclic framework which comprises six different phases: *(1) Problem identification, (2) Preliminary investigation, (3) Hypotheses, (4) Plan intervention, (5) Outcomes and (6) Reporting.* In a similar way, Mills (2003) posits, for action research practitioners, four stages of implementation*: (1) identify an area of focus, (2) collect data, (3) analyze and interpret data (4) develop an action plan*. According to him, the research procedure should initiate with the specification of the problem then follow by gathering information, which will be subsequently analyzed and synthesized for the purpose of designing an adequate action plan.

Moreover, Stringer (2007) outlines another simplistic and recurring framework that involves three processes: *(1) look, (2) think and (3) act*, that can be repeatedly adopted in each teaching stage. This model "enables people to commence their inquiries in a straightforward manner and build greater detail into procedures as the complexity of issues increases" (Nasrollahi et al, 2012, p. 1876). With the wide diversity of action research processes found in the literature and being a beginner action researcher, I opted for a simplistic model, in this study, so as to avoid confusion and perplexity. Thus, Mills' (2003) four stages model: *(1) identify an area of focus, (2) collect data, (3) analyze and interpret data (4) develop an action plan,* is regarded (in my opinion) most fitting to be incorporated in the current study, mainly because it engages clearly defined steps, which tends to provide intelligibility to the research approach.

3.2.4. Strengths and limitations of action research

As most research methods in language education, action research has a number of strengths and weaknesses. First of all, it is mainly valued for the fact that it "is the type of research that can be used to great effect in school settings,….is undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning by introducing more effective teaching strategies" (Henning et all, 2009, p.6). It addresses real- life situations or issues that teachers experience and to which they attempt to find solutions in analytical and systematic ways. Thus, it is based on practical problems and meant to bring practical outcomes (Wallace, 1991, p. 56). In addition, it has the advantage of providing the researcher with direct involvement in the experiment, as it offers the possibility of making, constant planning and immediate adjustments according to the research actual outcomes and predefined purposes.

What is more, action research is a flexible inquiry; it gives the researcher freedom to use more than one data gathering method. These may involve: interviews, questionnaires, class observations, diaries, filed notes, lesson recording…etc. Lastly, applying action research in language classes efficiently tends to improve the quality of education on two levels. On the one hand, "it involves the teacher working on a small-scale interventionist level to improve his or her own practice" (Rainey, 2006, p.67), that is to say, it leads instructors to professional growth. On the other hand, it helps to foster pupils' language leaning performance and behavior.

Nevertheless, action research also bears some problematic issues that put it under criticism. Such as, the questionability of generalizing the research findings on wider contexts. Because, action research outcomes generally fit to solving problems in a particular restricted setting, thus they may not be generalizable and valid in other larger contexts. As a result, this may yield uncertainty about the relevance of its outcomes beyond the immediate research context. Additionally, regarding the intricacy of playing a double role of teacher and researcher at the same time, some positivist scholars question the feature of objectivity. They cast doubt on the extent to which researchers can avoid personal bias in selecting, analyzing and reporting the data. The risk of subjectivity can come up in the phase of evaluating and criticizing one's own performance. Additionally, the wide range of action research models and frameworks can be misleading to some action researchers and may result in a messy investigation.

Despite its different shortcomings, action research undeniably, continues to be a renowned method and a beneficial tool to enhance education. However, its implementation is

truly not an easy process and its outcomes may not be visible as fast as might be predicted. Indeed, its realization tends to be more difficult for novice researchers, because it involves a longitudinal process that entails experience, time and an ongoing practice of critical reflection and informed action.

3.3. The research context and fieldwork

The study took place in a public high school 'Kouadri Boudjeltia secondary school' in the Wilaya of Chlef, Algeria. It was implemented at the period from October 2016 to April 2017 under an action research project framework. Being a teacher for two educational levels; first and second year classes in the same school, I decided to conduct my pedagogical experiment with the two level classes. The selection for classes was not made randomly, but rather based upon multiple reasons which are discussed in the 'participants' section.

What is more, this study was designed to reach my ultimate goal of increasing my learners' level of autonomy along with their English language proficiency. For this purpose, I conceived a number of competences and qualities that I wanted my pupils to acquire or at least begin to develop. These are drawn from multiple resources mainly from Holec (1981) to whom learner autonomy lies essentially on bearing responsibility for the decisions that concern learning, and Benson (2001) who insists on control over three particular cognitive processes: attention, reflection and metacognitive knowledge. Thus, the learning qualities intended to be built up in this study are as follows:

- Awareness of the learning objectives and deliberately working to achieve them.
- The ability to seek and select proper learning material.
- The aptitude to make some choices about learning.
- The capacity to participate in class discussion.
- Consciousness about one's own learning styles and strategies.
- The capacity for self-assessment.

Regarding secondary education in the Algerian context, it is extremely vital for educators to respect the guidelines and constraints of the curriculum. Yet, it is still not impossible to give room for learners to exert some freedom in their learning practices, such as: deciding upon the topic of a writing assignment, choosing peers in a collaborative work, setting time for a task or contributing in a vocabulary list selection. This study works towards attaining this type of autonomy which relates to Littlewood's (1999) 'reactive autonomy' i.e.

learners' partial freedom rather the 'proactive autonomy' which seems idealistic and impracticable for this research context, since it entails full responsibility taking for each and every learning decision.

3.4. Subjects description

The participants in this research were sixty two learners belonging to two different classes at secondary school. They are all Algerian native speakers of Arabic, taking the English subject as a foreign language and sharing almost the same educational background. The first year class is made up of thirty-five pupils while the second year class consists of twenty seven pupils (see more details in the table below). Picking informants from two different levels is drawn from the idea of expanding and varying the research subjects to get the most possible plausible results. In addition, both classes were purposefully selected from the literary rather than the scientific stream because English is a major subject within the former. In order to preserve the participants' anonymity, they were assigned a code at random (P1,P2,P3…etc) to be referred to throughout the data analysis and discussion.

Subjects	Male	%	Female	%	Total
First year	13	37	22	63	35
Second year	12	44.5	15	55.5	27
Total	25	40	37	60	62

Table 3.1: The research participants

3.5. Research design and procedure

In this section, I will present a detailed description of the research design and the various phases of its implementation. First, the scheme below summarizes the basic constituents of the study:

Research Questions	Research Purpose	Data Collection Instruments	Subjects	Timeline
1. How can I help my pupils to develop some level of autonomy? 2. What procedures and techniques can be adopted in the process?	**1.** To develop a sense of autonomy within English language learners.	1.Questionnaires 2. Interview 3. Class observation 4. Learners diaries	Secondary school pupils (first and second grade)	An academic year: From October 2016 to April 2017

Table 3.2: The research design pattern

3.5.1. An account of the research phases

Regarding the methodological procedures and multiple stages involved in this investigation, I will present the steps followed according to their chronological order:

3.5.1.1. Introducing the research project

At the beginning of the first term of the school year 2016/2017, exactly in October 9th 2016, pupils were introduced to the research project. This was operated by means of a detailed explanation of the project's aims and procedure in both languages, i.e. English and Arabic in order to ensure learners' comprehension of the overall framework. After clarifying to them the potential benefits they may gain and the difficulties they may encounter as a result of contributing in this research, pupils were invited to voluntarily take part in the study. Eventually, most of them (in both groups) showed interest and excitement for being involved in the research project. Yet, at the mean time they seemed somehow hesitant and concerned about their expected roles. Most probably, due to the efforts they were supposed to put both in and outside the class. After noticing pupils' overall approval, they were required to complete a participation consent form (see appendix F) for more reliability.

3.5.1.2. Administering the initial questionnaire

Once the first step has been done, pupils were further asked to complete a pre-questionnaire (see appendix A) that comprises aspects of their individual English language learning beliefs, attitudes, styles and strategies. It should be noted that before administering the questionnaire to each class, the researcher plainly read and explained every single question in English. I then, made them clear in the native language so as to avoid any potential ambiguity and to enable the participants select their most suitable option.

3.5.1.3. Introducing learning diaries

In the next session, the participants were given a learner diary document and were notified about a couple of information. First, they were expected to record information about their own English learning during the last five minutes of each session. Second, they were supposed to return back this document to the instructor at the end of every week. So that the researcher can eventually review and hand them back to the learners at the beginning of the following week. As a matter of fact, this 'learner diary' document constitutes of three elements: first, recording the learning goal then stating whether it has been achieved or not. Second, describing what has (not) been understood in the lesson. And finally making

comments, critiques or suggestions to adjust the forthcoming learning activities (see appendix D). This aimed to make them reflect upon their learning method on a regular basis. In other words, the researcher tried to help the learners consciously think of their own English learning gains and shortfalls. In the mean time, it aimed to enable the teacher-researcher to gain a constant insight on the pupils' learning process in terms of study actions, reactions and progress in class. For, it would help her provide adequate individual feedback to learners whenever necessary.

3.5.1.4. Implementing different teaching strategies throughout the lessons

All along the research course, I attempted to implement multiple self-directed strategies in class in order to promote learner autonomy, "trying new strategies is at the heart of action research" (Henning et al 2009, p.19). Hence, emphasis was laid on the direct intervention and active participation of learners in class. By providing several choice and decision making opportunities, incorporating strategy training and meta-cognitive awareness and employing strategies will be fully explained in (section 3.5.3).

3.5.1.5. Conducting a class observation

Bearing in mind the limitations of using solely the questionnaire's and diaries' data, I felt the need to make observations on the research ground. The purpose behind is to make up for the data obtained from the other tools. Therefore, at the middle of research time, I decided to set out a class observation while trying to make my action research progress as planned. In this way, I thought I could reflect upon specific features of the language classroom and thus I would be able to set out appropriate future directions.

3.5.1.6. Conducting the interview

In the middle of the research course, precisely during the second term, I conducted an interview (see appendix C) with two pupils from first year class and other two from the second year class. The interview concerns basically learners' viewpoints on their autonomous language learning experiences. In order to facilitate interviewees' expression of thoughts and taking into account their difficulties in spoken English, the questions could be possibly answered in English as well as Arabic (See more details in section 3.6.2.).

3.5.1.7. Administering the final questionnaire

Finally, at the end of the school year, the participants were required to fill in a post-questionnaire (see appendix B). The objective was first, to provide sufficient data about the potential change in their study skills i.e. their learner autonomy level. Second, to allow for a comparison between this questionnaire's findings and the first one's results. Out of sixty two participants, five learners did not respond to this post-questionnaire because of their absence. The other fifty seven pupils were expected to answer the questions as honestly as possible. As a final step, all of the participants were gratefully thanked to have contributed in this study and to have undertaken in a way or another experience of developing their autonomous English learning.

3.5. 2.The intervention plan

As stated earlier (in section 3.2.3), my research design basically follows Mills' (2003) four stages model: *(1) identify an area of focus, (2) collect data, (3) analyze and interpret data (4) develop an action plan.* Both pupils and I (teacher-researcher) are considered as equal partners in the research project. The whole research process comprised three major cycles. At each stage, problems were encountered; their data were recorded, evaluated then used to alter the subsequent phase. Figure 3.2 on the next page provides an overview of my research design scheme. Afterwards I present a narrative account of all the steps and strategies integrated in the fieldwork as well as participants' reactions to them.

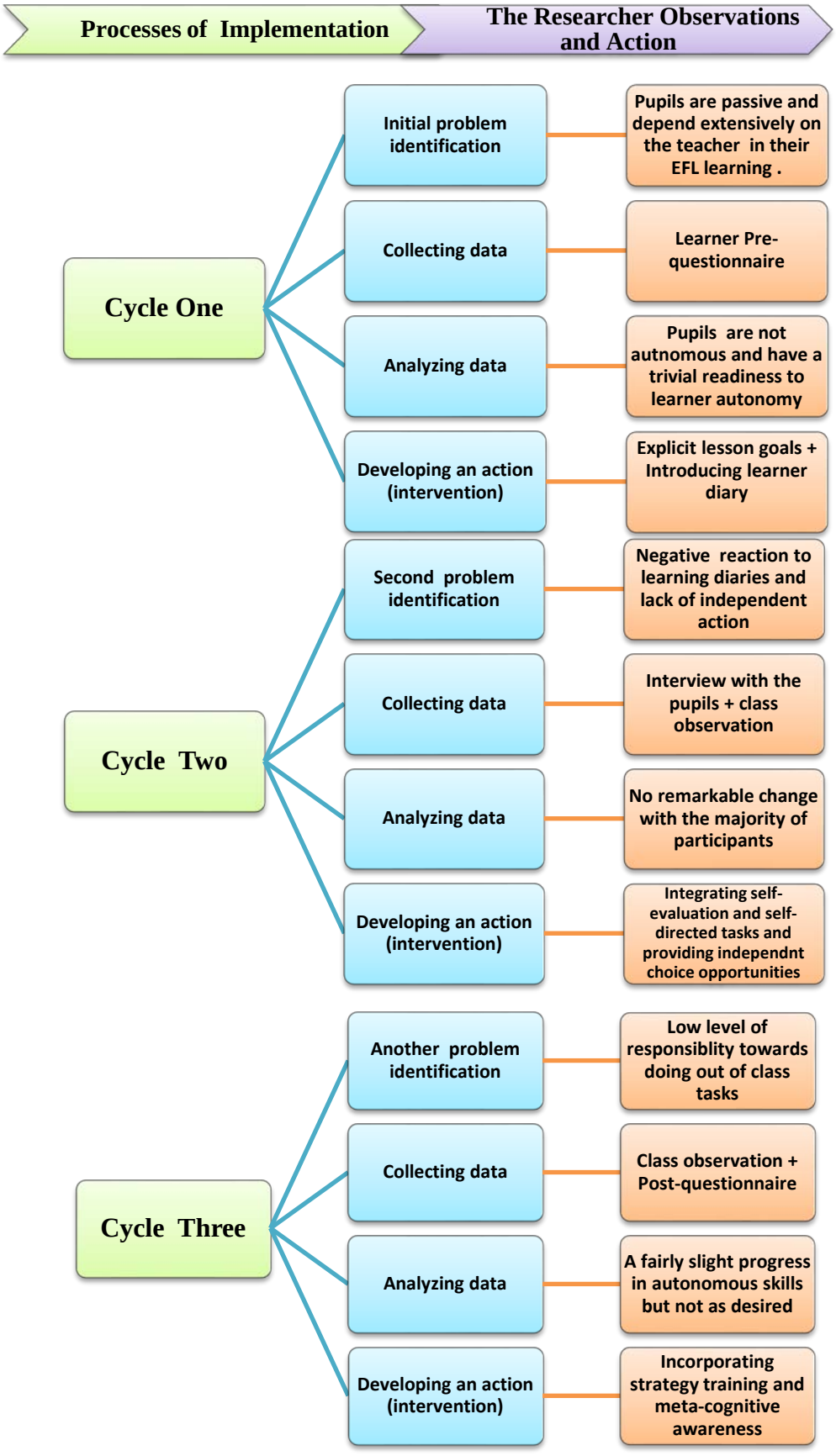

Figure 3.2: An overview of the research implementation processes

3.5.3. The implemented teaching strategies

After analyzing the pre-questionnaire and the initial diaries' findings, I could confirm my hypothesis assuming that an intervention has to be made. Therefore, I decided to implement specific teaching strategies gradually throughout the lessons. The following part explains in depth the various strategies that were employed in each cycle of the action research:

a. Making the lesson goal explicit

In order to help pupils become more independent in their language learning , the first compulsory step is to make the lesson purpose clear to them, as Nunan (2003) maintains. Thus, following Nunan's principle, I opted for this strategy in my experimental classes. At the opening of every lesson, I devoted a space on the board to write the objective of the lesson. For example, "My goal is to write a short biography about a famous personality". I then invited pupils to read it loudly at the aim of drawing their attention to it and to make sure they grasped it well. What is more, the lesson goal was intentionally kept written on the board from beginning to the end of the lesson. Partly because, pupils were supposed to reconsider if they have reached it or not by the end of the session. This new step brought quite positive reactions from the overwhelming majority of pupils. After a number of lessons, they showed interest in knowing the learning goal and seemed satisfied about it. Therefore, it might be assumed that this initial strategy has been successfully integrated in the action research.

b. Working on learning diaries

As has been stated previously (in section 3.5.1.3), the participants were familiarized about the notion of learning diaries right from the early stage of the research. That is why, they were expected to fill in their diaries (provided by the instructor, see appendix D) regularly i.e. at the end of each lesson. Moreover, I was supposed as a researcher to read the diaries critically then supply appropriate feedback when needed. However, practically this did not work as was predicted. For the largest part of learners except the most competent ones, did not exhibit a capacity to think about their own performance; on what was or was not learnt. As a result, they could not jot down relevant statements. Most of them started copying notes from peers; not really reporting their own unique learning outcomes. Thus, after few weeks of this practice almost all the participants stopped doing it. Both of learners and I could not benefit from this key autonomous learning tool, which unfortunately proved to be

ineffective in this study. It should be noted that the participants' learning diaries were planned to serve as important tools for data collection in the research. Yet, considering the failure in utilizing them adequately, they became somehow a worthless source of data and a useless instrument for a methodical analysis. As a remedy to this malfunction, I planned to introduce another key facet of autonomous learning 'self-evaluation' for the upcoming research cycle.

c. Establishing self-evaluation

Taking into account the inefficiency of utilizing learning diaries in the experiential classes, I decided to move to a second exploratory cycle that comprises other crucial strategies. I thus worked towards preparing pupils for self-assessment techniques that seemed appropriate for their level. Indeed, this step is vital for the promotion of autonomous learning, as Little argued: "in terms of assessment and evaluation, classrooms which have the development of autonomy as a goal will place great store on training learners in techniques of self-assessment, ongoing monitoring, self-evaluation and reflection" (Little, 1996, p. 23).

To put this into practice, I designed self-assessment schemes for evaluating the writing task based on specific criteria (see appendix E). Since, many of the pupils have common difficulties in this productive skill. They were strongly encouraged to utilize them regularly, i.e. whenever a writing assignment comes up. In this way, they can reflect upon their own written paragraphs then refine them prior to instructor's assessment. Eventually, many participants appreciated this technique and started employing it. Nonetheless, through time it did not actually last as most of the participants showed less enthusiasm about it.

In addition, I planned to help pupils in self-evaluating their own English learning practice via peer-support. By regularly inciting them to discuss their responses with peers before plainly correcting the learning tasks. This intended to help them check their own understanding and to enable them locate their own difficulties autonomously. So far, this strategy was moderately used, yet it did not work sufficiently to develop pupils' independent learning skills. Hence, I had to opt for other strategies simultaneously.

d. Implementing self-directed tasks

I furthermore tried to bring into play three different strategies in order to encourage pupils step towards independent English learning both in and outside the class. The first practice was assigning home works for pupils on a weekly basis. These assignments were essentially about reinforcing understanding of previous lessons or preparing for the upcoming

ones. As expected, this move was not quite welcomed or appreciated by most participants. Trying to deal with the passive situation, I allotted additional marks in the 'continuous evaluation grades' for the active fulfilling participants.

Secondly, I trained pupils on the use of English dictionaries; on how to look up a word in the English dictionary correctly. Pupils started performing this task inside the class as much as they could possibly find the time and opportunity. Fortunately, most of them showed good ability and positive attitudes towards this step, which proved to be useful. They were also advised to check words in the dictionary outside the class, to write them on their vocabulary notebook and to review them regularly.

The third employed strategy was inciting learners to borrow English books (grammar, vocabulary, stories…etc) from the school library. This is to immerse them in the language learning voluntarily and autonomously. I was supposed to monitor them in their chosen readings then supply feedback. However, based on my observation, no pupil took this suggestion into account or carried it out. Probably, due to their embedded reluctant mode of learning and low level of motivation.

e. Providing choice opportunities

In my continuous trials to increase pupils' level of autonomy throughout the second research cycle, I emphasized on implementing the strategy of individual choice making. This was carried out by allowing pupils to make choices and decisions over different phases of their English learning. Generally, pupils' most chances for this were exhibited in the writing and grammar tasks. For example, selecting a particular subtopic then writing a paragraph about it. Or picking out of a number of sentences their favorite one, then work on it grammatically. Regarding the vocabulary tasks, pupils were required to opt for a word from a list then check it up in the dictionary. Providing choices in the classroom had also another form. This concerns giving pupils the chance for deciding upon the structure of their English test. For example, choosing between a text followed by questions or just a set of activities, plus the day/time at which they wished to take it. What is more, to create an optimal learning environment, pupils were often allowed to make selection over how they performed the lesson tasks. That is, individually, in pairs or by joining the groups they preferred. They could also change their seating arrangements from time to time. Regarding this flexible choice-based approach, I noticed that pupils had positive attitudes and seemed to be more excited about completing their learning tasks.

f. Incorporating strategy training and meta-cognitive awareness

After realizing that pupils still lack some of the independent English learning skills (despite my prior interventions), I decided to engage in a third and final cycle for my action research. Hence, I implemented strategy training believing in its imperative significance for fostering autonomous learning in the EFL class. Therefore, I explicitly introduced the memory strategy to pupils by presenting pictures that bear the meaning of new lexis or by drawing their symbols on the board (when images are not available). Then, by explaining to them that such visual aids are useful in acquiring the new vocabulary, because they facilitate the memorization of the latter. Additionally, I endeavored to train them on the compensation strategy specifically in the reading comprehension tasks. By asking them to identify cues and key words that enable them understand the general idea of the text, instead of looking up the individual meaning of words. Furthermore, I tried to help them employ the social strategy, that is, by training them on seeking help from peers or the instructor whenever needed in order to accomplish their learning tasks successfully. In due course, each of these strategic acts became part of the lesson, they were meant to help pupils develop learning skills as well as their meta-cognitive awareness. Yet, in spite of this, most learners did not display such awareness, not even much interest in strategy training. Probably, due to their unprecedented familiarity with this different practice. They definitely needed more time to apply such unusual technique and to perceive its value. However, this has unfortunately happened when the school year was coming to its end and when most pupils lost focus and interest about their own studies.

3.6. Data collection instruments

In this section, I will present and explain in detail the various research tools that were employed to carry out the investigation.

3.6.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaires are one of the most popular and effective quantitative research techniques that several researchers employ. Mainly "because they are relatively easy to administer, they can be used in a time-efficient manner with large numbers of participants and they produce data which is relatively easy to analyse." (Dikilitaş & Griffiths, 2017). Another interesting point about questionnaires is that administering them does not necessarily depend

on the researcher's presence, nor it entails the respondents' immediate answers for they are generally given sufficient time to complete it (Townsend, 2013, p. 91).

Questionnaire designs are commonly classified under two main headings: open-ended and close-ended questionnaires. Each type has its own advantages and drawbacks and thus should be utilized in accordance with the research setting and objectives. With regard to this study, close-ended questionnaires (a pre- and post- questionnaire) were considered to be most convenient. First, because they engage multiple-choice questions covering most of the possible options that participants might not be able (at their level) to conceive. Second, because they provide precise and clear questions that can be easily understood. By easing the participants' load to complete the questionnaire, I intend to augment the chance to have them fully completed. Lastly, as opposed to the open-ended findings which are somehow hard to code and interpret, close ended questionnaire results are time-saving and can be simply analyzed statistically and thus can be efficiently employed throughout the action research process.

3.6.1.1. The pre-study questionnaire

The pre-questionnaire of this research comprised twenty close-ended questions divided into four sections named respectively as follows: 'beliefs and attitudes', 'learning styles', 'learning strategies' and 'self-reliance'. Each section tackles a particular facet and focuses on a specific constituent of learner autonomy. That is to say, this initial questionnaire addresses the informants' learning styles, strategies and their attitudes towards learner autonomy; as it examines their perceptions of their supposed roles and the teacher's role. In brief, it seeks to identify the main features that are considerably influential in the developmental course of learner autonomy.

3.6.1.2 Detailed explanation of the pre-questionnaire sections

The following part provides a comprehensive explanation of each section included in the pre-questionnaire:

Section A: learners' beliefs and attitudes

The first part (A) comprises seven questions related to learners' beliefs and attitudes. The major objective of this section is to perceive learners' thoughts, convictions and viewpoints about their actual ways of learning and how they think it should be. Additionally,

it aims to dig out their inner beliefs about being self-reliant and relatively detached from the instructor in learning the English language. It should be noted that identification of learners' beliefs at an early stage of the current action research is of paramount importance. For it allows the researcher to gain relevant insights of a key factor that determines how learning is going to be approached (Cotterall, 1995). By figuring out learners' conceptions of their own capacities and roles, I can possibly lay a proper ground for an autonomous learning via considering which beliefs should be maintained and which ones should be altered.

Section B: learning styles and preferences

The second section (B) aims at investigating pupils' learning styles based on Oxford's & Cohen's (2001) credited language learning styles. The latter conveniently comprise eleven dichotomies: 1-visual/auditory/ kinesthetic, 2- extraverted /introverted, 3- random-intuitive/ concrete- sequential, 4- closure-oriented/open-oriented, 5- global/particular, 6- synthesizing/analytic, 7-sharpener/leveler, 8-deductive/inductive, 9- field independent/field dependent, 10- impulsive/reflective, and 11-metaphoric/literal. Only two types of these styles were targeted in this study. Emphasis was laid basically on the two first types within four questions (type1in questions 09and 10) and (type 2 in questions 11and 12). It should be noted that Oxford's & Cohen's first type deals with the way learners use their physical senses in the foreign language acquisition process, their tendency to rely more on their senses of sight, hearing and touching or doing i.e. whether they are visual, auditory or kinesthetic. While, the second type carries out the way learners approach a learning situation, whether they tend to learn the language more efficiently individually or collectively i.e. whether they are more extraverted or introverted. Selection of these two particular types out of the eleven is, in fact, based on a couple of reasons:

First, it is not adequate to have a comprehensive investigation of all the learning styles (as indicated in Oxford's & Cohen's, 2001). Merely, because this is not the main research concern, it is rather a tiny fraction of it that does not entail a thorough account. On the contrary, scrutinizing all the categories may lead to redundancy vis-à-vis the research purpose. Second, I suppose that the selected two styles tightly line up more than the others with the research objective. In the sense that, recognition of pupils' learning inclination is of utmost importance to the developmental process of learner autonomy. Because, it helps learners to deliberately identify their own physical learning tendency as well sociability/

individuality in language learning. Thus, it aids to raise pupils' awareness over their own learning which will result in a higher meta-cognitive knowledge.

Section C: Learning strategies

The third part (C) involves another fundamental dimension of autonomous learning that is closely associated with the previous one (learning styles). It addresses, pupils' language learning strategies based on Oxford's (1990) taxonomy. The latter comprises two categories: the direct strategies (memory, cognitive and compensation strategies) and the indirect strategies (meta-cognitive, affective and social strategies). The main objective of this part is thus to draw learner's attention towards the way they operate in their English learning process and the frequency of their strategies use. Exploring this can result in a higher level of metacognitive awareness among the participants. As to the teacher-researcher, this part is definitely crucial, for it allows her to recognize the learners' process of internalizing, perceiving and transmitting information in the English class; which tends to help her train them on effective strategy use. Because, facilitating the use of strategies is indispensable for self-directed learning (Holec, 1981).

Section D: Self-reliance

The final part of the questionnaire deals with the aspect of 'self-reliance' which is one of the building blocks of learner autonomy. By asking four questions on this issue, I intended to elicit data about learners' actual and supposed roles in the English class. Besides, I aimed at revealing their perception of their own capacity for detachment along with their predisposition to become, to some extent, independent English language learners. Having such sort of information, at an initial stage of the research, is actually mandatory. For, it offers an insight about the learners' level of dependency/independency on external factors. This tends to facilitate for the teacher researcher the task of seeking out proper techniques and strategies that cope with the conditions and challenges of the given learning/teaching situation. Furthermore, data from this section can benefit not only the teacher-researcher, but the learners also, since it allows them to question and to think critically about their own roles in the English class as well as their aptitude to be more responsible and more self-reliant in their EFL learning.

3.6.2. The interview

Interviews are one of the most useful qualitative data collection tools that can result in rich and insightful data. They integrate systematic questions that usually uncover vital concepts and intensify comprehension. Because, “in qualitative inquiry, we need to go deeper, to pursue understanding in all its complex, elusive and shifting forms; and to achieve this we need to establish a relationship with people that enables us to share their perception of the world” (Richards, 2003, p. 50). Accordingly, interviewing enables researchers collect in-depth data and consequently helps them reach a deeper understanding of the studied areas. Similar to Richards’s (2003) idea, Grady (1998, p.19) maintains that building a good rapport between the researcher and interviewees is a key human factor that determines the success of interviewing. Besides, interviewing allows for joint interaction, interviewees can ask for explanation when they find ambiguity and thus can get immediate clarification (ibid). Interviewing also gives researchers direct access to the subjects’ inner thoughts “interviews are an opportunity for researchers to talk directly and acquire firsthand information from the participant” (Lee, 2014).

Nevertheless, interviewing has also weaknesses that can get the researcher off the track and may inhibit its success. One of the interview major shortcomings relates to the human factor; which is “the lack of absolute control” Grady (1998, p.19). This concerns both partners: the interviewer and interviewee. On the one hand, interviewees can provide very short responses to complicated questions or can even give out of topic answers. In addition, interviewees “may produce 'diplomatic' answers; those that they assume the researcher might want to hear” Hořínek (2007). Most likely because they find it difficult or embarrassing to directly express their negative feelings or criticisms to their interviewer. On the other hand, the interviewers ought to be skilled in administering interviews without interfering personal biases Grady (1998, p.19).

In the literature, the forms of interview differ from one research to another. Yet, there are three main types that are characterized according to their degree of control: the structured, unstructured and semi-structured interviews. In the first category, the interviewer is in complete control because he/she poses a sequence of preset questions in a fixed order, and the subjects are restricted to responding them without pursuing further discussion. That is, “it differs little from an oral administration of a written questionnaire” Grady (1998). Conversely, the second type resembles a formal open conversation between the interviewer and respondent, in which the latter is given the chance to progress in a free flowing discussion

yielding a large amount of data that fall in the same direction of the explored area. This type is "seldom useful for the novice researcher" (ibid). Whereas, the third type is a flexible combination of the two previous formats. It involves neither total control nor spontaneous questioning. It rather emerges through a set of predetermined questions that may vary in their construction, but conform in their meaning when posed to more than one subject (Berg, 2007). Regarding this study, I decided to carry out a structured interview, because it ensures greater reliability and consistency due to its standardized form (Burns, 1999, p.111). Moreover, within this type "the interviewee has limited scope for influencing the progress of the discussion" (Townsend, 2013, p.91) which tends to generate precise and concise responses that are not only relevant and time-saving but also relatively easy to manage.

3.6.2.1. The interview procedure

At the aim of examining the research output and to detect any possible change that would imply pupils' autonomous learning development, I conducted an interview with a sample group of participants at the middle of the research period, precisely on February 13th and 15th, 2017. It was conducted individually with four learners from two classes (two pupils from each). The interview setting was inside the classroom, yet out of the class time. The informants were selected on the basis of three criteria. First of all, they accepted to take part in the interview voluntarily. Second, their English proficiency level ranges between moderate and low, this is not to select the most competent learners as reference which may undermine data validity and credibility. Third, they were believed to be more expressive and more capable to provide sufficient data. It should be noted that all interviewees were informed, prior to the interview initiation, that they have complete freedom and time to express themselves. They were also guaranteed that their responses will not have any negative impact on their grades or their teacher's view about them. Moreover, to maintain the study objectivity, the researcher administered the interview being careful not to lead or affect the respondents' thoughts. The questions were asked in English (the participants were encouraged to ask for clarification whenever needed), but could be answered both in English and Arabic so that all participants can express and discuss their thoughts easily.

The interview consists of seven structured questions purposefully designed to illicit data and to lead the respondents to smoothly generate relevant insights on their own English learning. While constructing the questions, four aspects of learner autonomy were addressed, these are widely acknowledged by major references in the field (see chapter 1)*: capacity for*

reflection (Little, 1991, p.4) *learner responsibility* (Benson & Voller, 1997), *independent action* (Dam, 1995) and finally *learning assessment* (Holec, 1981). In short, the overall interview questions chiefly seek to find out whether learners are truly moving towards autonomous language learning. That is to say, whether they have developed any capacity for detachment or autonomy in their English learning while taking part in this research project.

3.6.2.2. Interview questions and their relevance

A detailed account of all the interview questions, their relevance along with their objectives is presented in this section.

A. Awareness and capacity for reflection

Question 1: *How often did you manage to achieve your learning goal?*

-When it was not achieved, did you know why?

After being constantly made aware of their learning goals, the participants were asked about the frequency of achieving these aims. This question, indeed, was asked not only to find out the extent to which they succeeded to fulfill their learning goals, but more importantly to examine their capacity to reflect on their learning outcomes. Following the first question, a correlated sub-question was posed to dig deeper into learner's thoughts and thus to extract specific information about what they believe inhibited them from attaining these learning objectives, this allows to recognize whether they attribute their learning failure to themselves or to other external factors.

Question 2: *What is the best way to improve your English learning?*

This broad question addresses the learner's ability to explicitly identify best English learning methods. It tackles their knowledge and awareness of the most effective learning approaches they may be using or think can be used to reach better learning outcomes. The findings will provide insights on what learners consider helpful to boost their English learning, which allows the teacher-researcher to see through the learners' eyes. What is more, the participants' responses are of utmost importance, since they supply data on the extent to which they are being conscious about their best learning methods. Consequently, they would relatively facilitate measuring the level of autonomy in the EFL class as autonomous learners are supposed to be aware of that.

B. Learner responsibility

Question 3: *How do you feel when the teacher gives you a home work?*

This question's major objective is to elicit data on learners' attitudes about a given learning situation; particularly when asked to do a home work. It seeks to find out if the learners accept to make individual efforts in order to progress in their own English learning. Whether they feel it as a burden on their shoulders to fulfill additional tasks. The informants' feedback will imply their level of responsibility and their internal conception of who should do the learning. In my view, this question is noteworthy because it allows measuring the learners' sense of responsibility which is a key aspect to foster learner autonomy.

Question 4: *Who contributes mostly to your English study success or failure?*

Examining the level of learner responsibility was further executed by addressing a second question. The latter underlines from learners' perspective the fundamental factors that determine their English study success or failure. Therefore, on the basis of the participants' accounts, it would become easier to figure out their responsible/irresponsible learning attitude. Considering themselves as passive contributors in the learning process and the teacher as being the only one in charge of learning would indicate a low level of responsibility. Whereas, presuming to have a focal impact on one's own learning outcomes, not associating their failure solely to the teacher would suggest a more responsible attitude.

C. Independent action

Question 5: *How can you learn English by yourself?*

This is an open question that may yield a range of data on learners' potential for independent action. It seeks to perceive the individual efforts pupils may be making to boost their English language level. Participants are expected to reveal various ways, situations and activities they actually use or find useful to learn English in a teacher's absence. The information gathered, hence, would display learners' likelihood to act autonomously and the different methods they could draw on.

Question 6: *What activities do you do outside the class to learn English?*

Similar to the preceding question, this is designed to generate data on learners' autonomous learning conduct. However, this question seeks more specifically to spot the nature and type of the independent learning tasks. It seems to suppose that all the participants

are already doing some learning tasks on their own. Yet, in fact the respondents who are not fulfilling any individual work are not necessarily meant to supply answers.

D. Learning assessment

Question 7: *Did your English study method change? How?*

This direct question indeed examines two main areas. First, it explores the possible change in pupils' learning approach as a result of implementing the research method. To put it otherwise, it aims to reveal whether the adopted pedagogy has been influential in their overall studying approach or not. Second, more importantly it examines learners' awareness about the change that might have happened. Because, consciousness about the learning process will eventually display learners' level of metacognition which is a major requisite for enhancing autonomous learning.

3.6.3. Classroom observation

The observational dimension has been integrated in this study in order to construct a more comprehensive account of the research procedure. Indeed, it can add valuable information to the study process, "observations give the researcher a more holistic sense of situations than can be obtained from interviews or document analysis" (Grady, 1998, p. 22). Classroom observation is "looking with purpose" (ibid), it is a process of "selective watching" (Duckett as cited in Reed and Bergemann, 2001,p. 15). Yet, it is not a mere act of watching events occurring in the class, but rather a systematic description, evaluation, and analysis of specific features linked to the area under scrutiny. Effective classroom observations entail a set of skills such as: the ability to generate questions, effective and flexible note-taking, mental preparation for observation and the capacity to "see more to see" Levine et al. (as cited in as cited in Lynch,1996,p.108).

Classroom observations have a number of scheme divisions in the literature. Some of which are broken down into four types: systematic, structured, focused and open observation (Hopkins,1993). Some into two types: structured and open observation (Seliger and Shohamy,1989) and others into system-based, ethnographic and *ad hoc* by Wallace (1991) (as cited in McDonough,2014,p.101). Yet, despite the wide range of divisions, there are three basic types that are most popular and most employed in research works: the structured, unstructured and semi-structured classroom observation. As for the structured observation, Lynch (1996) maintains that the more structured the observation is, the less naturalistic data it generates, and added that:

> Such instruments may be able to tell us how often something occurred, but they will not always give us a clear idea of how it occurred. Most likely, these structured instruments will provide useful data for a naturalistic evaluation only if the categories for recording have come from more open-ended, unstructured observation…….In fact, most naturalistic researchers would generally eschew the use of any form of structured observation. (p. 110).

Following the same thoughts and believing that structured observation engages a set of detailed "protocols" as articulated by (Grady,1998, p.23) that generally yield 'thick' information and sometimes complex items which might be difficult to scrutinize, I chose not to opt for this type. Furthermore, implementing an unstructured observation would not serve my research purpose either. Because, it involves a load of open data that might not conform to my areas of interest. Another reason for not choosing the unstructured form is that it is frequently used by expert researchers (ibid) and is commonly considered to be more fitting to the experienced scholars that I certainly do not claim to be.

Taking into account all of the aforementioned issues, I chose to opt for the semi-structured type believing that it is the most suitable form for my research setting. Because, first it gives me room to exercise my role as a teacher without being overwhelmed with filling detailed observation schemes. Second, it keeps me, at the same time, focused on the areas I wish to examine with low restriction. Additionally, it is more manageable for it engages clear ways of data identification, description and analysis. As it is more flexible, since it combines open-ended note taking with categories that serve as a guide. In the present study, such categories comprise: learners' individual/group work, learners' engagement, learning strategies and teacher self-evaluation.

3.6.3.1. Classroom observation procedure

The duration of the investigative observation lasted for more than six weeks. Throughout, this time, I attempted to carry out objective observations, by taking regular notes on how pupils acted and reacted to the different stages of each lesson. At times, I jotted down my notes during the class time, but mostly it was done afterwards. These notes consisted mainly of short accounts on participants' practices and behaviors based on four categories. The latter were inspired by Nunan's (1989) investigated aspects of autonomous behavior in the classroom. Thus, it seeks to provide answers for the following questions:

CATEGORIES	QUESTIONS
1. Learners' individual/group work	• Are the pupils doing individual work? • Did they enjoy working in groups?
2. Learners' engagement and sense of responsibility	• Are the pupils interacting effectively in class? • Are they doing their assigned home works?
3. Learning strategies	• Are they having problems using their learner diary? • Which strategies are the pupils using in class to complete their tasks?
4.Teacher self-evaluation	• Did I encourage pupils to reflect on their works after being done? • What did I use to encourage them? • Am I giving all the learners equal opportunities to develop autonomy in the class? • How could I engage my pupils in decision making about the direction of the course?

Table 3.3: Aspects of classroom observation

Using classroom observation in this study was, to a certain extent, helpful. Because, it allowed me, through a deliberate examination, to learn more about what was really occurring in the experimental classes. Nonetheless, this had put me, at the same time, under the pressure of being immersed in a complex situation where I had to act as a teacher and a researcher simultaneously. Being as such, I was at the risk of unconsciously missing some important data. What is more, being a participant among the participants, I found the challenge to avoid biased description of the facts and events, as Lynch (1996) pointed out "the complete participant observer may be overly influenced by prior knowledge and understanding of the setting and fail to observe aspects that do not conform to that understanding" (p.121). In spite of this, the situation was also advantageous; as it might have lessened the effect of "the observer's paradox" (Labov,1972) i.e. the observer's presence influence on the participants' conduct, since the pupils were accustomed to my presence (the teacher's).

3.6.4. The post-study questionnaire

The post-questionnaire consists of twenty statements with a 5 point Likert scale response format (ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree) to measure the data. It was handed to the participants at the end of the school year, precisely on May 10th 2017. After

clearly explaining the various questionnaire items, the participants were invited to complete it and to hand it back to the researcher. It should be noted that five participants (3 from 1st class & 2 from 2nd class) were absent and consequently did not fill it. The following table displays detailed information about the post- questionnaire participants.

Subjects	Male		Female		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
First year	10	31.25	22	68.75	32	56.14
Second year	11	44	14	56	25	43.85
Total	21	36.84	36	63.15	57	100

Table 3.4: The post-questionnaire participants

Its design was inspired by Dixon's (2011) questionnaire in *Measuring Language Learner Autonomy*. Close similarities can be marked between the current questionnaire's 20 items and Dixon's long list (256) items. For example: (section A: item 3 with item 86, section B: item 7 with item 130, section D: item19 with item 231 and item20 with 237). This may indicate that the literature provides a level of support to this questionnaire. Moreover, in order to maintain a systematic examination of learners' autonomous behaviors, the questionnaire was divided into four sections namely: 1.'learning strategies', 2.'metacognition', 3.'responsibility and self-reliance' and 4.'the capacity for independent action'.

3.6.4.1. Detailed explanation of the post-questionnaire sections

An account of each section is discussed below.

Section A: Learning strategies

The first section targets learners' use of the language learning strategies. Akin to the pre-study questionnaire, it comprises six different statements congruent with Oxford's (1990) six language learning strategies. Each item representing a different strategy respectively (item 1: the memory, item 2: the cognitive, item 3: the compensation, item 4: the meta-cognitive, item 5: the affective and item 6: the social strategy). The main purpose of this section is to perceive learners' potential strategy use and to examine whether they developed the capacity to employ them efficiently and regularly. Because, this would either indicate or negate their possession of one of the basic independent learning skills.

Section B: Meta-cognition

The second category concerns another feature that is greatly emphasized as a vital portion of autonomous learning (Cotterall 2009; Sinclair 2000). Through its seven self-reflection based items, it seeks to figure out if the participants had built any metacognitive skills so far. The responses would reveal whether they have been reflective about what and how they learnt English along the year. To put it differently, the findings would display whether the participants have involved awareness about their own English learning process or not. It should be noted that within the items, more emphasis was put on the *knowledge* of cognition (i.e. consciousness of the factors that influence performance) rather than on the *regulation* of cognition (i.e. setting the goals and evaluating the learning strategies). Because, such participants are not expected to develop the proactive type of autonomy, but rather the reactive one as was stated earlier (in chapter one section1.4.2).

Section C: Responsibility and self-reliance

In the third category, three distinct items were integrated in order to reexamine pupils' sense of responsibility in their EFL learning. After encouraging them to take charge for their own English learning all along the research course, I attempted to detect whether they have altered their misleading beliefs or if they still believe that English learning ought to be done for them (by the instructor). By considering the findings, it would be clearer to identify the extent to which they have acquired this particular tenet of learner autonomy.

Section D: The capacity for independent action

The last section emphasizes on participants' ability to act independently in their EFL learning. It deals with the same aspect tackled in the interview's final questions. By comparing the latter's findings with the former's, one can get relevant data on pupils' potential capacity for detachment in their English learning conduct. This category includes four items covering opposing autonomous actions (doing tasks as individual work Vs a group work). The responses of this section would reveal pupils' willingness and potential to study English independently i.e. without any external pressure, but rather for the sake of improving their language level.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter essentially depicts the teacher-researcher's endeavor to take her Algerian EFL learners in an autonomous learning journey. It aims at framing the whole picture of the research process and design. All of background information, study plan, duration, as well as reasons for selecting the research methodology, tools and participants are made clear. Action research has been the adopted method to attain the study aims. The procedure of the research method was fully presented: identifying a problem, collecting data, analyzing data, and developing an action plan. At each stage of the action plans, I integrated multiple teaching strategies in order to achieve higher levels of autonomy in the EFL class. The implemented strategies have, eventually, generated divergent attitudes amongst pupils, some of which were positive and some negative. Despite facing several challenges and failing at some stages of the strategies implementation, it should be noted that the whole process brought me new insights on my own instructional performance as it helped me to understand pupils' approaches and reactions to each step. Finally, the research findings from both types; quantitative and qualitative are fully analyzed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4. Introduction

This chapter serves the prime purpose of interpreting and analyzing the research findings. It illustrates and explains the informants' EFL learning experience vis-à-vis autonomous practice. Therefore, I attempt in this chapter to report how the participants reacted to the different stages of the action research, mainly in terms of two aspects: first, their *beliefs* about self-directedness, second their *attitudes* in actual practice. Hence, the findings of this study are expected to help readers find out whether the participants have developed any of the independent EFL learning skills as a result of the integrated teaching approach or not. This eventually leads to measure the usefulness and effectiveness of each implemented teaching strategy, as it tends to implicitly inform about the potential outcomes of applying such strategies in comparable Algerian EFL classrooms.

In the current chapter, different types of data are analyzed and organized according to the chronological order of their exploratory process. The respective order of their interpretation begins with a presentation of the pre-questionnaire results plus an analysis based on four fundamental sections of learner autonomy (*beliefs and attitudes, learning styles, learning strategies and self-reliance).* Subsequently, it describes the findings of the classroom observation (class A and B) taking into account the positive as well as the negative notes then draws conclusions from them. After that, it probes into the interview results in order to check the viability of the implemented approach. Finally, this chapter ends up with an exploration of the post-questionnaire responses and presents a comprehensive discussion of the overall findings. The latter thus are twofold in their nature since they derive from both quantitative as well as qualitative resources.

Obviously, the strategies employed to analyze data in any study depend greatly on the nature and type of information gathered. For that reason, the present research involved different analytic methods to explore both of quantitative and qualitative findings. Relating to the qualitative data, I basically followed (Hatch, 2002 and Shank, 2006) approaches, that stand upon *identifying* and *categorizing* themes and patterns of the obtained information. Whereas, for the quantitative data, I opted for the *description, synthesis,* and *interpretation of* the statistics as a main analytic tool (Gay, Mills and Airasian, 2006).

4. 1.Data analysis tools

Analyzing data is undoubtedly a fundamental step in the action research. However, it might be the most challenging phase in the whole research process (Efron & Ravid , 2013). There are several ways of analyzing and making sense of the results in the literature. Overall, data analysis is basically concerned with a set of preordained procedures: *1. organizing, 2. summarizing, 3. synthesizing, 4. interpreting and 5.presenting the gathered data*. Such processes are mainly similar in both qualitative as well as quantitative research (Cresswell & Plano Clarck, 2011).

As far as this study is concerned, particular data processing approaches have been adopted. With regard to the qualitative data, I attempted to process the information that stemmed from classroom observation, mainly in the way that was suggested by (Hatch, 2002 and Shank, 2006). That is, by means of identifying and categorizing themes and patterns "in order to build a coherent interpretation and logically structured findings" (Efron & Ravid , 2013, p. 166). The data collected from the participants' interviews were initially transcribed, then organized and divided according to a predetermined category for each question. Interpreting the interview findings is, then, based upon the consideration of precise facets of learner autonomy so that the most important features could be easily revealed.

However, in the quantitative data analysis where the questionnaires' findings are basically in numerical form, I opted for a descriptive statistical analysis. Because, this fits well the specific characteristics of action research (Burns, 2009,p. 121). What is more, I followed Tomal's (2010) principle in calculating then tallying the responses and using descriptive statistics. As "the numerical information can assist the action researcher in providing quantifiable data in which to make analysis and interpretation" (ibid.p.104). Hence, through a combination of such analytic methods, I aimed first to establish a deeper understanding of the participants' fundamental components of autonomous learning and second to assess the intervention plan that I employed in the fieldwork.

4. 2. The pre-questionnaire findings and analysis

Section A: Beliefs and Attitudes

4. 2. 1. In your opinion, learning English is: a. Important b. Not important?

Answer / Class	Important	Not important
First year	34	1
Second year	25	2
Total number	59	3
Rate	95%	5%

Table 4.2.1.: Pupils' opinions about the importance of learning English

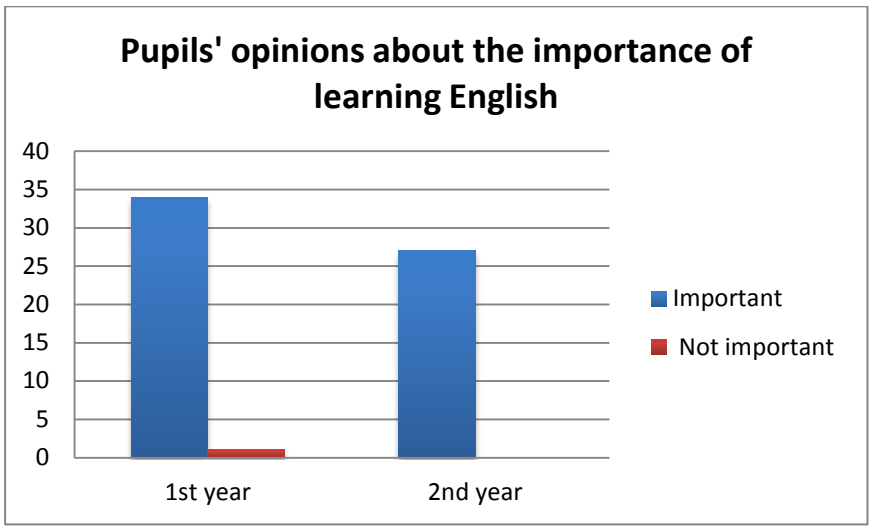

Figure 4.2.1.: Pupils' opinions about the importance of learning English

The initial question is principally concerned with pupils' view about the worth of learning English. According to the responses, the vast majority of learners from both groups (95%) regard learning English as important. This broad positive belief reasonably denotes learners' awareness of the considerable merits and benefits that may be gained from mastering this lingua-franca. This can actually be taken as a good indicator of an inherent motivation that may lead them to assume higher levels of responsibility in their EFL learning. Whereas, the remaining category of pupils (5%) held that learning English is unimportant, implying a reluctant position towards learning this language. Since the latter category sees no interest in learning English, it tends expectedly to act passively and to put little effort during the course of the action research.

4.2.2. Do you think that learning English is difficult?

Answer / Class	Yes	No
First year	19	16
Second year	17	10
Total number	36	26
Rate	58%	42%

Table 4.2.2: Pupils' perception of the difficulty of learning English

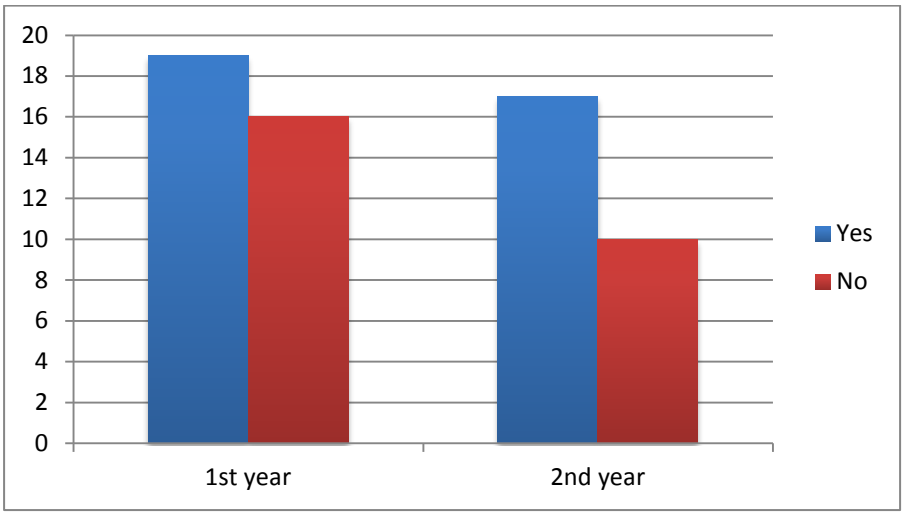

Figure 4.2.2: Pupils' perception of the difficulty of learning English

This question aimed at targeting learners' perception on the complexity of their English learning process. More than half of the respondents (58%) reported that leaning the English language is hard while 42% maintained that it is not. According to the common idea that learners' beliefs and attitudes do, to a great extent, shape and impinge on their learning behavior, many of the participants who consider English learning a hard task will tend to have a subtle inclination to be engaged in the learning process and are less likely to make individual efforts for improvement, as opposed to the rest who think oppositely. In actual fact, obtaining this information and recognizing this attitudinal aspect at an early stage of the research may well help me (the teacher-researcher) to take a moderate action for an alteration of such negative beliefs.

4.2.3. According to you, what is the most difficult skill in English learning?

Answer / Class	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
First year	18	21	5	24
Second year	15	19	9	21
Total number	33	40	14	45
Rate	53%	64%	22%	72%

Table 4.2.3: Pupils' most difficult language learning skill

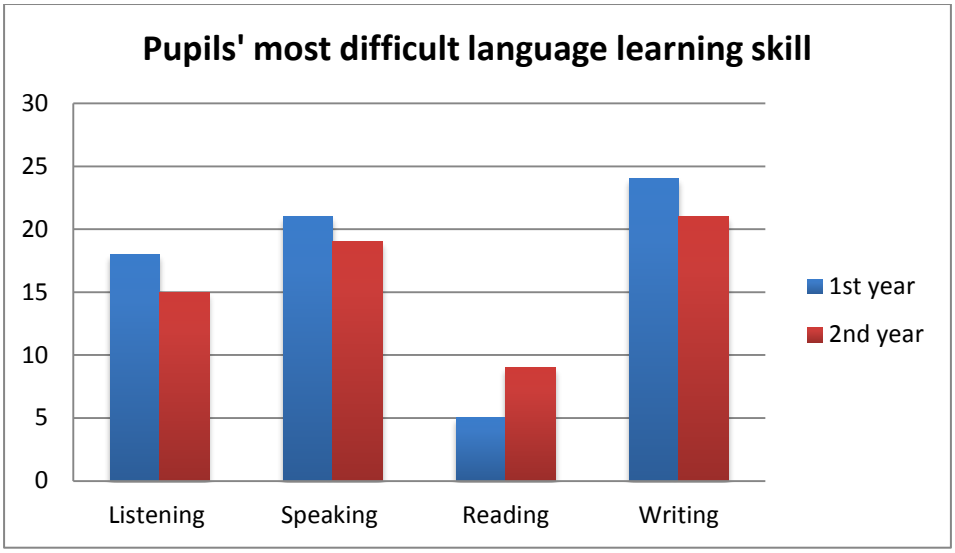

Figure 4.2.3: Pupils' most difficult language learning skill

In relation to the previous question, pupils were further asked about their most challenging English learning skill(s). Four options representing the four language skills were proposed, with a possibility to select more than one. Unsurprisingly, the first most selected option was the writing skill with a rate of 72%. Indeed, this finding was expected due to pupils' widespread weakness in writing, which has often been mirrored in their performance at class. The second most selected choice applied to the second productive skill that is, speaking with a rate of 62%. This ratio was also anticipated, as most of the learners show fear and resistance to oral communication during the lessons. Listening has been selected at a third place probably not for the fact that it is less difficult but rather because of their lack of exposure to auditory tasks. The reading skill was at final position seeming to be the least difficult for most learners. Based upon those results, I came to a decision of putting special emphasis on the two most selected skills .i.e. writing and speaking skills throughout the action research course at the aim of enhancing them via an autonomous-based approach.

4.2.4. Do you think that you can learn English from resources other than the teacher?

Answer / Class	Yes	No	No answer
First year	18	15	2
Second year	10	17	0
Total number	28	32	2
Rate	45%	52%	3%

Table 4.2.4: Pupil's opinion about learning English from other resources

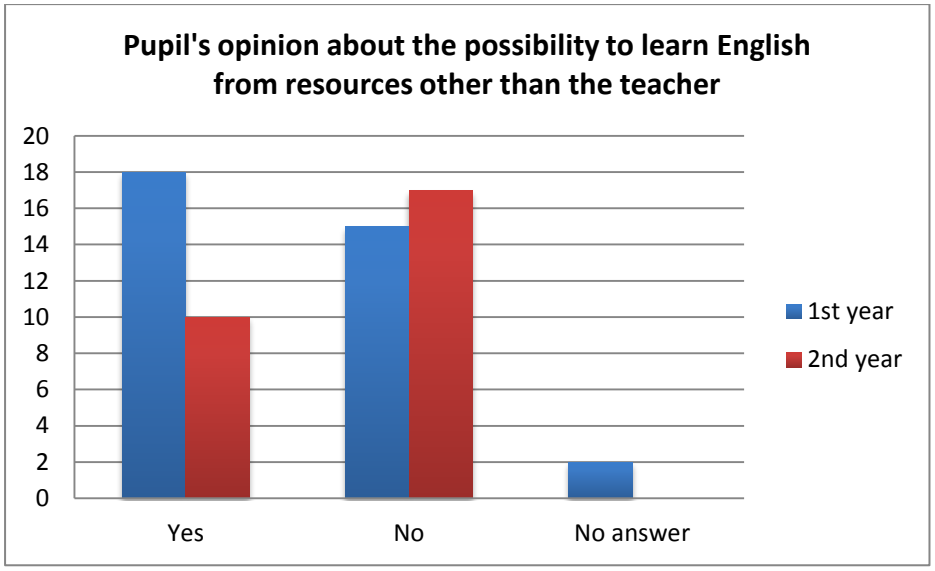

Figure 4.2.4: Pupil's opinion about learning English from other resources

In this question, I intended to find out pupils' potential to learn English from instructor-free resources. The purpose behind is to detect whether the participants are open to multiple English learning resources and thus can draw on them. Eventually, most of second year pupils revealed their incapability to become skilled at English without teacher's counseling and assistance which displays their perception of the mentor as their sole knowledge supplier, denoting a strong dependence on her. Only ten pupils pointed out that they can possibly utilize multiple learning means in their English study. In contrast to the former group, eighteen pupils from first year class (i.e. the largest number) confirmed that they can gain knowledge from different learning paths. Fifteen pupils negated that, while two others did not reply. According to the overall responses, the respondents have a common tendency to learn English from a single resource (instructor).

4.2. 5. Do you believe that your English level will be better if you rely more on yourself than on your teacher?

Answer / Class	Yes	No
First year	10	25
Second year	8	19
Total number	18	44
Rate	29%	71%

Table 4.2.5: Pupils' belief about improving their English learning through self-reliance

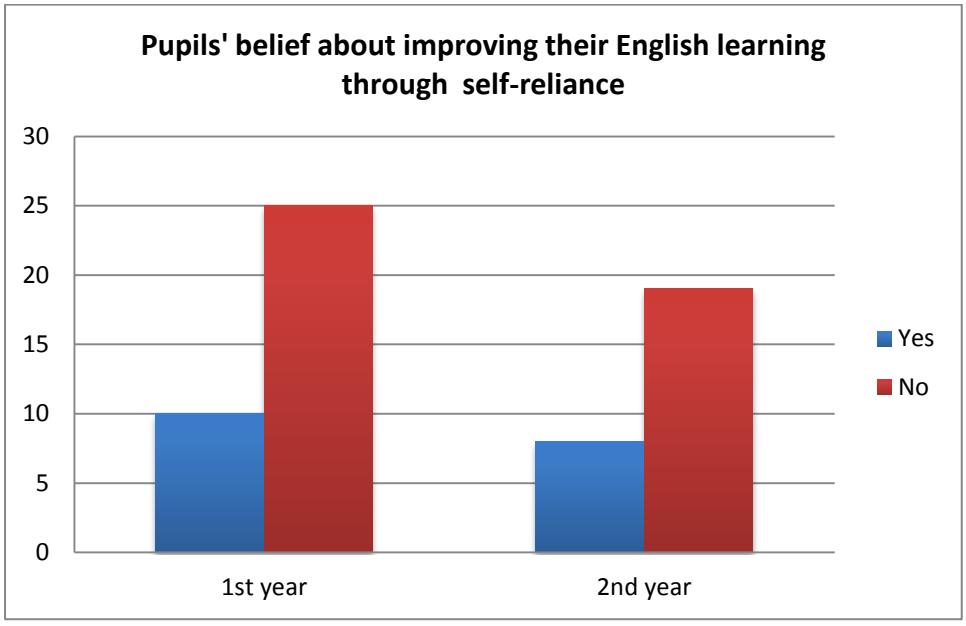

Figure 4.2.5: Pupils' belief about improving their English learning through self-reliance

This question is seemingly akin to the previous one in terms of learners' attitudinal aspect towards their dependency on the instructor. However, this one seeks particularly to find out pupils' perception of the correlation between self-reliance and their English learning enhancement. As shown in the graph above, the responses from both groups suggest that most learners (71%) think that improving their English proficiency level is not quite linked to self-reliance. This denotes their subconscious attachment to the teacher's input and assistance in the EFL classroom. Therefore, it may be argued that pupils holding this mistaken conviction are not quite set to receive a learner-centered educational approach. That is why I am supposed to make strategic decisions concerning this issue.

4.2.6. Which way do you think helps you to understand the lesson better?

Answer / Class	Learn about the lesson before the class	Learn it in class
First year	9	26
Second year	5	22
Total number	14	48
Rate	22%	78%

Table 4.2.6: Pupils' viewpoints about the best way to understand their English lesson

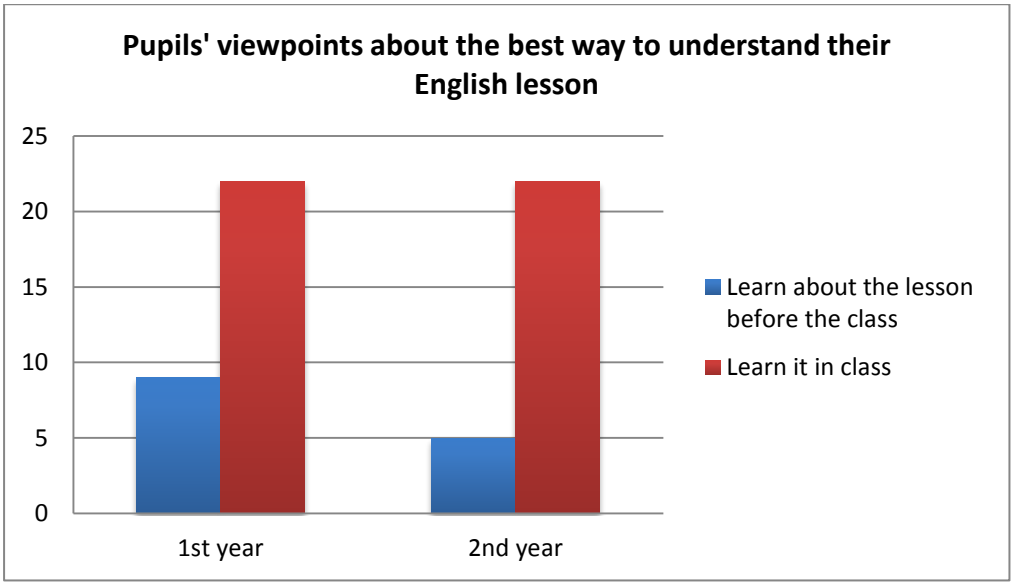

Figure 4.2.6: Pupils' viewpoints about the best way to understand their English lesson

The principal objective of this question is to identify learners' opinion about the most efficient way to grasp the English lesson based on two options (pre-class and while-class). Because, it is important to recognize, at this stage, whether pupils consider preparing the lesson prior to the class helpful for a successful English learning or not. According to the results, I found out that the majority of participants (78%) prefer having all data supplied inside the classroom (by the instructor) rather than trying to reveal it on their own in advance. By inference, they have a tendency to effortlessly receive a plain explanation from the teacher, rather than take the initiative to discover it autonomously. In fact, this is not a good indicator about their response to the independent learning assignments that are planned to take place in this action research.

4.2.7. Are you ready to take more responsibility in your English study in order to be more successful?

Answer / Class	Yes	No	No answer
First year	15	19	1
Second year	20	3	4
Total number	35	22	5
Rate	56%	36%	8%

Table 4.2.7: Pupils' readiness for taking responsibility in their EFL learning

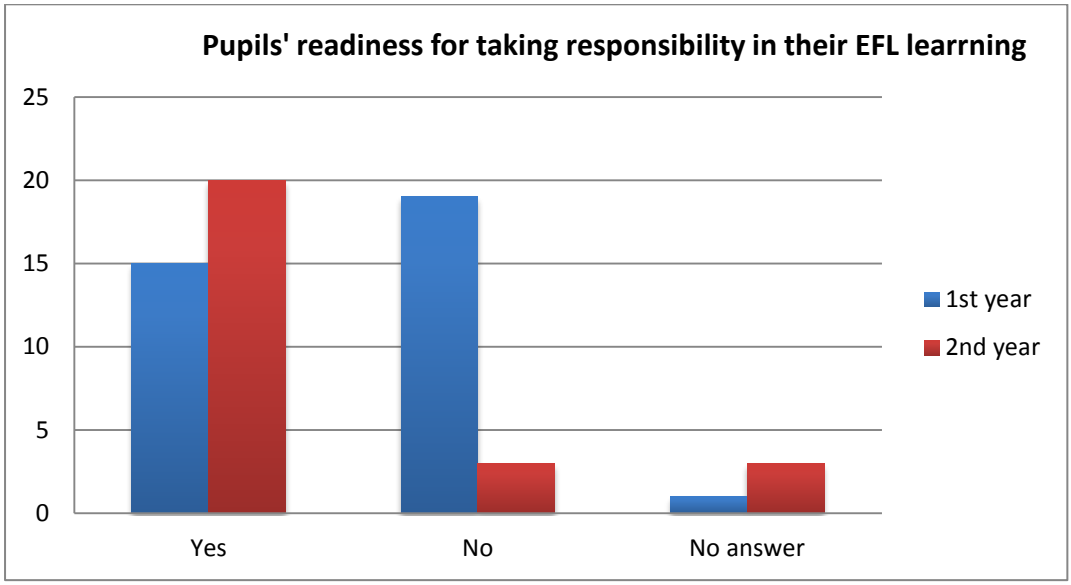

Figure 4.2.7: Pupils' readiness for taking responsibility in their EFL learning

By this query, I intended to spot light on learners' readiness to assume responsibility in their EFL learning at the aim of attaining better outcomes. As can be noticed from the graph, the findings largely differed from the first to the second year class. While the vast majority of second year pupils maintained a positive attitude towards this notion, most first year pupils displayed an indisposition to take charge of their own EFL learning. Normally, such attitudes would be reflected in their learning practices all along the research course. Because, every pupil would adopt his/her internal conviction then act upon it. Considering the overall results, 56% of the participants apparently claimed their willingness to act responsibly in the English learning process. However, this can be confirmed or disproved only after implementing the action research.

Part B: Learning styles and preferences

4.2.8. What do you prefer your English teacher to use in the lesson?

Answer / Class	Pictures and graphs	Texts for reading	Oral Discussion	Practical exercises
First year	22	7	13	23
Second year	19	12	5	21
Total number	42	19	18	44
Rate	67%	30%	29%	71%

Table 4.2.8: Pupils' preferred learning material 1

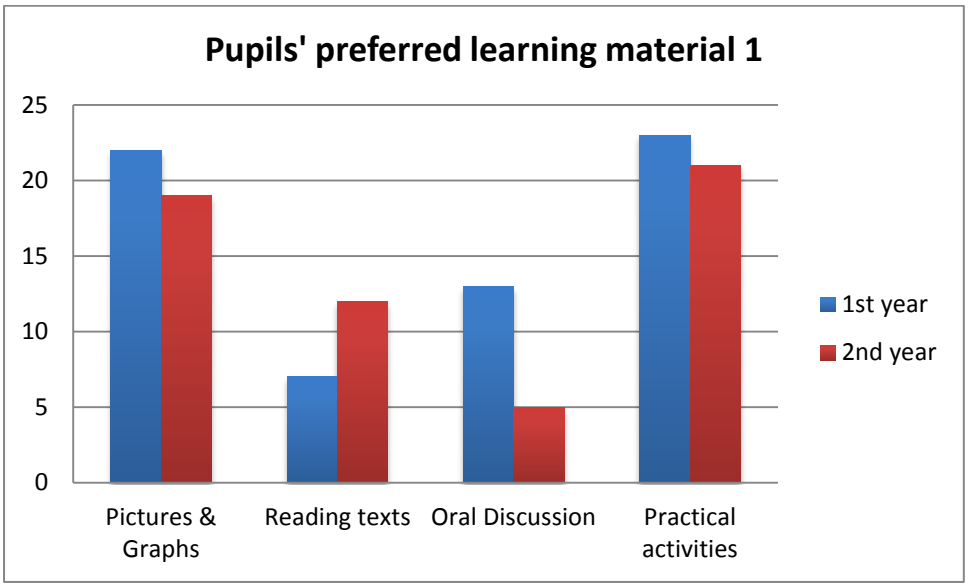

Figure 4.2.8: Pupils' preferred learning material 1

This question intends to provide an insight on pupils 'favored language learning material in the English class. Be it pictures and graphs, reading texts, oral interaction or practical activities (based on syntactical and lexical structures). According to the findings, the highest rate (71%) applied to language practical exercises. This choice might be explained by learners' propensity to retain their habitual learning practices in the English class. Subsequent to this, (67%) of respondents selected the visual materials as their second most desired input. One may justify this by their natural tendency to learn the language by means of attractive and motivating material. Only (30%) of learners opted for the reading text along with (29%) for the oral interaction. In point of fact, the data gathered from this question may be of good help to me as a teacher-researcher in the courses design process. Since, it allows me to take into account learners' preferences while selecting the teaching material.

4.2.9. What sort of material do you usually prefer to learn English with?

Answer / Class	Videos	audios/music	Lectures	Projects
First year	24	16	8	10
Second year	22	15	4	11
Total number	46	31	12	21
Rate	74%	50%	19%	33%

Table 4.2.9: Pupils' preferred learning material 2

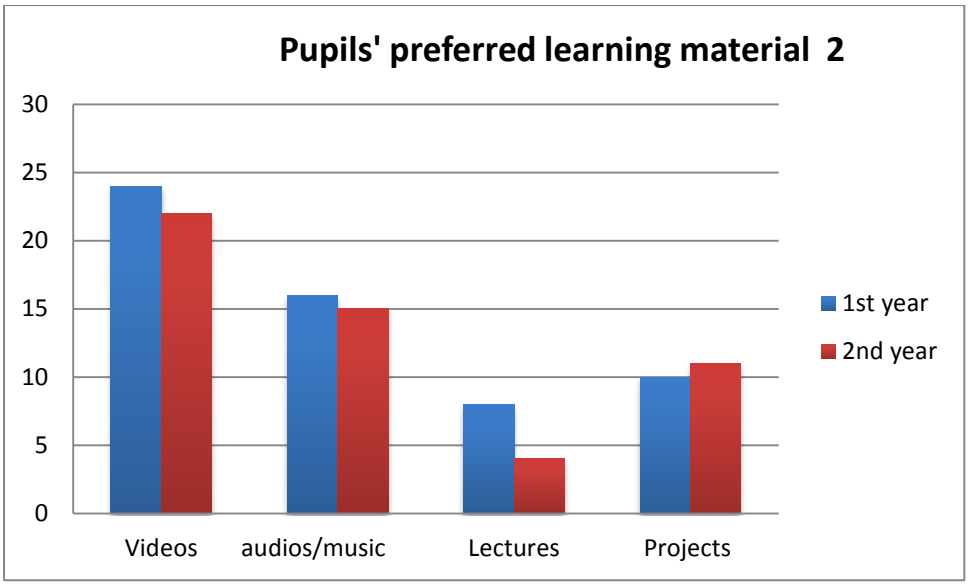

Figure 4.2.9: Pupils' preferred learning material 2

For the purpose of backing up the preceding question's results with more precise data, this closely related question was posed. Eventually, the latter's answers have been consistent to a large extent with the previous ones. With regard to visual aids use, most learners in both groups (74%) tend o be visual learners according to Oxford's & Cohen's (2001) first category of learning styles. They consider watching videos as their most appealing learning style. Another consistency appeared in their low tendency (a rate of 19%) to learn English within traditional-like classes. That is classes which mainly involve reading texts followed by a set of questions. What does not seem to conform with affirmations from the previous question, is that half of the participants reported their preference of the auditory learning style, yet they did not show readiness for an oral interaction in the English class. What can be drawn from the above discussion, is that most participants are visual learners at first place, auditory secondly and kinesthetic at a final position. This conclusion can serve in shaping the teaching plans, strategies and material.

4.2.10. Do you often feel comfortable with an individual work?

Answer / Class	Yes	No
First year	12	23
Second year	6	21
Total number	18	44
Rate	29%	71%

Table 4.2.10: Pupils' comfort with an individual work

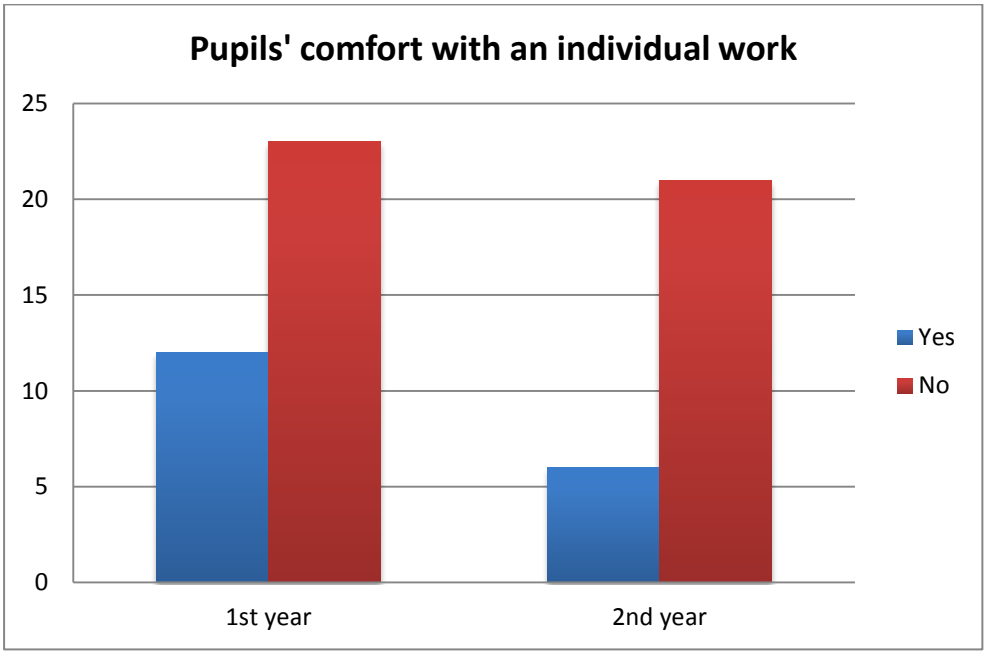

Figure 4.2.10: Pupils' comfort with an individual work

The main objective of this question is to examine participants' emotional tendency to study English independently. In other words, it seeks to check their predisposition to develop autonomous learning skills. Regrettably, the findings show that 71% of them are not truly comfortable with an individual work in their EFL learning process. This presumably reflects their low motivation and self-assurance in taking autonomous actions. Besides, it shows their notable inclination to join groups in order to ensure a feeling of security and ease. The remaining participants, that is 19% answered 'yes' denoting their readiness and capability to accomplish an English learning task on their own. Only such small category of participants suggested its likelihood to become more autonomous.

4.2.11. Do you often review the newly learned words and grammatical structures?

Answer / Class	Yes	No
First year	7	28
Second year	4	23
Total number	11	51
Rate	17%	83%

Table4.2.11: Pupil's use of memory strategies

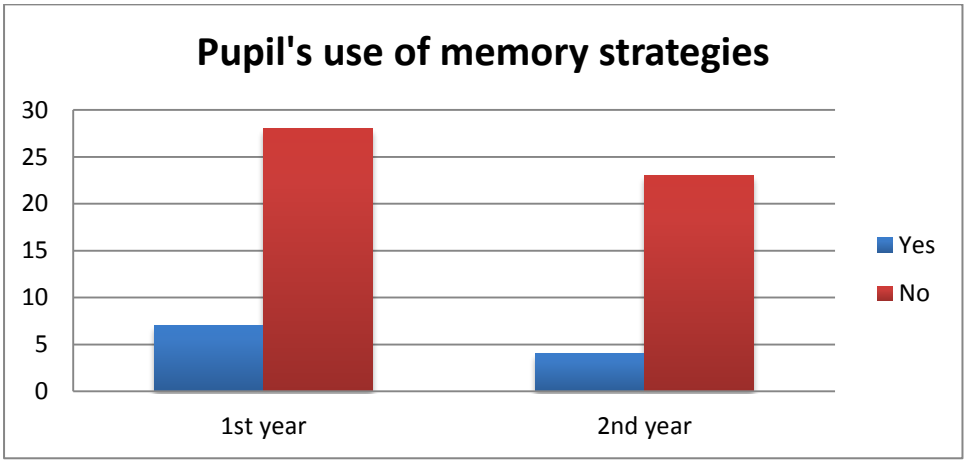

Figure4.2.11: Pupil's use of memory strategies

Taking into account the crucial role of employing learning strategies to enhance self-directed learning, I posed a set of questions in this respect. The initial investigated strategy relates to the memory strategy. Aiming to know if pupils memorize the newly learnt linguistic structures and functions, i.e. if they deliberately internalize them to boost their English proficiency or not. Surprisingly, the overwhelming majority of participants (83%) negated their use of this mental strategy i.e. repetition of grammatical structures or vocabulary, creating mental pictures…etc. According to them, English learning is not bound to memorization of linguistic units, but rather to the instructor's instant explanation in class. Merely (17%) of the learners said they do utilize the memory strategy. By inference, this small group tends to have a desire to develop their English language proficiency through self-directed involvement, which is quite essential for developing autonomous language learning.

4.2.12. Do you try to understand the meaning of what you read using the dictionary?

Answer / Class	Yes	No	No answer
First year	2	29	4
Second year	9	18	/
Total number	11	47	4
Rate	18%	76%	6%

Table 4.2.12: Pupils' use of cognitive strategies

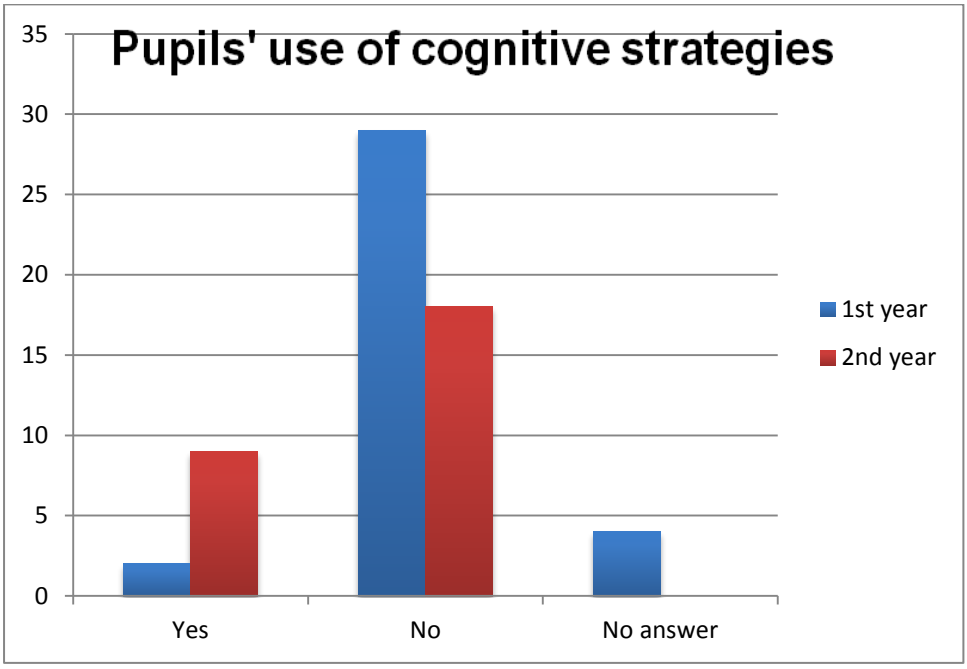

Figure 4.2.12: Pupils' use of cognitive strategies

The point of this question is to figure out if the participants generally use the cognitive strategy while trying to grasp the meaning of an English sentence or a reading passage. As expected, 76% of the participants admitted that they do not refer to dictionaries in order to facilitate their comprehension of a text. No self-ruling action seems to be exerted in the learning process, which make the task of becoming autonomous learners somehow hard. 18% of them stated that they do use the cognitive strategy, meaning that; they opt for an ample detailed explanation of lexical units to be able to comprehend the text. While, 6% of the respondents left the box unanswered, probably for not being quite conscious about their own language learning behavior.

4.2.13. When you encounter a new English word, do you usually?

Answer / Class	Guess the meaning	Use the dictionary	Ask the teacher	Do not care about it
First year	11	1	5	18
Second year	5	0	8	15
Total number	20	1	9	33
Rate	32%	1%	14%	53%

Table 4.2.13: Pupils' use of compensation strategies

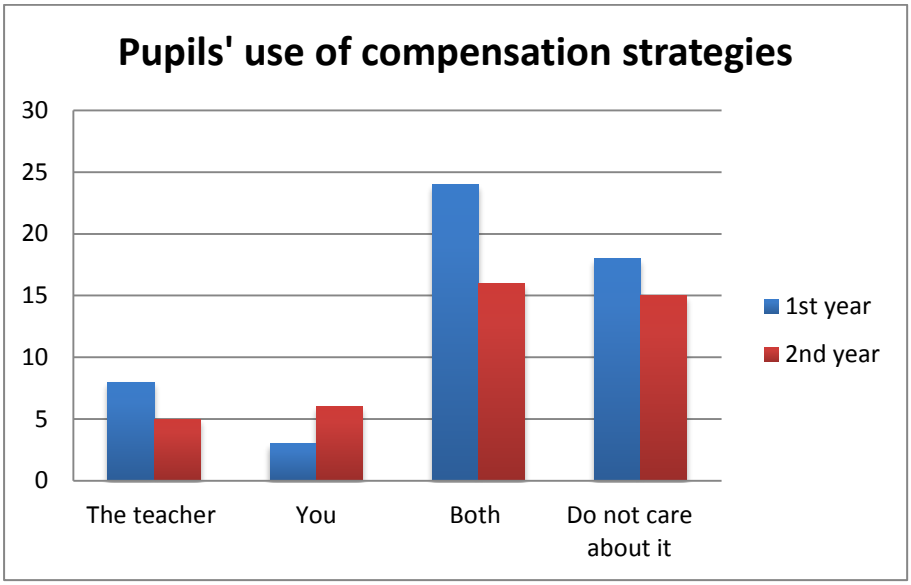

Figure4.2.13: Pupils' use of compensation strategies

This question investigates another type of strategies, named the compensation strategy. It puts forward the instance of learners coming across new lexis whilst reading or listening to an English text/discourse and proposes four different choices (as shown above in the graph). The most selected option was “I do not care about it” with a rate of 53%, this category of pupils displayed a complete disregard of learning the unfamiliar English terms. They do not seem willing to gain the missing knowledge. Therefore, they do not employ the compensation strategy in their English language learning. The second most selected choice was “I guess the meaning” of the word. As opposed to the first group, these learners tend to bridge the gap between the known and the unknown by means of guessing from the context or by drawing on their schema knowledge in order to reach a successful understanding. In the meantime, 14% of the participants said that they “ask the teacher” about the meaning of new words. In point of fact, this finding can imply two contrasting interpretations. From the one

hand, they may be perceived as passive teacher- reliant learners since they refer to the instructor rather than their own efforts when facing a learning difficulty. On the other hand, they may be seen as responsible self-directed learners as they seek answers from external resources (the teacher). Finally, the lowest rate (1%) of responses refers to the option of consulting the dictionary in order to identify the sense of new words. This uncommon strategic learning behavior represents one of the most important conditions to enhance learner autonomy.

4.2.14. Do you know your strengths and weaknesses in your English study?

Answer / Class	Yes	No	No answer
First year	6	26	3
Second year	3	22	2
Total number	9	48	5
Rate	14%	78%	8%

Table 4.2.14: Pupils' use of meta-cognitive strategies

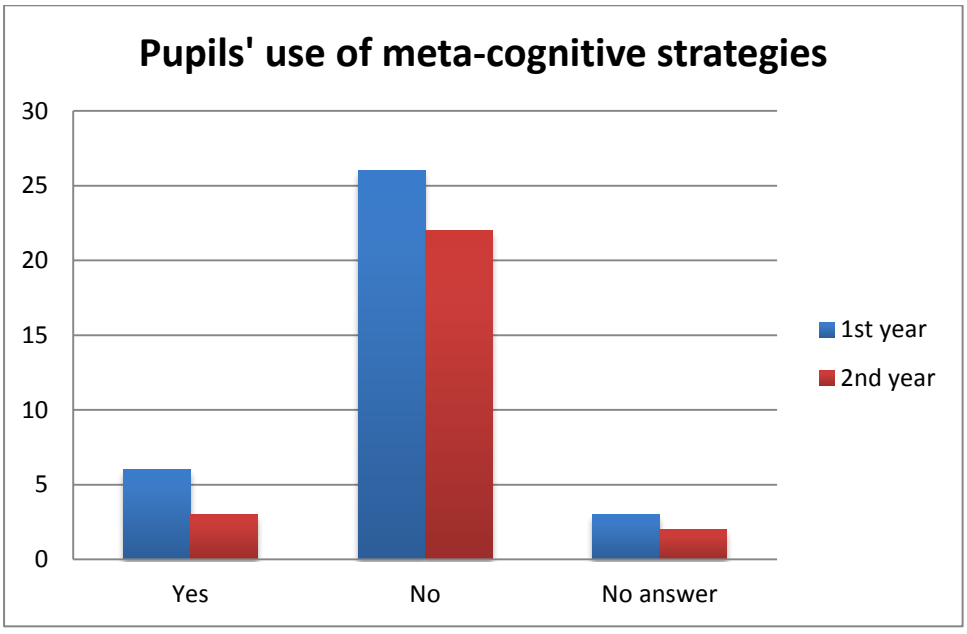

Figure 4.2.14: Pupils' use of meta-cognitive strategies

Recognizing and assessing one's own learning strength or weakness is a basic constituent of the meta-cognitive strategies. Such strategy stands at the heart of the developmental process of learner autonomy. Therefore, I aimed at examining learners' use of this fundamental aspect. The findings reveal that most research participants (78%) cannot

identify the strong and weak points of their English learning process. Only 14% claimed they do, while 8% of them did not answer. It is apparent, thus that most learners are incapable to deliberately spot their strengths and limitations in their English study. Perhaps, due to their lack of awareness and focus on what is being learnt both in and out of the EFL class.

4.2.15. What do you do when you feel bad about English learning?

Answer / Class	Encourage yourself	Let it go	Ask for help	No answer
First year	3	14	11	7
Second year	0	10	15	2
Total number	3	24	26	9
Rate	5%	39%	42%	14%

Table 4. 2.15: Pupils' use of affective strategies

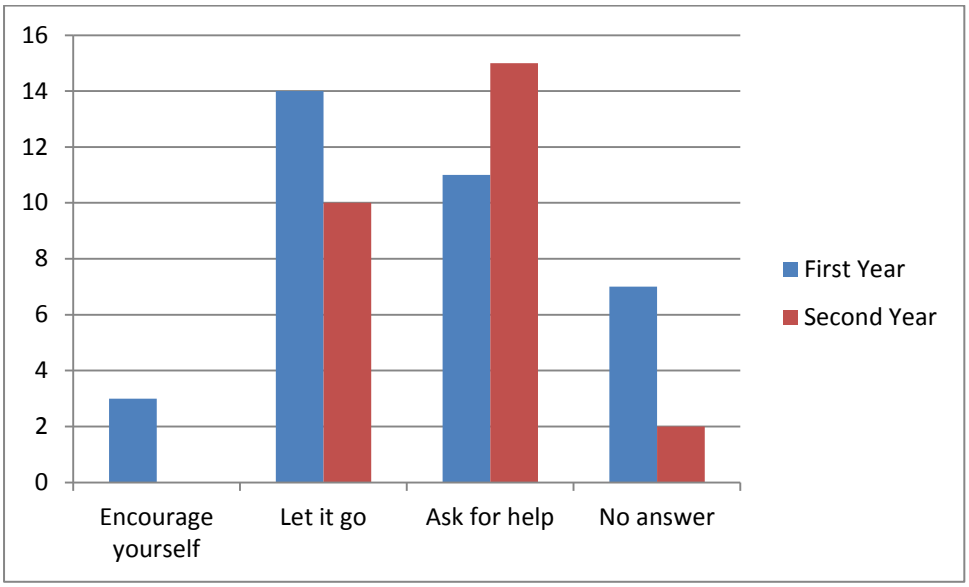

Figure 4.2.15: Pupils' use of affective strategies

The main aim of this question is to examine pupils' use of the affective strategy. A strategy that principally deals with managing the mood, feelings and anxiety level about English learning. Three reactions to situations involving negative emotions were proposed: first, "encourage yourself", second "let it go", and finally "ask for help". 42% of the participants claimed that they seek help from others by overtly expressing their concerns. This finding implies a somehow good use of this strategy. A lesser rate 39% shows that they "let it go". That is, they do not handle their learning-related stress in a systematic and efficient way.

Only 5% declared that they do encourage themselves autonomously and know how to employ self- relaxation technique in order to overcome their negative emotions.

4. 2.16. When you do not understand something about the lesson do you usually ask your teacher/classmate or others to explain it?

Answer / Class	Yes	No
First year	3	32
Second year	5	22
Total number	8	54
Rate	13%	87%

Table 4. 2.16: Pupils' use of social strategies

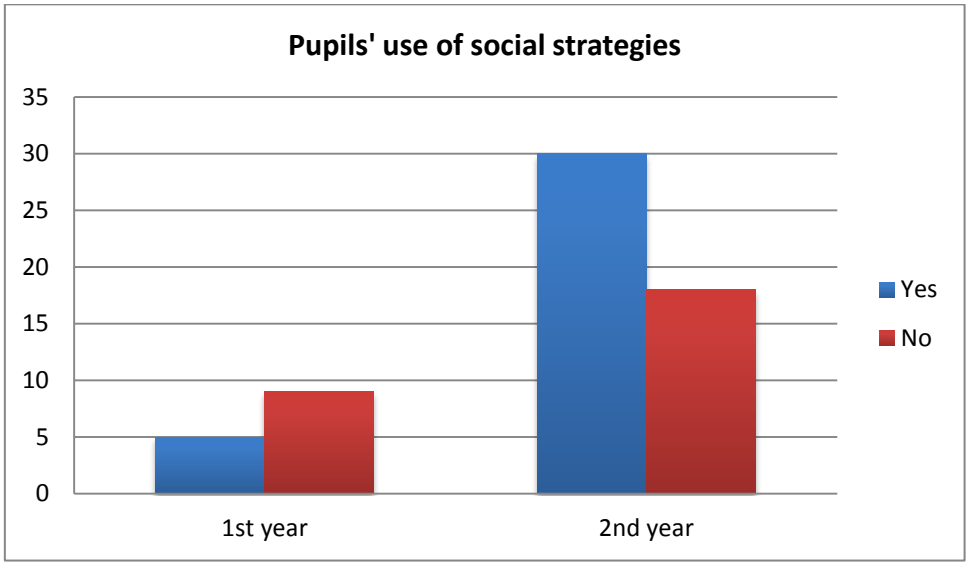

Figure 4. 2.16: Pupils' use of social strategies

This question targets the participants' potential use of the social strategy. It investigates their probable cooperation and social interaction with peers and more proficient language users in their English language learning experience. From the findings, it is noticeable that most pupils did not utilize this strategy as 87% of them said 'no'. Accordingly, most of them do not ask for clarification or correction to build an understanding of the language forms or functions. This, indeed, reflects their lack of interest as well as irresponsible attitude towards their English study. Only 13% responded that they ask others to help them resolve the ambiguities. Using this strategy is a sign of independent learning skills which enable pupils to increase their level of competence and thus to reach their learning goals.

Part D: Self-reliance

In order to examine pupils' effort to learn English independently and to see the extent to which they rely on themselves, the following questions have been asked:

4.2.17. Do you try, at times, to learn new English words and expressions from different resources?

Answer / Class	Yes	No	No answer
First year	4	30	1
Second year	7	20	/
Total number	11	50	1
Rate	17%	81%	2%

Table 4.2.17: Learning English vocabulary from various resources

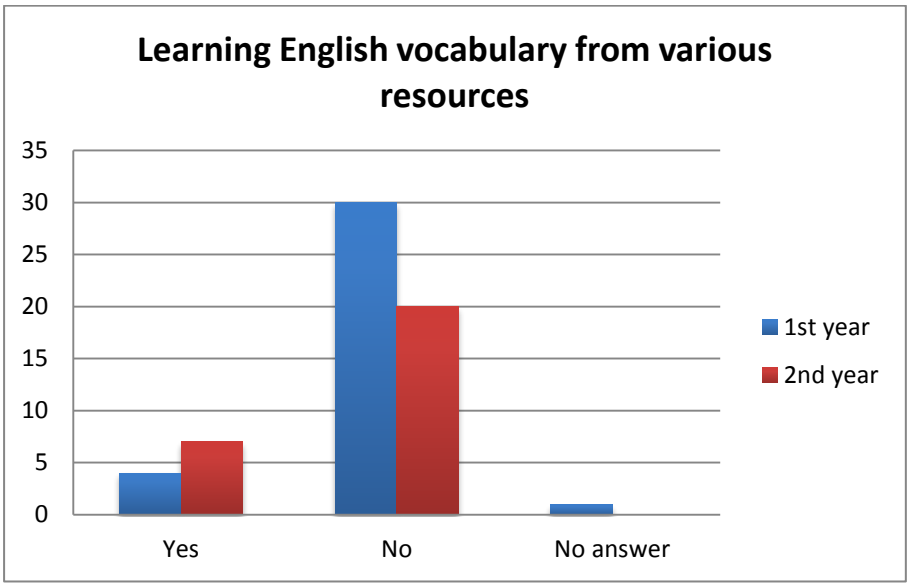

Figure 4.2.17: Learning English vocabulary from various resources

Behind this question, I aimed to know whether the participants make independent use of other resources that are beyond the classroom setting or not in order to broaden and enrich their English lexical repertoire. According to the responses, 81% of them do not draw on external resources to gain knowledge of new terms or expressions. In truth, this implies their heavy dependence and over- reliance on the teacher's input in the EFL class. While, 17% of them claimed to have the habit of discovering new meanings from outside class walls. Optimistically, the latter category of participants demonstrates, to a certain extent, an inclination to a self-directed study approach that can possibly lead them to an autonomous EFL learning.

4.2.18. Do you often try to read and understand simple texts independently?

Class \ Answer	Yes	No
First year	3	32
Second year	5	22
Total number	8	54
Rate	13%	87%

Table 4.2.18: Reading and comprehending English texts independently

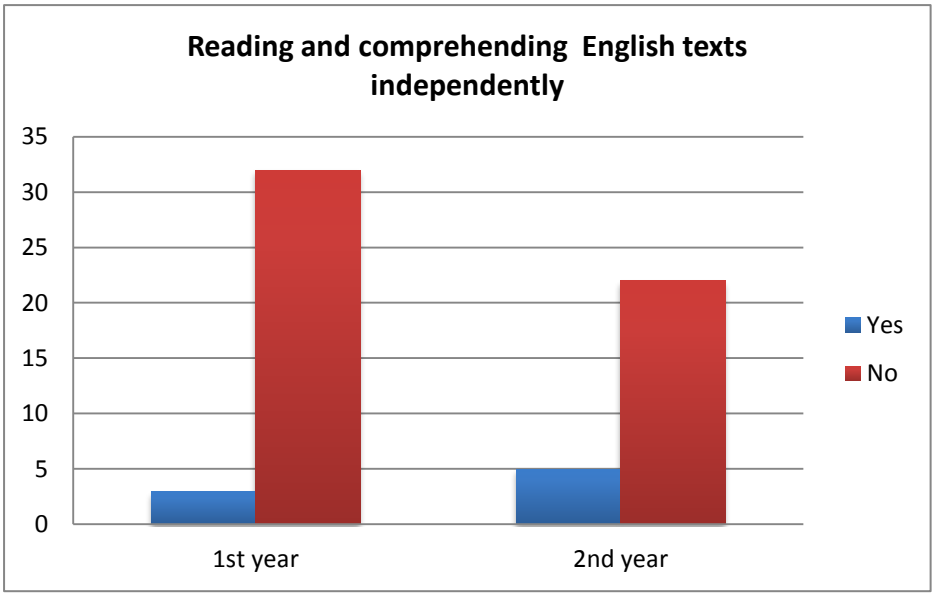

Figure 4.2.18: Reading and comprehending English texts independently

This question tries to examine another aspect of autonomous language learning. It focuses on the learners' tendency to acquire the English language independently of the instructor's assistance. Precisely, it seeks to detect learners' potential of reading and understanding texts autonomously. The largest part (77%) of participants responded negatively; admitting they would not make individual efforts for such activity. They seem reluctant or unable to do individual learning tasks. However, 23% declared their aptitude to undertake challenging learning activities and to boost their reading comprehension aptitude autonomously. These are most likely to have a higher level of self-confidence and motivation towards English learning.

4.2.19. What is your role in the English class?

Answer / Class	Only listen to the teacher	Listen and answer questions	Listen, ask and discuss
First year	20	13	2
Second year	17	9	1
Total number	37	23	3
Rate	59%	37%	4%

Table 4.2.19: Pupils' role in the English class

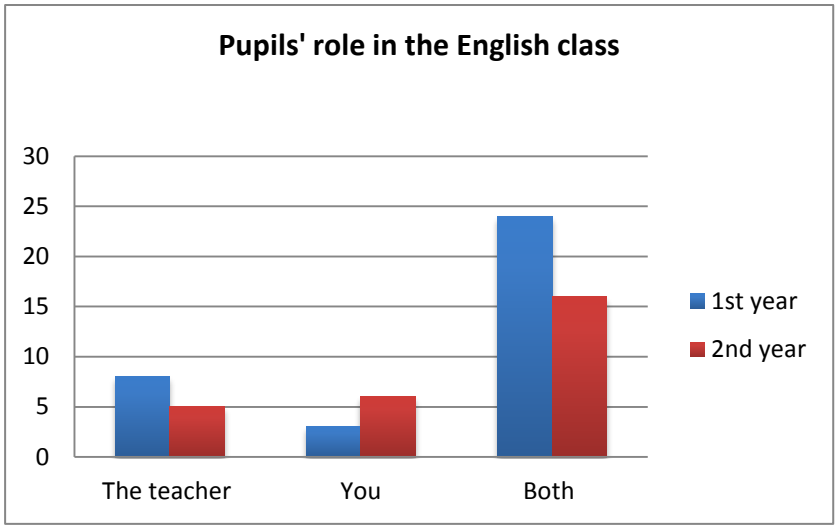

Figure 4.2.19: Pupils' role in the English class

In order to spot learners' opinion about their supposed roles in the English class, I have asked them to select one of three different options: "I only listen to the teacher", " I listen and answer questions" and "I ask and discuss". A large number of participants chose the first receptive passive role with a rate of 59%. In their view, listening to the instructor and taking notes is their chief responsibility all through the language course. Whilst, 37% of the participants conveyed a more proactive role; thinking that they should listen to the teacher then answer questions. Whereas, 4% only selected the third option. i.e. the multifunctional role which involves listening, asking and discussing the English lesson. These pupils seem to deliberately accept taking active part in the language learning process. Thus, they tend to be initiators, risk-takers and more predisposed to have a self-directed EFL learning.

4.2.20. Who is responsible for your English study success or failure?

Answer / Class	The teacher	You	Both
First year	8	3	24
Second year	5	6	16
Total number	13	9	40
Rate	20%	15%	65%

Table4.2.20: The responsible agent for the EFL learning success/failure

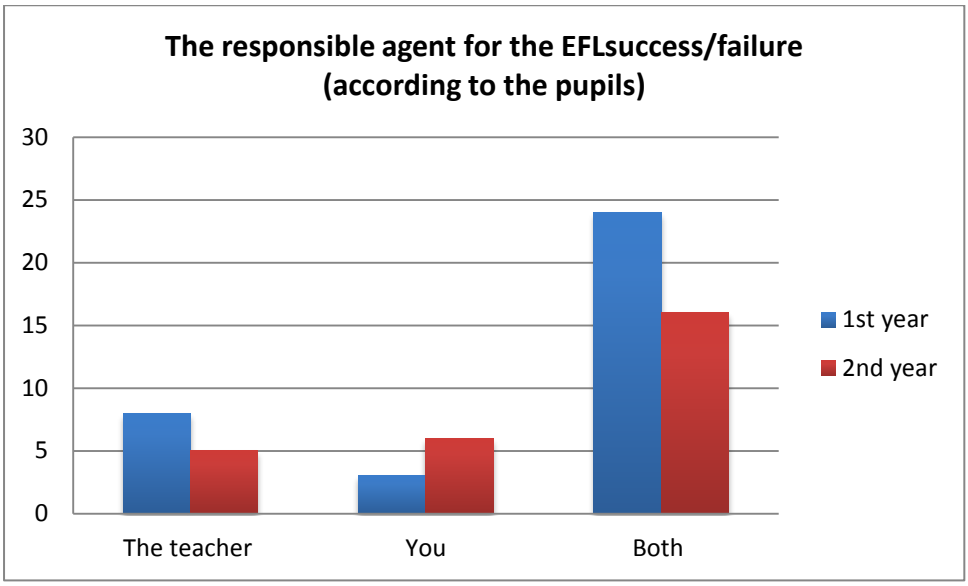

Figure 4.2.20: The responsible agent for the EFL learning success/failure

The closing question points directly to the facet of learner responsibility. It seeks to uncover learners' thoughts about the responsible agent about their English study success or failure; be it the learner, the teacher or both. Interestingly, 65% of the participants, that is the majority, indicated that both learners and teachers share this charge jointly. This, in fact, is not a bad sign in relation to autonomous based beliefs, it rather shows a moderate recognition of responsiblity. Whereas, 20% of them attributed their English learning responsibility solely to the instructor, implying a hidden discard of responsibility. Most probably not to honor the instructor in case of success but rather to escape the blame in case of failure. Finally, 15% of learners perceived themselves as the unique responsible agents in their English learning process. In other words, they have a strong sense of responsibility and somehow admit possession of the decisions that concern their learning aspects which would eventually lead to an autonomous learning conduct.

Considering the pre-questionnaire's overall findings and trying to synthesize their interpretations, it can be argued that pupils' level of autonomy is remarkably low. Because, they proved to lack a sense of responsibility, a capability for decision making, self-assessment and self-reliance in their EFL learning. This assumption was clearly proved in their own responses. For instance, in question 4 (learning English from external resources), question 9 (attitudes towards individual work), question 17 (learning English vocabulary from various resources) and question 19 (pupils' role in the English class). Nevertheless, only a small number of participants demonstrated some autonomous learning features and seemed more aware of their expected roles throughout the research project. Therefore, based on the results, it became relatively clearer for me to design a systematic action study that would expectantly help them reach higher levels of autonomy.

4.3. Classroom observation analysis

In this section, I try to display illustrative examples from the findings of the six week-class observations. These are organized in the form of tables consisting of four main categories. Firstly, the time of the observation, secondly the specific class activity covered, thirdly the various observational notes taken and finally a brief interpretation of the notes. The latter are further subdivided into two headings: positive and negative notes, based on Burn's (2009, p.110) way of coding the data in qualitative analysis.

Date	**Task/sequence of action**	**Observation**		**Interpretation**
Week 1: 05-09/ 02 /2017	**Class A:** Finding meanings of words (SE1,p145)	**Positive:** -Three pupils tried to find answers on their own. - Some learners made small groups to look for the meaning of words using the dictionary.	**Negative:** -Many pupils were passive and failed to find the correct meanings by just guessing.	**Learners' group work:** several pupils could work collaboratively. **Disengagement and low responsibility:** most of them were not interactive and did not take responsibility to fulfill the task. **Strategy use:** two strategies were used: cognitive (using the dictionary) and compensation (guessing).

	Class B: Writing a newspaper article about imagined events (a homework) (SE2,p142)	**Positive:** - Almost all pupils brought their homework. -They discussed various ideas.	**Negative:** -One paragraph was repeated in many papers. -Only two pupils used the self-evaluation writing sheet.	**Responsibility taking:** home work done, yet they did not exhibit work in an individual manner. **Lack of strategy use:** most pupils did not evaluate their works**.**

Table 4.3.1 Classroom observation/week 1

During the first week of class observation exactly on February 9th 2017, pupils from class (A) were introduced to some lexical terms from a previously studied text in order to find out their meanings. The main purpose of this activity was to enable them employ the compensation strategy by guessing from the context. Eventually, only three pupils started re-reading the text trying to finds meanings on their own, while the other vast majority kept being passive. After observing such reluctant behavior, I invited them to utilize dictionaries (that were brought from the school library) to help them take individual action in constructing understanding. This step had a slight positive effect, as a many of them gathered in order to search for the words' meanings in the dictionary.

As for the second class (B), the learning task was preset as a home work. Pupils were expected to write a newspaper article using the conditional form then assess it by means of the self-evaluation sheet. Without being constrained to the book's notes, they were advised to freely use and develop their own ideas. Almost the whole class did the task yet not quite as required. For, many of the paragraphs were copied rather than written individually. Probably, because they believed that doing the home work would please the teacher rather than improve their English level. In fact, this indicates a low level of commitment and an irresponsible attitude towards the English class. Nevertheless, some pupils managed to supply diverse interesting ideas that were later approved, developed and written as a sample. With regard to the meta-cognitive learning strategy, only two learners seemed to have self-evaluated their work before it had been corrected by the instructor.

Date	Task/sequence of action	Observation		Interpretation
Week 2: 15 / 02 /2017	**Class A:** Matching conditional clauses with their result clauses (SE1,p152)	**Positive:** - Most pupils seemed excited about the lesson. -Six learners gave their own examples. - Several slow learners were given the chance to participate.	**Negative:** -Some learners were reluctant without trying to make individual efforts.	**Active engagement:** most learners were engaged in the lesson. **Learning strategies**: cognitive strategy (explicitly synthesizing parts of sentences) **Teacher role:** Equal opportunities for exercising autonomy.
	Class B: Making a dialogue (asking for and giving explanation) (SE2,p147)	**Positive:** -Three pairs of pupils made a dialogue and acted it out in class.	**Negative:** -The majority of pupils was indifferent and made no attempt to perform the dialogue.	**Low-level of involvement:** most pupils declined to work in pairs. **Teacher role: the instructor** could not motivate the learners to take individual action.

Table 4.3.2: Classroom observation/week 2

On February 15th 2017, class (A) had tackled a lesson on the conditional structure. During this lesson, many positive behaviors were observed as most pupils were vividly interactive including the least-confident ones. They showed interest and tried to construct correct sentences. Interestingly, six pupils formed and shared their own conditional sentences by applying the rules properly. They managed to synthesize linguistic chunks individually, i.e. they could utilize one of the cognitive strategies. This was a good indicator of the independent strategies use. However, this did not apply to all other learners who could not make use of such strategies.

In the second class, I emphasized on learners' pair work as a means to boost their autonomous skills. The lesson dealt with the way one conducts a conversation in English and how he/she should ask for and give clarification in situations of misunderstanding. Therefore, I invited pupils to make dialogues by exchanging different phrases and expressions. I also

seized the opportunity to explicitly instruct them on the use of specific learning strategies in order to reach a successful interaction in English. Since this particular lesson holds schemes of compensation and social strategies. Yet, most participants showed little interest in applying this strategy. Three pairs only had prepared the dialogue then acted them out after receiving teacher's feedback. Inevitably, having such passive attitude among learners, one can say that no considerable self-directed behaviors manifested yet.

Date	Task/sequence of action	Observation		Interpretation
Week 3: 22-23/02/2017	**Class A:** Forming adjectives by adding suffixes (SE1,p154)	**Positive:** -Many pupils made different suggestions loudly. - A pupil asked me about the meaning of a word (toxins).	**Negative:** - Few learners were reluctant to do this task.	**Learning strategies:** the use of a cognitive (organizing a new language form) and a social strategy (requesting information). **Teacher role:** encouraging pupils to try to use an alternative technique to do the task.
	Class B: Reading a text about scientific laws (SE2,p149)	**Positive:** -Four pupils were trying to read the text. -A pupil used the dictionary	**Negative:** - No suggested ideas. -Most pupils did not read the text, they were talking instead.	**Low-level of engagement:** reluctance and passive attitudes. **Low sense of responsibility:** no preparation for the lesson.

Table 4.3.3: Classroom observation/week 3

During the third week of observation, class (A) carried out a task with clear and simple instructions. This activity was about adjective formation by adding the right suffixes. So, many learners were interactive; suggesting multiple answers. Even though it was time consuming, I invited them to check accuracy of their suggested words using the dictionaries. As a matter of fact, my objective was not only to help them acquire new lexical and syntactical forms but also to direct them towards this independent learning technique. On the part of most learners, a cognitive and meta-cognitive engagement was displayed in the

English lesson and consequently a moderate willingness to develop a level of autonomy was revealed.

Taking into account the prime role of learners' choice and decision making in developing their autonomy, I invited the second year classroom (B) to suggest a short simple text about a common scientific law two days ahead of the lesson's date (22nd of February). The ultimate aim was to involve them in making decisions over the content of their own English learning. However, this attempt was in vain because none of the pupils really did the task. I thus had to propose my own text. Only four pupils attempted to read it while one of them was searching the meaning of a word in the dictionary. This act showed some willingness to take responsibility for improving their level. But, the learners' overall attitude was unsatisfactory as it did not indicate signs of an autonomous learning behavior.

Date	Task/sequence of action	Observation		Interpretation
Week 4: 09/03/2017	**Class A:** Reading a text (about solutions to the problem of rubbish) (SE1,p158)	**Positive**: -Two pupils brought pictures of rubbish. - Most learners interacted and enjoyed watching the video.	**Negative:** -Almost all the class didn't prepare for the lesson as was planned.	**Active engagement:** a positive reaction to the use of visual material. **Learners' low sense of responsibility:** Lack of preparation for the lesson.
	Class B: Writing a short biography of a scientist (SE2,p151)	**Positive:** -Pupils worked in small groups. -They made different choices in class.	**Negative:** -Some members of the group did not contribute in the task.	**Active engagement:** Many pupils working in class. **Learning strategies**: the use of cognitive and social strategies.

Table 4.3.4: Classroom observation/week 4

Based upon first year pupils' most favored learning style, I decided to utilize pictures and a video as a teaching aid in their reading comprehension lesson (on March the 09th).

Additionally, I asked them beforehand to make a small research on the topic of 'rubbish and recycling' accompanied with some pictures in order to smoothly train them on conducting independent research in their EFL learning process. Eventually, the foremost remark about pupils' attitude was that most of them were interactive and seemed to have enjoyed the lesson after watching the video. Consequently, many of them attempted to read the text and managed to discuss some of its ideas collectively.

Under the constant framework of autonomy support, I tried to engage the second year pupils in choice making over their writing assignment (a biography of a scientist). Thus, I asked them first to make small groups with a possibility to change their seating arrangement to be able to work with their preferred peers. Then, they were supposed to select one scientist (out of three) to write his/her short biography using a set of data. By doing this, almost all pupils could make decisions over their group members, the character they wrote about and the biography to be taken as a sample. Several pupils seemed to be using the cognitive strategy (by synthesizing different information and sentences) as well as the social strategy (by interacting with their classmates to get assistance). Yet, not the entire group members truly contributed in the task, although they were given equal opportunities to work collaboratively.

Date	**Task/sequence of action**	**Observation**		**Interpretation**
Week 5: 13-15 03/2017	**Class A:** Writing an advert (Home work correction , SE1,p151)	**Positive:** -Most pupils did their home work, (eleven of them didn't).	**Negative:** - Five pupils only (out of thirty five) used the 'self-evaluation sheet'. - Some paragraphs were copied.	**Strategy use:** the meta-cognitive strategy (writing a paragraph and completing the self-evaluation sheet). **Learners' sense of responsibility is high:** most of them did the home work. **Teacher role:** The teacher corrected some written errors with the pupils.

	Class B: Reading a text about charity (SE2,p120)	**Positive:** -A pupil shared shortly his charity experience with the class**.**	**Negative:** -The pupils were silent, they looked bored. -No pupil prepared for the lesson. - None used the dictionary to find meaning of words.	**Disengagement:** absence of interest and participation **A low sense of responsibility:** most learners were negligent about the course.

Table 4.3.5: Classroom observation/week 5

In order to train first year pupils on learning English outside the classroom, I asked them to do a home work. The latter was about writing an advert on 'the protection of nature'. Apparently, many pupils did their assigned homework. However, after reading their paragraphs I noticed that some of them were bearing a big resemblance to others. This indicated that such pieces of writing were not truly the outcome of their individual efforts. Such practice demonstrated an unwillingness to assume responsibility for the EFL learning. What is more, only five pupils corrected their paragraphs using their self-evaluation sheet. Consequently, it can be assumed that only a minority could develop, to some extent, a sense of responsibility towards fulfilling the tasks, assessing and identifying their own strengths and weaknesses.

Regarding the second class (B), pupils were expected to read a text at home (prior to the lesson) then to extract some data from it. Unsurprisingly, no pupil prepared for the lesson, as they were all passive and silent in class. Their attitudes clearly displayed a low sense of responsibility which may be born form their lack of interest and motivation (key foundations for learner autonomy). Hence, to cope with the situation, I tried to stimulate their motivation by asking them to talk about any personal charity experience they had witnessed. Eventually, one pupil interacted and narrated his story shortly to the class. After this warm up, I instructed them to read the text and to seek meanings of difficult words using the dictionary. Nevertheless, this did not happen either. Unfortunately, all of my observations confirmed that this class still suffers from a lack of engagement, responsibility and strategy use, which indicates that they are not really heading in the direction of learner autonomy.

Date	Task/sequence of action	Observation		Interpretation
Week 6: 02-06/04/2017	**Class A:** Listening and marking stress (SE1,p112)	**Positive:** -Most pupils were taking part in this task. -They listened and marked stress on their copy-books.	**Negative:** - Few pupils were not participating in the lesson.	**Learner's individual work:** trying independently to detect the stressed syllable. **Teacher role:** Encouraging pupils to suggest their own words.
	Class B: Transforming sentences from direct to indirect speech (SE2,p123)	**Positive:** - Pupils analyzed their own sentences	**Negative:** -Some pupils were unresponsive.	**Learners' engagement:** fairly good participation. **Strategy use:** cognitive strategy (analyzing).

Table 4.3.6: Classroom observation/week 6

As part of my endeavor to make first year learners contribute in the selection of their own EFL learning content and to help them develop a capacity to be more proactive, I asked them to suggest words then to identify their stressed syllables. Rather than studying linguistic units as taken from the textbook, pupils focused on their own proposed words. Eventually, this act had generated positive attitudes, as many of them were highly engaged and enthusiastic about it. Most of them relied on their own listening aptitude to provide answers, in spite of their limited English level. At the mean time, some pupils stayed passive, paying little attention to the lesson and manifesting again an irresponsible learning attitude.

On April the 6th, the second year class had a grammar based lesson. Precisely, it dealt with the transformation of sentences from direct to indirect speech. Since the autonomous language learning approach does not support explicit instruction of grammatical rules, I asked the participants first to reflect on direct/indirect sentences, then to draw the rules from them individually. Nearly the whole class attempted to decipher the syntactic structures. This was a good indicator of their cognitive engagement in the learning process. However, they seemingly could not extract the rules on their own. I then inevitably had to explain them in order to facilitate their understanding. After that, pupils were required to apply the rules using their own suggested sentences. By so doing, I aimed to involve a strategic step towards

autonomy enhancement, which is implicating their free choice in learning. In effect, many pupils seemed to be positively involved in the task despite having some difficulties that were managed jointly.

4.4. Interview data analysis

This section presents the findings of the interview that was conducted with four participants (P1, P2, P3, and P4). As mentioned earlier (in chapter 3.section 3.6.2), the interview is based on four key aspects of learner autonomy and consists of seven different questions. The responses are grouped according to each category and discussed with reference to autonomous learning principles.

4.4.1. Awareness and capacity for reflection

Question 1: *How often did you manage to achieve your learning goal?*

Concerning the first question that addresses learners' view about the frequency of attaining the learning aims, it should be made clear once more that the research participants were constantly informed about the objective of each lesson they had throughout the school year. Thus, in response to that question, P4 and P3 asserted that they could often reach their lessons' objectives. P4: "*….I ++ achieve often my goal", P3:" yes+ I__* often كنت نوصل للهدف تاع الدرس ". When asked about the causes of failing to fulfill some of them, P4 stated one reason: "em __ because difficult صعيب *الدرس*". She, thus, relates her learning deficit to an external factor which is the complexity of the lesson content. While, P3 seemed to attribute her failure in reaching some goals to an internal feature. Specifically, to her own comprehension capacities as she pointed out: " sometimes ++ I follow with you+++ but++ I don't understand.". Another participants said: P1: "*Ah+++ sometimes yes, sometimes no*". That is, she could accomplish the objective at times only and justifies the fact of missing that by her lack of attention to the lesson "*….because++ when I__* Miss ما نتبعش معاك", which is also an internal aspect (as P3 did). This is actually a good indicator (as far as P1 and P3 are concerned). Because, it implies their awareness and inner beliefs of the link between their failure and their own performance in the EFL class. Whereas, P2 asserted that she could constantly attain the English lessons purposes: "yes++ in every + lesson". Perhaps, this is because the latter proved throughout the courses to be more committed and more proficient in the English language than most of her peers.

Question 2: *What is the best way to improve your English learning?*

The second question intended to dig into learners' view about the most efficient learning method that can be used to enhance their English level. In effect, it yielded various responses that seem somewhat far from the autonomous learning perspective. For example, P1 replied: **"**Euh__ ss+ speak it+ speak English", this pupil tends to believe that practicing oral communication is the best way to develop the English language proficiency. This answer indeed reflects her conception of the way English can be mastered. Yet, P3 sees it in a different way, as she said: " Euh __euh نتعلم الكلمات باش نكون الجمل ". She, hence, thinks that being able to acquire new lexis in order to formulate correct sentences in the target language is the most efficient learning method. It can be noted from these two replies, that the learners associate the best learning methods with particular language based tasks rather than systematic learning practices. Interestingly, P2 and P4, who appeared to view it from a distinct perspective, tend to relate the effective English learning approach to their personal learning behavior. As the former linked it to a deliberate focus on the teacher's explanation, P2: "Em __ نفهم الدرس مع ننتبه كي", i.e. P2 maintains that she could learn better and grasp the language lesson well if she pays attention to the details of the lesson. Whilst, the latter relates it to her own effort outside the class P4: "++لازم نراجع دروسي ونحل تمارين". That is, she regards individual practice outside the class and reviewing the prior acquired knowledge as essential factors to boost one' own English level. This participant P4 displays, through her answer, one of the autonomous learning attributes which is awareness of her own responsibility in EFL learning and her own supposed role.

4.4.2. Learner responsibility

Question 3: *How do you feel when the teacher gives you a home work?*

Question three seeks to implicitly note whether the interviewees have developed any sense of accountability towards their English learning. The responses seemed to reveal a rather positive attitude towards home work assignments. Since, three of the respondents (P2, P3 and P4) described their reaction to having home works as 'good'. P3 said: "Yes++ good because I + +I__ "نحاول وحدي في الدار ونحضرللدرس قبل مانقراه في القسم. She maintained that carrying out home works allows her to be equipped with data ahead of the lesson. Similarly, P4 stated: "++good Miss++ because help me" believing that it is beneficial and useful to her. Whilst, P2 replied : "The__ the home work is good ++ very good yes". In fact, such positive replies may give the impression to be 'diplomatic answers' as pointed out by Hořínek (2007). For, pupils

probably found difficulty to supply a direct negative response in front of me (being their own teacher and interviewer at the same time). Or they might be referring to an emotional state towards *having* a home work rather than *accomplishing* it. Nevertheless, respondent P1 admitted frankly her discomfort with being assigned with an extra home activity P1**:***"Ah__* (smile)++ I not like home work Miss ", which may indicate a low sense of responsibility towards EFL learning.

Question 4: *Who contributes mostly to your English study success or failure?*

This question emphasized on learners' viewpoints on the reasons of success and failure in their EFL learning. The findings reveal a quite limited set of data. As the interviewees constrained their opinions solely to two factors namely: the teacher and the learner. P2 and P3 attributed their English learning achievement to the instructor in combination with the learner. P2: "Me++ and + the teacher", P3: " Me+ I+++ انا لي نساهم في نجاحي الاستاذ يعاوني برك" meaning that it is her own duty to study rather than the teacher's. Then added that P3:"Me because…. me must ++ study not the teacher". In view of that, they linked their learning outcomes to themselves at first place. Holding such balanced view may indicate a more or less elevated sense of awareness regarding their EFL learning. Whereas, the other interviewee P4 associated her English learning results exclusively to herself saying in one word P4: "Me", excluding all external factors. This may suggest that she feels entirely responsible for her own learning. On the contrary, P1 responded clearly that educators have the greatest impact on her English studies success or failure P1**:** "++ *the teacher"*. This shows that the latter did not really grasp one of the fundamental autonomous learning characteristics.

4.4.3. Independent action

Question 5: *How can you learn English by yourself?*

As regards the fifth question, I have asked the interviewees about the ways they may use to develop their English skills. The first respondent articulated P1:"++ صعيب *نحتاج الاستاذ باش يفهمني+++ "*. According to P1, it is hard to carry out a learning activity independently of the instructor. For, she definitely needs teachers' assistance to get things comprehensible. In other words, she seems to believe that conducting any autonomous EFL learning activity is not possible. Likewise, P4 plainly declared P4: "..No__ما نقدرش Miss" claiming that she cannot carry out EFL learning tasks individually. Therefore, these

participants declared their relative failure to operate autonomously. This signifies not only an inability for independent action, but also a lack of confidence, motivation and self-managing skills. On the other hand, P2 exhibited, in her response, a certain capability to carry out independent learning methods. P2: "Yes I__ learn English in the book and++ with my brother+ help me". Hence, two different learning means are used to improve her English skills. She seems to employ the social strategy when seeking aid from a family member. P3 also showed a moderate ability to make use of other technological means: "yes for example television, internet…euh". The two last pupils (P3 and P2) tend to be developing an aptitude of creating learning opportunities outside the class environment.

Question 6: *What activities do you do outside the class to learn English?*

This complementary question seeks to back up the data drawn from the previous answers. Thus, it aims to identify in depth the nature and type of tasks performed outside the EFL classroom. Only one participant maintained that she does not take extra activities P1: *"Em__ Miss ماندیرش تمارین"*, which means that she relies entirely on the data provided inside the class by the instructor. The remaining interviewees cited some instances of tasks they claim to exercise in order to increase their EFL competence. For example: P3 said: "Em ++ matching sentences +if +++ شرح الكلمات" referring to a grammar lesson that had been dealt with (previously) in class. Also, to vocabulary enrichment, i.e. seeking for English terms' meanings individually. Besides, P2 mentioned two grammar based tasks specifically on the direct/indirect speech plus paragraph writing: P2 "I __ for example++ direct/indirect speech and+++ write a paragraph". These two respondents appear to emphasize mainly on grammatical tasks that involve specific rules, rather than activities that entail reading or listening comprehension. Moreover, P4 held that she revises her lessons and watches English speaking TV shows to improve her EFL skills. P4: "sometimes I revise my lessons… I+ watch TV."

Teacher: In English?

P4: "Yes, in English."

4.4.4. Learning assessment

Question 7: *Did your English study method change? How?*

The purpose of this question is twofold. First, it aims to check learners' consciousness of any possible change resulting from the implemented teaching pedagogy. Second, it seeks to

examine the specific learning areas that pupils might have altered or improved. According to the responses, a slight change occurred in some aspects of their learning approaches. P2 for example, maintained that: "++ sometimes because+++ I participate+ و راني نجاوب". What can be drawn from this, is that she has more or less developed the capacity to interact actively in class. By implication, she has increased her level of self-confidence and motivation which enabled her to engage in the class discussion. Interestingly, P1 affirmed that her learning approach has changed due to her recognition of the lesson purpose P1: " + *Yes, yes*__ Miss من قبل ماكناش نعرفو الهدف من الدرس و ضروك رانا نعرفوه" which according to her P1: " …. *I understand more"* made the English lesson easier and more comprehensible. Furthermore, P3 confirmed that she has developed her English level thanks to collaborative work. That is, she regards group work as a fruitful technique for her EFL learning, P3: "Yes, I study English better++++ I like+ do activities in class with my group". Whereas, P4 appears not quite aware of the potential change she had. As she stated that: P4: "no ++ euh __when I don't understand I ask question". Probably, asking for clarification is one of the few techniques she has acquired throughout the research journey. It should be noted that regardless how truthful the replies are, the participants displayed a somehow reasonable level of awareness. Since, they could draw on their learning approaches and eventually reflect upon and assess them.

In the light of the interview findings, it can be concluded that almost three out of four participants displayed a somehow acceptable level in the investigated areas: "awareness and capacity for reflection", "learning responsibility", "learning assessment" and possibly a lower level in "independent action" (if we consider the responses to question five in particular).Therefore, it might be assumed that these pupils have developed some of the key learning features that define an autonomous learner. However, this finding cannot be generalized and may not apply to all the pupils, as this was restricted to merely a sample from the research participants.

4.5. The post-questionnaire data analysis

The data gathered from the post-questionnaire are displayed in the form of tables and figures, then analyzed with reference to the autonomous learning key parameters.

4.5. 1. Section A: Learning Strategies

Learning Strategies	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
1. I use images, sounds to help me remember new words**.**	**1.75**	**26.31**	**0**	**4.91**	**7.01**
2. I usually look up for the meaning of an English word in the dictionary**.**	**8.07**	**38.59**	**3.50**	**2.28**	**7.54**
3. I can comprehend an English text without understanding every word**.**	**8.77**	**19.29**	**1.75**	**45.61**	**24.56**
4. I know what is easy/difficult for me in the English class.	**14.03**	**24.56**	**0**	**0.87**	**0.52**
5. I feel good and congratulate myself when I do well in the English class**.**	**3.50**	**47.36**	**5.26**	**6.84**	**7.01**
6. I join a group every time I need, to do my class activities**.**	**19.29**	**50.87**	**1.75**	**4.56**	**3.50**

Table 4.5.1: Participants' language learning strategies use

To begin with, the findings of the first category are discussed according to their respective order. They display initially the respondents' low use of the memory strategy. Only 26% of them acknowledged their good use of techniques that help them remember the newly learnt vocabulary. This denotes that most pupils did not master yet the skill of memorizing new words or do not really desire to acquire extra English words. On the other hand, the cognitive strategy, stated in item 2 (as using the dictionary to find new meanings), was scored with a high frequency of agreement. This positive outcome might be justified by their repeated use of this particular strategy in class. With regard to the compensation strategy, 45% of the participants reported that they cannot infer the general meaning of an English text without understanding it literally. This indicates that their strategic guessing practice did not develop as required and thus still needs to be cultivated. As for the metacognitive strategy use, more than half of the respondents reported their lack of ability to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. Unfortunately, this can be seen as a bad indicator of their critical aspect about their own EFL learning. What is more, the responses related to the affective strategy reveal a good use of it. As most participants expressed agreement over holding a positive attitude towards their successful performance. Lastly, the data collected from the social strategy show that 69% of the learners make use of it, which suggests that they developed, to a certain extent, ways to handle their learning difficulties.

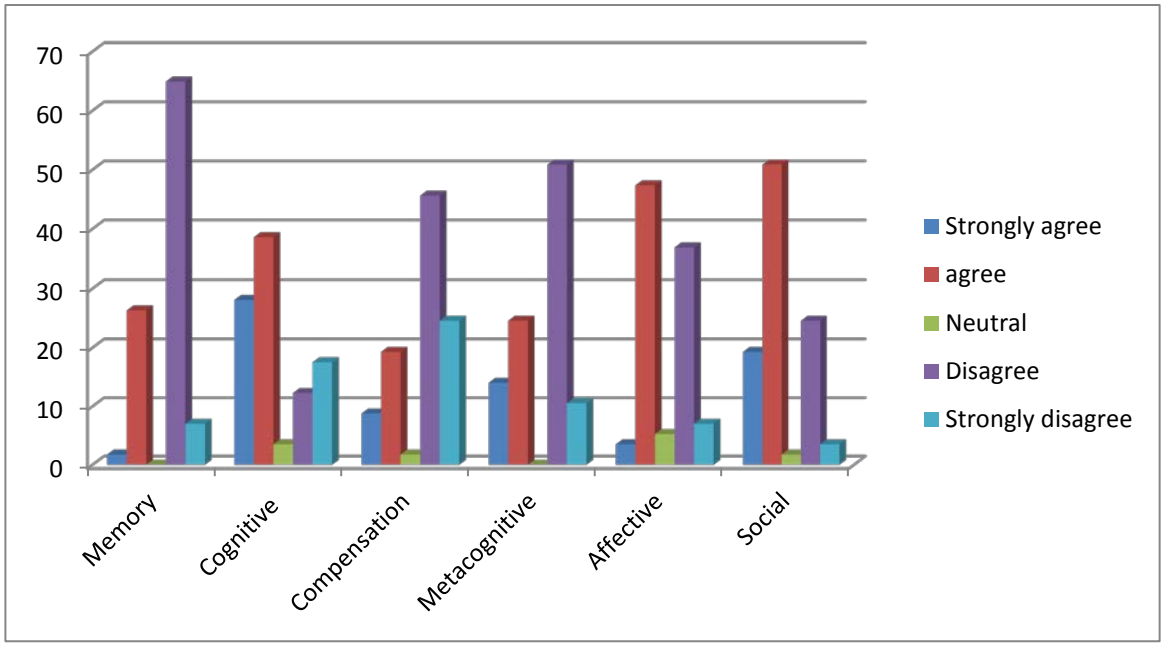

Figure 4.5.1: Language learning strategies use according to the participants' responses

It is noteworthy that comparison between the post-questionnaire findings and the pre-questionnaire results, regarding the informants' overall practice of the learning strategies, shows some reasonable statistical differences. As the mean scores changed moderately, for example, the memory strategy use increased with a slight difference from 17% to 27%. Similarly, the meta-cognitive strategy use has multiplied from 14% to 38%. An increasing rate was marked from 18% of the cognitive strategy and 13% of social strategy use to more than 50%. This data indicates a fairly intensified use of these strategies. However, with regard to the affective strategy, the data revealed that learners' use is moderately constant. Hence, it can be concluded that the research had a moderate effect on pupils' overall strategy practice, and that the teaching strategies implemented in class (such as: discussion, explicit learning goals, dictionary use, teacher-feedback, self-assessment… etc) were by some means influential on their EFL learning behavior.

4.5.2. Section B: Metacognition

In this section, I will present, in detail the findings of the post-questionnaire' second part, as shown in the following table.

B: Metacognition	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
7. My writing skill improved after using "the self-evaluation sheet" in the writing task.	**5.26**	**24.56**	**8.77**	**42.10**	**19.29**
8. Doing homework helped me to understand the lesson better.	**8.77**	**14.03**	**19.29**	**50.87**	**7.01**
9. My speaking skill has developed because of my active participation in class.	**1.75**	**8.77**	**15.78**	**57.89**	**15.78**
10. My learning diary helped me to think about my English learning.	**7.01**	**35.08**	**10.52**	**45.61**	**1.75**
11. I can evaluate my written paragraph on my own.	**5.26**	**24.56**	**5.26**	**54.38**	**10.52**
12. I understand the lesson better when I know my learning goal from the start.	**21.05**	**50.87**	**7.01**	**15.78**	**5.26**
13. I know the learning method that suits me best and I use it**.**	**1.75**	**5.26**	**33.33**	**54.38**	**5.26**

Table 4.5.2: Participants' metacognitive awareness

7. My writing skill improved after using "the self-evaluation sheet" in the writing task.

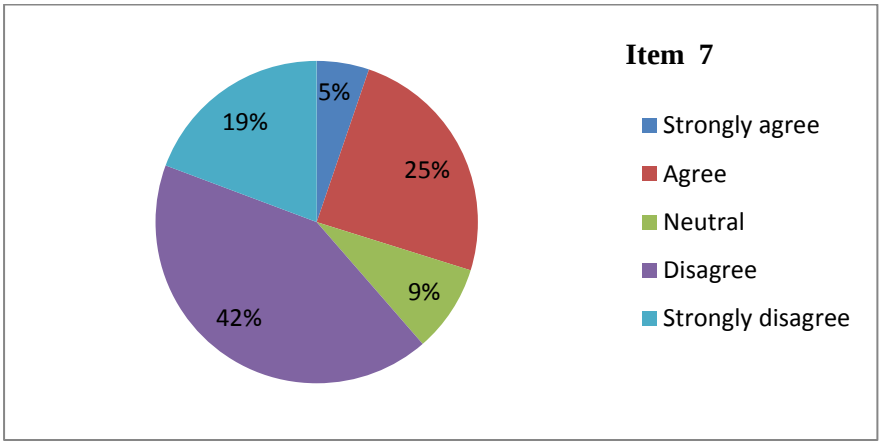

Figure 4.5.2: Post-questionnaire item 7

In response to the first item of this category, only 29% seem to acknowledge a progress in their writing skill due to their use of the self-assessment technique. Yet, more than half of them could not benefit from engaging such strategy into their EFL learning. This data might suggest that pupils are still unconscious about the necessity of self-evaluation to help them improve their EFL writing skill. Thus, most participants do not seem ready to take control of their own cognitive performance. On the whole, the reflective skill, which is a key component of learner autonomy, is still undeveloped.

Item 8: Doing homework helped me to understand the lesson better.

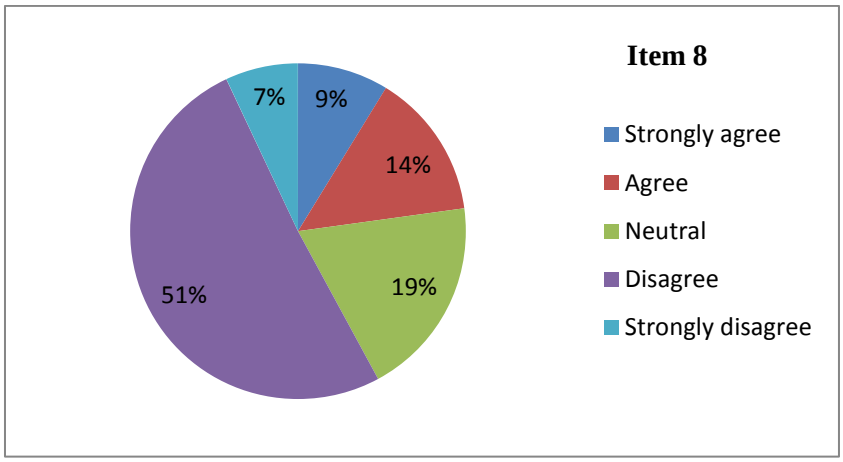

Figure 4.5.3: Post-questionnaire item 8

The second item addresses learners' understanding about the effect of doing home works. A minority (14%) of them seems aware of the individual work's impact on their EFL learning enhancement; that it can facilitate their English lesson comprehension. Whilst, half of the informants did not agree with that. In fact, this common negative attitude and refusal to do home works might emanate from two reasons. First, it can be explained by their low level of motivation and responsibility over English learning. Second, it may result from their failure in accomplishing the tasks on their own; due to their limited language proficiency level. Hence, it can be deduced that pupils lack both the essential knowledge to fulfill the learning tasks, and more importantly the consciousness about the necessity of doing such autonomous works to improve their English skills.

9. My speaking skill has developed because of my participation in class.

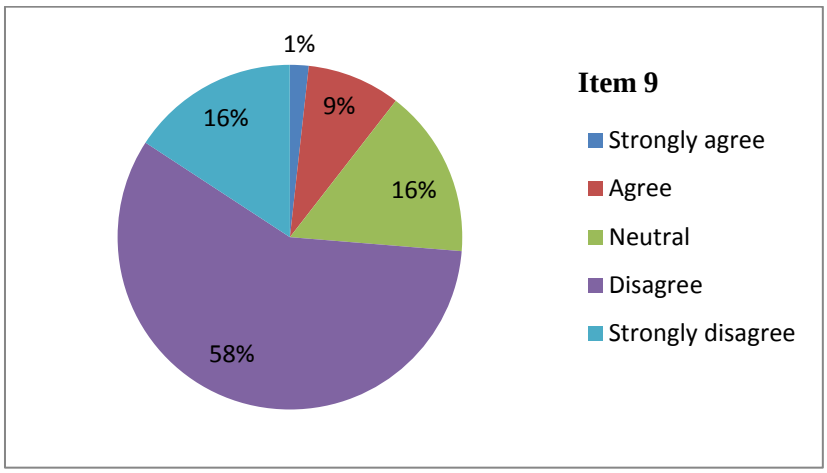

Figure 4.5.4: Post-questionnaire item 9

The findings of this question tend to reveal not only learners' potential change in the speaking skill as a result of their active engagement in class activities, but also their awareness of such supposed change. According to the overwhelming majority of respondents, there is no observable enhancement in their EFL speaking proficiency. Merely about 10% of the participants seem to assert a positive change. An accurate account of the results seems to be somehow difficult as several factors might intervene. However, one might consider only the self-directed learning prospect, which suggests that many of the participants lacked the confidence and drive to communicate in English and thus missed the direct involvement in the class.

10. My learner diary helped me to understand my English learning process.

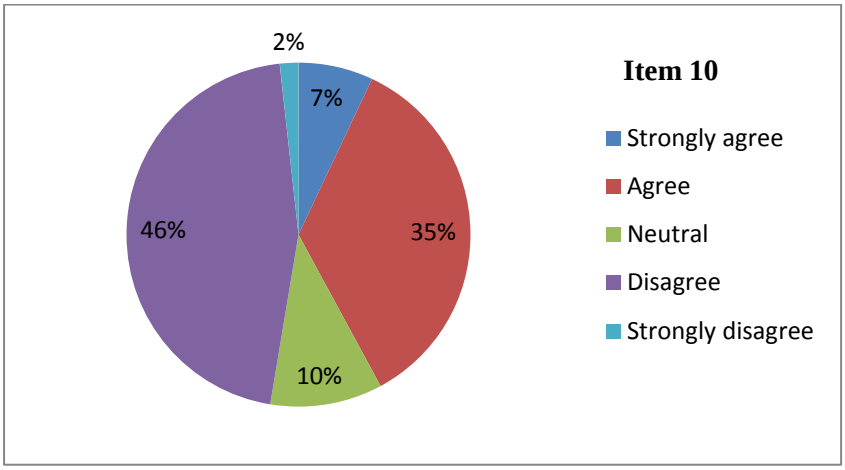

Figure 4.5.5: Post-questionnaire item 10

In examining pupils' viewpoints about this statement, it was found out that 35% of the respondents agree with the relevance of utilizing the learning diary. Probably, because it might have illuminated their thinking about their own EFL performance and might have led to constructive learning outcomes. In other words, it might have served, to a certain extent, their EFL learning experience. This result may emanate particularly from participants who really kept on using their diaries on a regular basis. On the contrary, a remarkable rate of about 46% supplied negative responses and expressed disagreement with the worth of using learning diaries. Such participants may possibly belong to the category of pupils who dealt with this technique uncaringly then stopped using it. Their attitude might be justified by an unawareness about the possible gains they can get from using them.

11. I can evaluate my written paragraph on my own.

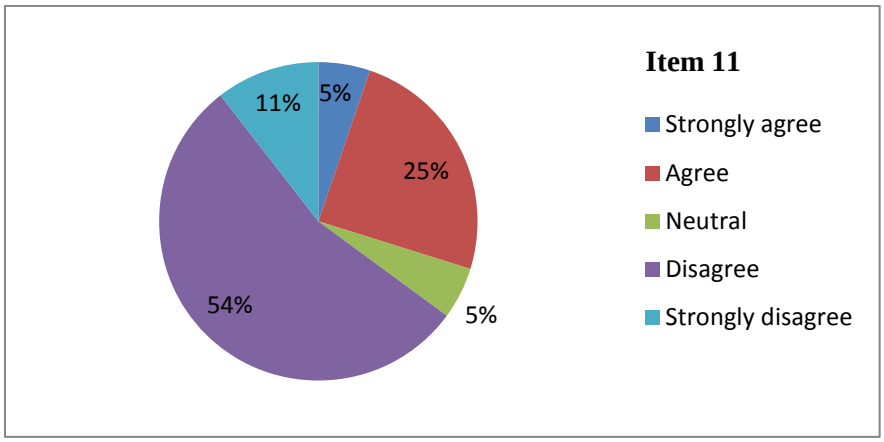

Figure 4.5.6: Post-questionnaire item 11

With regard to self-assessing the written paragraphs through a given simple scheme, more than half of the respondents reported their incapability to utilize it efficiently. Most probably, because most learners have difficulties in the writing skill. This may consequently explain why they find it hard to evaluate their own pieces of writing. It should be noted that, among all the participants, only very few were really using the evaluation sheet in the writing courses. These learners may represent the 30% who are in agreement with the statement. They appear to have grasped the writing criteria and so have developed the awareness of what should be assessed in their own written work. In other words, such minority managed to independently assess their written production, which might be taken as an evidence of developing a metacognitive knowledge, and therefore a feature of autonomous learning.

12. I understand the lesson better when I know my learning goal from the start.

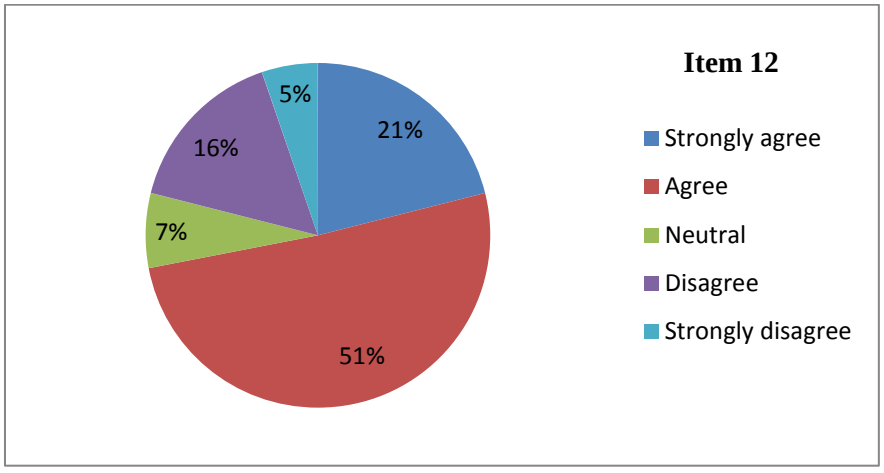

Figure 4.5.7: Post-questionnaire item 12

The present item emphasizes on pupils' awareness about their English learning practice. It examines specifically their consciousness about the impact of recognizing one's own learning purpose on their comprehension of the lesson. In other words, it seeks to find out whether recognizing the objective helped to understand the lesson.Interestingly, the findings display that 72% of participants held positive responses conveying their agreement with recognizing their learning goals beforehand. Perhaps, because this implemented technique was beneficial. In the sense that it had shown them the direction of lesson and enabled them clearly see what is worth focusing on. More importantly, the results can imply that learners are able to think critically about their learning, since they can distinguish between what was useful to their EFL learning and what was not. Therefore, it might be assumed that learners have built somehow certain metacognitive abilities.

Item13. I know the learning method that suits me best and I use it.

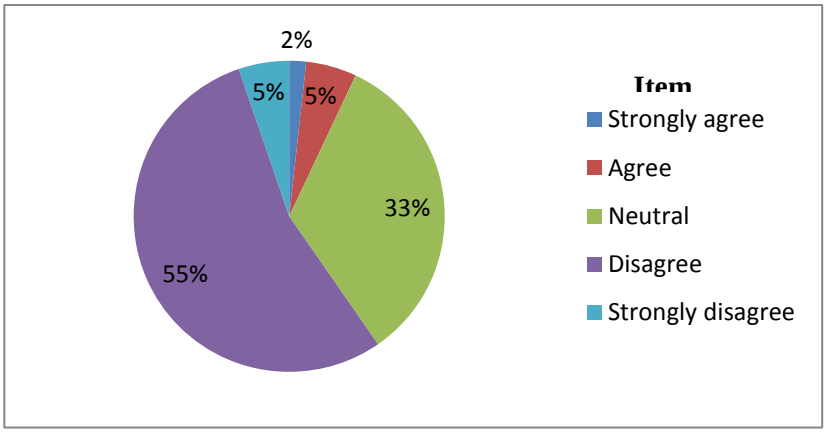

Figure 4.5.8: Post-questionnaire item 13

Concerning the last item of the 'metacognition' category, the findings reveal that a small number of participants (5%) only seems to approve their familiarity with their best EFL learning method. More than half of them expressed disagreement, which signifies an incapability to detect which learning approach is most appropraite, thus should be utilized. Furthermore, 33% of the respondents stood neutral towards this statement. This can imply an inaptness to form an opinion about their own learning procedures. All of this confirms pupils' low degree of awareness about their suitable English learning method. What can be drawn from the overall perceptions held by the participants in this category, is that their general metacogntive awareness level is reported as rather low. Since, most respondents maintained disagreement towards the statements involved, except for a limited group who appeared to have reached a higher level of awareness.

4.5.3. Section C: Self-reliance and learning responsibility

The main characteristic of autonomy as an approach to learning is that students take some important responsibility for their own learning over and above responding to instruction (Boud as cited in Cotterall 1995,p. 195).

C: Self-reliance and Learning Responsibility	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
14. I am ready to learn new words even when the teacher does not ask me to do so.	**3.50**	**19.29**	**33.33**	**45.61**	**1.75**
15. It is my responsibility to improve my English learning.	**12.28**	**59.64**	**0**	**22.80**	**5.26**
16. The teacher must give me all the information in class.	**14.03**	**36.84**	**14.03**	**29.82**	**5.26**

Table 4.5.3: Participants views on self-reliance and learning responsibility

Item 14: I am ready to learn new words even when the teacher does not ask me to do so.

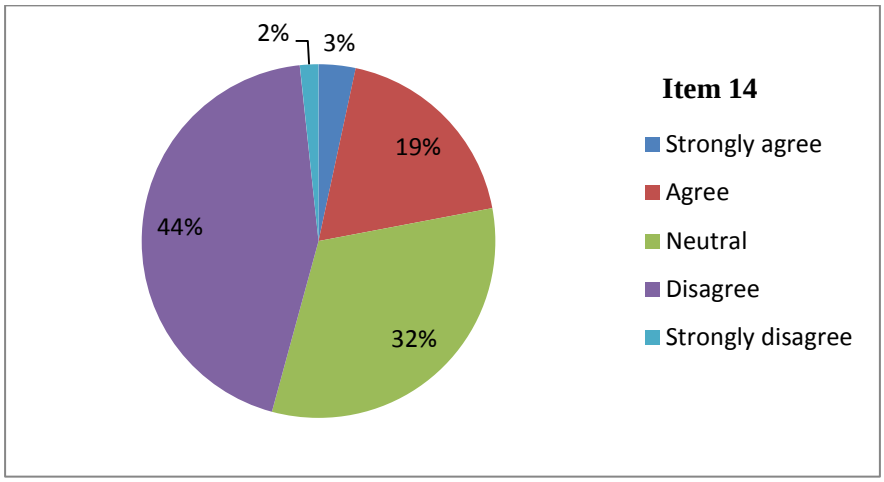

Figure 4.5.9: Post-questionnaire item 14

The question addressed within this item tends to investigate whether the participants developed a sense of responsibility towards their English learning or not. The findings show that about 45% of the learners are not likely to acquire new words without teacher's instructions or extrinsic motives (tests, exams…etc). They are not willing to independently enhance their lexical repertoire, only 22% claimed they do. It should be noted that this question is similar to question 18 in the pre- study questionnaire, for the latter also seeks to

examine learners' level of dependability on the teacher. Comparing both results, no important difference can be viewed, as the rate of agreement has bearly increased from 17% to 19%. Hence, learners' sense of responsibility can still be marked as low whilst their dependability on the instructor as high.

Item 15: It is my responsibility to improve my English learning.

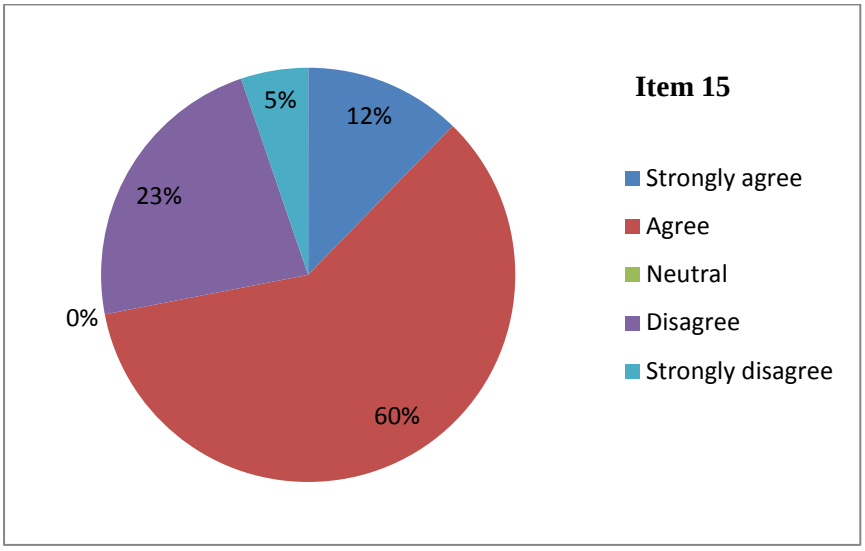

Figure 4.5.10: Post-questionnaire item 15

With regard to pupils' viewpoint about holding responsibility for their own English learning, most responses range between 'agree' and 'strongly agree'. The greater part of respondents pointed out their good sense of responsibility for their own EFL learning. Seemingly, most of them believe that success and improvement in their English level is actually under their control. However, despite such widespread assumption, only few of them tend to prove it on the practical ground. 28% of them appear to disagree with the idea that learning (such as: completing the learning tasks, getting to the class prepared, voluntarily participating and assessing their own performance) should be done by themselves rather than by the instructor. As a matter of fact, approximately the same finding with a rate of 20% was maintained in question 20 of the pre-study questionnaire, indicating no perceptible change in this regard.

Item: 16. The teacher must give me all the information in class.

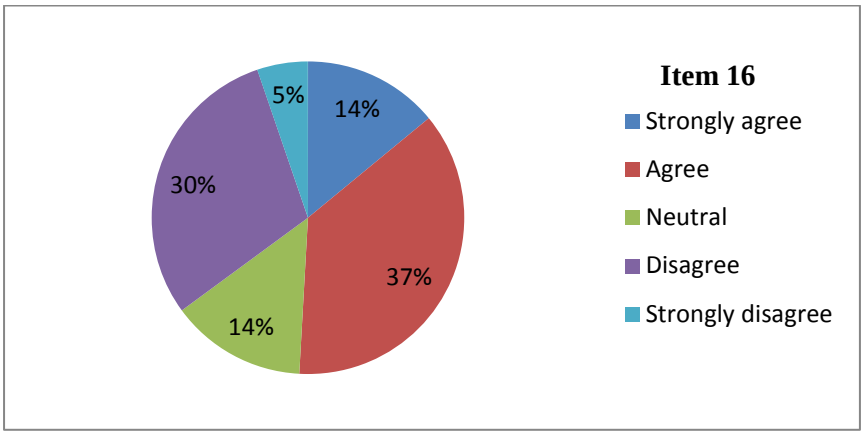

Figure 4.5.11: Post-questionnaire item 16

The last item of this category suggests that EFL teachers ought to provide all the information for pupils throughout the learning process. Therefore, it implicitly addresses their perceptions of the EFL teacher's role. About 35% of participants expressed disagreement about this statement, which reflects a reasonable and proper awareness about teacher's supposed roles as well as their own. Whereas, more than half of the respondents agreed; displaying a negative and misled attitude for taking responsibility. Approximate rates were reported in item 4 of the pre-study questionnaire. Thus, it can be concluded that no intensification in learners' sense of responsibility and self-reliance has been achieved.

4.5.4. Section D: Capacity for independent action

We can define an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions. This capacity depends on two main components: *ability* and *willingness* (Littlewood, 1996, p.428).

D: Capacity for independent action	1 Strongly agree	2 Agree	3 Neutral	4 Disagree	5 Strongly Disagree
	%	%	%	%	%
17. I am able to choose the content and the members of my English project.	**15.78**	**49.12**	**7.01**	**24.56**	**3.50**
18. I can take time to study English outside the class.	**1.75**	**15.78**	**14.03**	**59.64**	**8.77**
19. I can select tasks to do them on my own	**0**	**8.77**	**15.78**	**56.14**	**19.29**
20. I know how to seek help when it is necessary.	**5.26**	**33.33**	**12.28**	**36.84**	**12.28**

Table 4.5.4: Participants' capacity for independent action

Item 17: I can choose the content and the members of my project.

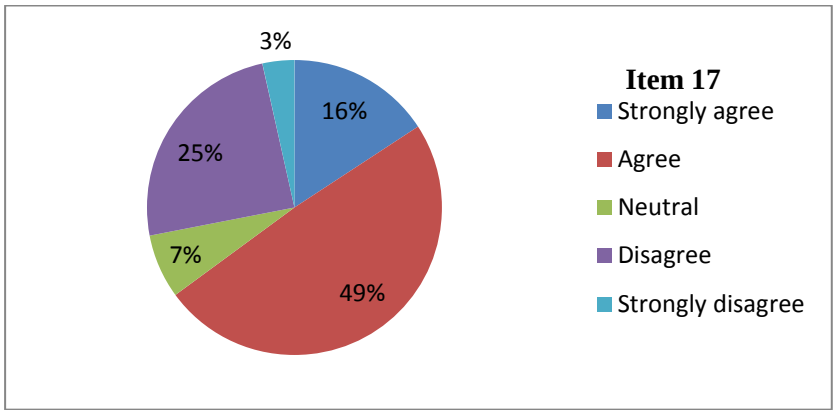

Figure 4.5.12: Post-questionnaire item 17

The first item of this category aims to detect the extent to which pupils are able to independently make choices over a group work. On what elements to include and which members to join in their project work. These may seem to be simplistic easy steps that are no evidence of an independent work. Yet, they actually represent the stepping stone to build the capacity for more significant autonomous learning decisions. Unexpectedly, the answers gathered in this regard show that the vast majority (65%) hold the capability to make the aforesaid learning choices. Based on this, one might not assume that pupils' capacity for independent action in a project work is elevated or quite satisfactory. However, pupils' actual classroom practice tends not to conform with this finding. Because, only a small number of learners showed an aptitude to decide over the content of their project.

Item 18: I can take time to study English outside the class.

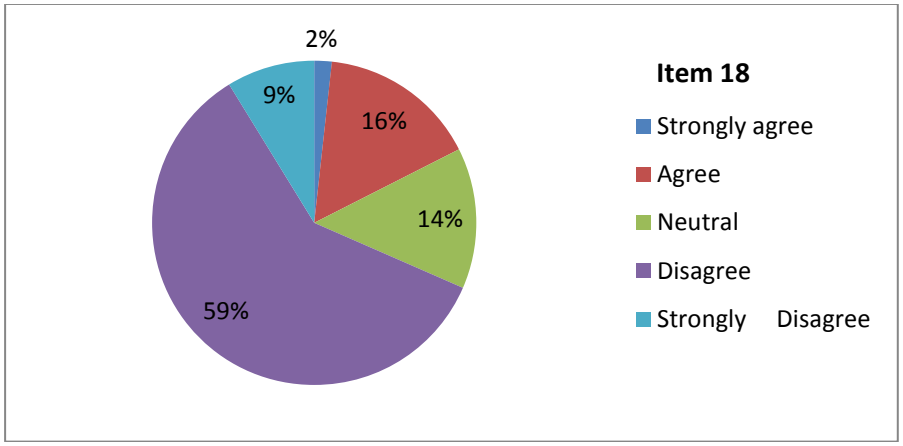

Figure 4.5.13: Post-questionnaire item 18

The specific aim of this query is to perceive participants' attempt to create their own learning opportunities beyond the classroom constraints. In effect, the respondents' most dominant answer holds disagreement (68%), which demonstrates a common indisposition to devote spare time and individual efforts to improve their English skills. Accordingly, such learners do not tend to possess the skill of independent action.While, 18% of them pointed out agreement, implying an acquisition of two important attributes regarded as essential conditions for an autonomous learning. First, an acceptance of hoding responsibility and second a willingness to act independently.

Item 19: I can select tasks and do them on my own.

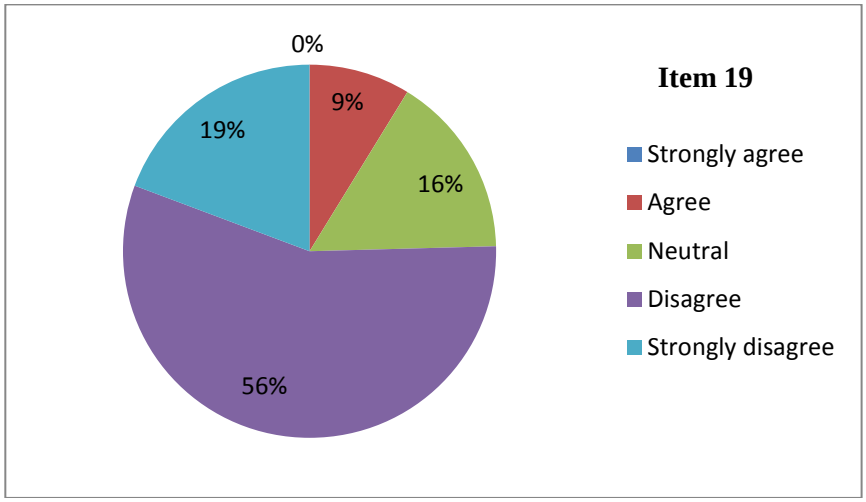

Figure 4.5.14: Post-questionnaire item 19

A further question was addressed to note the extent to which pupils are likely to carry out English learning tasks away from the class setting. As expected, the vast majority (75%) of informants denied the possibility of taking these steps in their EFL learning routine. Perhaps, due to their low level of awareness on the necessity of indepndent involvement. Or they may lack the intrinsic motivation and confidence to individually fulfill tasks outside the class. Conversely, a minority (9%) of respondents appears to agree with the idea, presuming a tendency to pick out and perform appropriate English assignments without instructor's assistance, which indicates a fairly good capability for independent action.

Item 20: I know how to seek help when necessary.

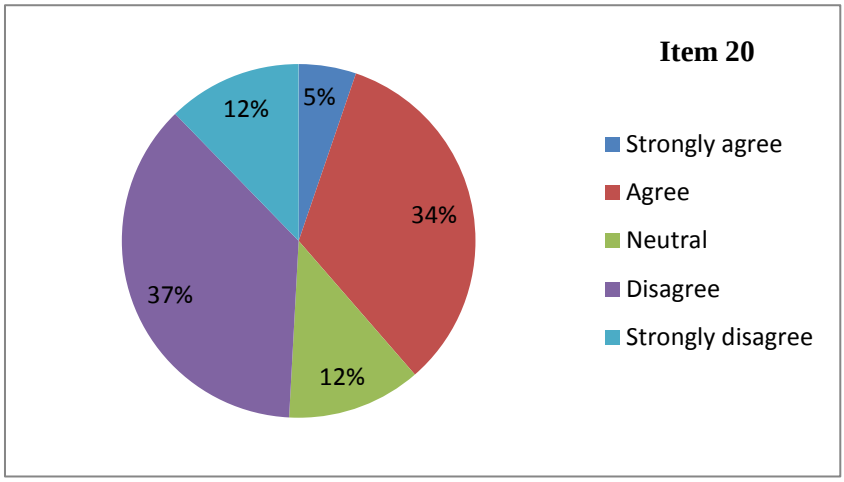

Figure 4.5.15: Post-questionnaire item 20

The last question aims to examine learners' capability to handle their own EFL learning difficulties. It considers whether they have explored ways to individually find answers to their queries. The data show that merely 34% of the participants seem to take the initiative to perform such independent action. Comparable answers with a rate of 37% maintained moderate disagreement while 12% asserted strong disagreement. This generally signifies an inaptitude to search for information, i.e. they have not developed yet the data seeking skills (cognitive and social strategies). It also tends to indicate a lack of curiosity and motivation towards EFL learning.

To sum up the overall post-questionnaire findings, it can be presumed that most pupils still lack many of the self-directed capacities, such as being responsible, self-reliant, reflective and self-aware. Sadly enough, they have not sufficiently developed the metacognitive knowledge or the effective learning strategies use. This concerns the vast majority of participants who did not have a cooperative attitude and were not fully involved in the research process. That is, in Dickinson's (1992) sense of 'active involvement', they did not perform activities outside class, devise techniques, look for clues, guess, ask questions, identify and deal with problems. The reason which might explain why the research project was of low efficiency and had trivial impact on their English learning behavior. Neverthless, scoring the results allows also to perceive a slight positive shift in some participants' EFL learning conduct. For they proved to be, in some ways, successful in their process of heading towards a higher level of autonomy.

4.6. Discussion of the results

The participants' responses in every research instrument of the study were basically analyzed within the frame of four major tenets of learner autonomy namely: (1) learning strategies use (2) metacognitive awareness (3) self-reliance and responsibility (4) capacity for independent action. Whilst some pupils displayed a slight progress in the autonomous learning practice, others did not seem to have acquired the autonomous traits. Such prevailing reluctant conduct is probably due to their conscious or unconscious resistance to the change in their EFL learning habits as well as their refusal of holding responsibility. The latter which emanates mainly from a lack of intrinsic motivation. Thus, as the teacher-researcher working on the autonomous supportive process, I had to create a number of extrinsic motives through various instructional procedures such as:

- Providing them with rationales of their learning tasks.
- Involving numerous activities that were based on free personal choices.
- Frequently allowing them to handle their own choices.
- Engaging collaborative and pair work tasks.
- Reducing teacher talk to the minimum possible time.
- Encouraging the use of peer and self-assessment techniques.

Nevertheless, despite the careful implementation of such teaching procedures in class while being restricted by the curricular guideline, it did not yield effective outcomes on the practical ground. That is to say, I failed to some extent, in making the learners willing to take over responsibility. In this regard, Dam (2011) argued that it is: "difficult for the teacher to let go .i.e. pass over responsibility to the learners in this process whereas it seems easier for the learners *to take over"* p.41. This indicates that learners' *reception* of responsibility is easier than the teacher's *transmission* of responsibility. His statement confirms that developing autonomy depends greatly on learners' readiness to assume more responsibility rather than teacher's effort to pass it over.

Additionally, as it has been already argued (in chapter one 1.6.1.), learners' beliefs about their supposed roles are embedded in the concept of learner autonomy. Unfortunately, those beliefs yielded unsatisfactory results in this study. As the dominant belief held amongst participants about teachers' roles carried an expectation of a thorough and constant guidance by the instructor. By comparing the findings in part D (questions:19/20) of the pre-study

questionnaire with the results of part C (question 16) in the post-study questionnaire, closely similar results were observed. This suggests then, that along the research process, their misconceived beliefs could hardly be altered. Rather than deliberately accepting the notion of active involvement and taking control of their EFL learning, they consistently stuck to their traditional latent studying behaviors. However, it should be noted that through different stages of research implementation, many participants could employ social as well as affective strategies. They have made attempts to deliberately assess their own practice by means of learner diaries and self-eevaluation writing sheets. Despite the difficulties faced in these attempts, some of them proved to overcome them successfully. An evidence of this was their constant self-directed observed practice inside the class, plus their replies to the questionnaires and interviews. Taking the overall findings into account, it can be assumed, by and large, that a slight move towards learner autonomy has been achieved.

4.7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter reveals the findings of all the data collected in the fieldwork as it provides a thorough analysis for each. It should be first noted that teaching English to intermediate or low level learners at secondary school while concurrently working on developing their autonomy in the Algerian context, is by no means an easy task. This has been proved in this study, which eventually suggests a slight increase in participants' autonomous learning practice. Through its implemented self-directed teaching approach, this study cannot claim to have generated a significant positive change in learner autonomy. However, participants seemed to have appreciated and benefited from many of its aspects such as: knowing the lesson goal, having the freedom of choice, using self-evaluative strategies and engaging in collaborative tasks. Besides, despite this more or less unsatisfactory outcome, one of the important benefits I gained, is developing a personal reflection over the process of autonomy improvement. For, it allowed me to deepen my understanding on a number of issues related to autonomy enhancement on the practical ground such as: the challenges to strategy training, ways of developing metacognition, measuring 'autonmous competence' and altering misconceptions. Hence, based on my humble experience and the findings of this chapter, I tried to think of and to create a more effective autonomy developing frame that can meet the needs of Algerian EFL learners in secondary education. Therefore, I have put forward, in the final chapter, a set of potential solutions and suggestions in order to adequately integrate learner autonomy in the Algerian EFL secondary education.

CHAPTER FIVE

IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5. Introduction

Learner autonomy is not meant to be the end in itself, but it is rather a vital tool to ensure efficient language learning. This eventually makes it a highly required skill for the academic success; “the school ensures its function of education, socialization and qualifications only if we install in the learner competencies which enable him to become autonomous in developing his analytical capacities, mobilizing his knowledge acquisitions and synthesizing when he faces new problem-solving situations” Bouhadiba (2015, p.12). Hence, it is necessary to facilitate the process of developing pupils’ autonomy, since it contributes notably in the promotion of language learning (Little, 2007). Accordingly, and based on the findings of the preceding chapter which demonstrated challenges to ensure a greater level of autonomy, I attempt to present in this chapter additional and alternative methods that may possibly yield higher stages of learner autonomy.

Therefore, the present chapter intends to answer the third research question which regards the pedagogic ways and frames to enhance learner autonomy in the Algerian EFL secondary education. It retraces vital constituents and conditions to foster autonomy in the EFL class. Some of which have been revealed throughout my research and teaching experiences while others are stressed by acknowledged scholars and pioneers in previous works. It should be noted that the issues discussed are not restricted merely to the learners and teachers, but rather to a wider frame that takes account of curriculum, syllabus designers, policy makers as well as the social context. As a result, multiple suggestions and directions are proposed to raise awareness about learner autonomy, to demonstrate fashions of integrating it and hopefully to overcome the difficulties generally raised with this facet of learning in the local context.

5.1. Basic foundations for promoting autonomy in the Algerian secondary education

Fostering any aspect of learning entails careful consideration of its entire framework, so that proper and rational measures could be wisely taken. With regard to autonomy enhancement in the Algerian educational setting, many parameters seem to involve such as: the actual adopted pedagogic approach, the different actors in the learning process (learners, teachers, parents, decision makers) as well as the socio-educational context. Thus, all of these agents need to be thoroughly examined and discussed at the aim of putting forward adequate suggestions and solutions to get through the present undesired situation.

5.1.1 Activating the Competency Based Approach: moving from theory to practice

The competency based approach was introduced into the Algerian educational curriculum since 2003 as has been pointed out in chapter 2. It was reckoned as an important educational reform launched by the authorities at the purpose of creating a more promising schooling system. One of its core principles is equipping learners with a know *how to do*, *to be* and *to act* in various and unexpected situations. Therefore, the prior aim behind its implementation was to generate independent citizens who can transfer their acquired academic skills to their daily life situations. However despite having it officially and theoretically integrated in the Algerian school for more than a decade, many of its prime objectives remain still unachieved. They rather appear to turn into a myth that is far from reality and a source of concern for Algerian decision makers, inspectors, instructors, learners and even parents (Bouhadiba, 2015).

Under the CBA reform in Algeria, pupils have been expected to acquire critical thinking abilities, socio-interactive competencies and independent learning skills, which are quite congruent with an autonomous learning pedagogy. They were supposed to engage in a collaborative learning that has been mainly shaped under the form of project works. Through these projects, learners are meant to exhibit the targeted abilities and competencies. Whilst, instructors “must guide, help, and encourage the learner to take part in his own learning.” (Document d’accompagnement 2AM,p. 80-81) as recommended by the ministry of education. Moreover, he/she is advised to implement information and communication technologies (ICTs) in their teaching practices in order to facilitate learning and to offer multiple learning opportunities. Thus, integration of this approach intended to give foremost focus on the learner rather than the teacher. It puts the pupil in a proactive instead of a reactive position, where he/she has to take both individual and collaborative action to construct knowledge and to develop understanding.

However, on the practical ground, quite opposite outcomes seem to occur, “what we notice in reality and in the daily behaviours of teachers is the 'coercive' tendency in teaching practices. This applies to the pupil who is pushed to remain in a defensive learning position while the teacher stands as the only source of knowledge” Bouhadiba (2005,p. 10). This implies that learners still keep their traditional learning fashions while educators stick to their ‘sage on the stage’ roles in the classrooms. In such conditions, independent learning skills seem to die and the encouragement of autonomous learning tend to become a somehow ‘fairy

tale'. Indeed, this undesired reality mirrors, in a way or another, the failure of the CBA implementation in Algeria.

One of the factors that significantly contributed to this situation is the lack of preparation and training for this crucial move. In this regard, Bouhadiba (2015) points out: "In fact, neither the teachers nor the pupils had been prepared in advance for the move towards the CBLT. They remained, so to speak, unfamiliar or alien to this mode of teaching and learning, not to say, resistant to change" (p.4). Thus, such malfunction may not relate mainly to a lack of information nor to an understanding of the approach per see, but rather to the way it should be carried out. A recent study that was conducted by Bader & Hamada (2015) showed that Algerian teachers are well-informed about the CBA, yet they are incapable to transfer their knowledge or to implement it effectively in the practical setting. This suggests that no valid practical guidelines were set for the adequate implementation of this approach.

Consequently, none of its seeds seemed to grow amply, including the seeds of learner autonomy. For in reality, it failed to place pupils at the heart of the learning activity. It did not take into account their interest and needs, as it fell short to supply them with effective learning strategies that would enable them learn how to learn. Most of the generations that were taught under the CBA, if not all, tend to lack the skills of self-assessment, decision making and a sense of responsibility over their own learning. Sadly enough, all of these are indicators of a true absence of a learner-centered approach. Hence, to revive the CBA with its underlying and rewarding principles in the Algerian school in general and in secondary education in particular, it is necessary that the authorities review seriously the application of this approach and eventually take proper measures.

To do so, I believe that decision makers should, initially, launch effective and practical training programs for all pre-service and in-service mentors to transmit a CBA proficiency that is applicable in class. In due course, they should emphasize on the new expected behaviors and roles which imply less control on the part of teachers and more creativity and individual knowledge construction on the part of learners. Moreover, authorities need to supply more facilities in institutions in terms of ICTs. Because, this first tends to increase pupils' motivation towards learning as it helps to assist teachers in fulfilling their job of 'letting pupils learn' as required. It would gradually help to train learners to be self-sufficient when seeking information and thus it will lead them to find individualistic learning

approaches. Last but not least, educational decision makers should reduce their high expectations to more realistic and achievable objectives, as they need to ensure, through inspectors' and teachers' guidance that these objectives are being achieved in the real language classrooms.

To sum up, if learner autonomy would develop in Algerian schools and if the competency based approach seeds are to be reaped, the latter ought to be transferred from a mere ink on paper to practical actions on the ground. It has to sort out from its theoretical nature to a concrete execution in real classroom settings, even if a long distance needs to be run.

5.1.2. Fostering autonomy through the curriculum

To lay a solid foundation for learner autonomy in language education, it is first and foremost important to consider their prearranged curricular. Simply because the curriculum determines, to a great extent, if not entirely how teaching and learning is processed. All educational curricula around the world cover a set of fundamental issues: 1. the learning goals of the programme, 2. the content of the programme and 3.the means of organizing the learning process (methodology, materials and media) (Wolf, p. 108 in O'Rourke and Carson, 2010). Hence, to develop ways for implementing autonomy in our educational system, I suppose it should all start with the curricula design. "The key difference between learner-centred and traditional curriculum development is that, in the former, the curriculum is a collaborative effort between teachers and learners, since learners are closely involved in the decision-making process regarding the content of the curriculum and how it is taught". (Nunan, 1999, p.2).

Accordingly, curriculum designers need to maximize pupils' opportunity to make decisions and choices over their own learning , i.e. to select their learning material, language content and methods as much as possible. So that the learner becomes an active contributor in the curriculum making process rather than a mere receiver of learning tasks and approaches. The pupils are in the best position to provide insight on what they need and eventually may propose what fits them. Adapting the curriculum according to the learners' needs tends to stimulate their interest and to increase their motivation to take active part in learning (Zoharbi, 2011, p.123). However, pupils' common low level of competence and experience in language learning strategies, methods and awareness may impede the application of curriculum negotiation. Therefore, language mentors are continuously required to interpret prudently

learners' opinions and needs into adequate practical activities. To facilitate the job for instructors, the following issues need to be involved within an autonomy- supportive curriculum:

5. 1. 2. 1. Explicit learning goals

It is crucial that not only language instructors get awareness about the objectives of the tasks but so do the pupils too. Because, this will open up opportunities for them to develop autonomous learning skills. Awareness of the learning aims makes it easy for the pupils to comprehend the learning input and to reflect on their relevance. Interestingly, this has been confirmed in this study, as was previously stated in chapters 3 and 4, participants had really valued this step and had developed quite positive attitudes towards it. Moreover, raising consciousness about learning objectives helps to seek effective ways to reach them. For instance, if a leaner recognizes his upcoming objective (e.g. learn how to "express an apology" in English), he becomes predisposed to grasp the language form and may attempt to utilize it afterward in different situations (dialogues, mails, letters and even outside the classroom setting). Thus, explicitly stating the lesson/task objective helps to perceive, in a precise and clear way, the best road to achieve it. What is more, by recognizing the aims of language learning, pupils tends to gradually develop a meta-cognitive knowledge which will enable them to self-evaluate their practice as regards achieving those specific goals.

5. 1. 2.2. Deliberate strategy instruction

Much constructive talk has been said on the merits of language learning strategies in education within a variety of academic settings. However, as far as the Algerian context is concerned, it remains, in the main, stuck at the level of the scholars and educationist' awareness. As most of learners, appear to go blind about this fundamental learning aspect. From my personal experience as a pupil, I have never been informed or taught about such strategies even though I might have been using them unconsciously. It was only at the level of university that I could make sense of what a learning strategy is and how it can be successfully utilized. So, I missed the opportunity to gain awareness about them and consequently could not take advantage from them at an early stage. Unfortunately, this seems to continue happening with present-day Algerian learners who tend to lack this type of awareness.

Hence, an urgent need calls for a rational and explicit implementation of these strategies in the curriculum and consequently in the language classroom. Because, curricula that provide learners with a range of learning strategies are most likely to facilitate their learning and to strengthen their independent language acquisition. What I intend to propose here, is to implement, in all curricula generally and the language curriculum particularly, tasks that clearly target basic and plain language learning strategies (such as the memory, social, affective and compensatory strategies) which fit to the pupils' cognitive comprehension level. This has to be regularly worked out in the class in order to gradually train the learners "on how to learn" efficiently.

5. 1. 2.3. Multiplicity in learning resources

Another vital condition for promoting autonomous learning via the curriculum is the integration of diverse language learning resources. For this provides flexibility and adaptability in the teaching/ learning process. It would open up learners' minds towards resources other than the instructor, and tends to reduce their dependability on him/her. In addition, it implicitly leads towards higher levels of self-reliance and responsibility. Because, instead of engaging in a rigid, traditional and monocentric learning, the pupils will be able to mold their education in different forms, which entails extended individual efforts. Besides, learners can jump from one language resource to another (for example, from a textbook to a short film/song or from the board to a digital electronic dictionary), which would keep them focused and excited about their language learning. As a result, they may develop higher motivation to take initiatives in this wide range of learning experiences. Indeed, for the aforesaid good reasons, curriculum designers ought to incorporate contemporary and motivating language learning means (such as: theater programs, flash cards, computers, educational websites …etc) in addition to the current utilized ones which have mainly been restricted to the teacher, i.e. the textbook and the board. Finally, it should be noted that in the resources selection and implementation process, some significant criteria have to be taken into account such as:

1. The educational value.
2. Realization of the curriculum objectives.
3. Learner centeredness.
4. Interest and motivation.
5. Simplicity.
6. Relevance and suitability.
7. Accuracy.
8. Encouragement. (Gupta, 2014)

5. 1. 3. Fostering learner autonomy in the English language syllabus

In order to make the language syllabus geared towards autonomous learning, syllabus writers as well as teachers need to gradually abandon the traditional content based syllabi and have to embrace a skill-based syllabus that focuses on developing pupils' independent learning capacities. Obviously, foreign/second language learning is an intricate process that should not be overlooked by the emphasis on the so desired autonomous learning goal. But it has rather to progress alongside with its prime objectives. How can this be practically processed, might be a hard question to be resolved, but definitely not impossible.

Admittedly, Algerian pupils are not expected, for the current time, to develop elevated levels of autonomy, but are rather aimed to get started in the autonomous learning road. Merely, because, they are used to the type of prescribed syllabi that rest basically on teachers' preset orders and moves rather than negotiated actions. Hence, bearing this in mind and since educational syllabi are naturally designed to fit the social reality of their contexts, specific realties ought to be taken into consideration in the syllabus design process for the Algerian language classroom.

Accordingly, I believe that integrating autonomy in the language course planning should take a somehow restricted but not trivial space, at least for the present time and until pupils reach more advanced levels of autonomy. That is to say, the language syllabus has to allow learners to exercise autonomy in its most simplistic forms. In a way that leads pupils to smoothly voice their viewpoints on the language tasks, to be capable to pinpoint their difficulties and strengths when performing a task and to feel more responsible about their own language learning. Based on negotiation, it has also to enable them to start making some little independent decisions (such as the mode of doing their tasks i.e. in pair, group or individually, choosing the learning material…etc) and more importantly to have deliberate strategy use.

It is noteworthy that a number of amendments need to take place in the actual English language syllabus. Because, I think, as many of my colleagues (teachers) do, that several shortcomings exist in the current English language textbooks (1SE, 2SE, 3SE) such as: condensed language forms (grammar), complex terminology, some inadequate instructions, long listening scripts and loads of unnecessary similar tasks. Thus, to ensure efficiency in language learning, I suppose that syllabus writers have to replace the current complicated and heavy texts that are sometimes irrelevant to the learners' disposition, with more adequate

manuscripts that comprise more simplistic wording and attractive images. Listening scripts ought to be cut down into short comprehensible scripts that fit to learners' listening aptitude.

Additionally, task instructions need to be designed in a way that instigates the learners' thoughts in order to help them develop their thinking process, rather than restrict them with the mere reproduction of given data and facts. Moreover, lessons should target strategic learning skills rather than solely the linguistic and communicative outcomes. To serve the purpose of prioritizing quality rather than quantity, syllabus designers should reduce the amount of learning tasks and have to put more emphasis on why and how the pupils are truly learning the language. Furthermore, it is important that enough time and space are devoted to fulfill each single task.

Trying to make the aforementioned thoughts clearer, I will summarize in the following table, the major points that, in my viewpoint, need to be adjusted within the English language syllabus of secondary education:

The pedagogic aspect	The current syllabus design	The suggested syllabus design
Time distribution: 3 hours per week	3 hour for linguistic/ communicative competence	2 hours for language and 1 hour for strategic learning competence
Task instructions	Pre-determined mandatory questions.	A set of optional questions.
Listening scripts	long and sometimes hard scripts	short comprehensible scripts
Vocabulary use	A large number of complicated terminologies.	Relatively simple lexis
The amount of tasks	Numerous and sometimes similar tasks on a single language point.	Few relevant tasks.
Task content	Some intricate grammatical rules that surpass the pupils' level.	Easier grammar points that fit pupils' cognitive capacities.
Reading texts	Lengthy texts.	Concise and motivating texts that cope with pupils' readability level.

Table 5.1: A suggested scheme for designing the English language syllabus

5. 1. 3. Promoting autonomous learning through the socio-educational context

It is evident that learners' social background plays a crucial role in the language learning process. For, it affects pupils' psyche and this can be clearly perceived in their behavioral learning. Based on Gardner's socio-educational model of SLA (1979), the social milieu is one of four interrelated variables that intervene in a second language acquisition. Moreover, the cultural and societal environment of learning is strongly tied to learner autonomy as has been discussed earlier in chapter one (section1.6.3). "Although we think of studying and independent learning as resulting from individual goals and behaviors, they are actually socially mediated. "Self-regulation" implies that *internal* forces regulate behavior, but the ability to self-regulate is predicated upon *environmental variables* (social, physical, and economic) that are not universally available." (Smith Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe, 2007, p.24). Therefore, independent or self-regulated learning capacity is context-related, consequently, one must consider and spot light on this socio-educational constituent while aiming to foster autonomous learning in the Algerian context.

5.1.4. The socio-educational context

The learners' social setting is generally referred to as: the parents, family, classmates, friends and the overall members of society. All of these are important agents that tend to impinge extensively on pupils' learning journey and can contribute significantly in enhancing their autonomy. Nevertheless, they play roles in different ways and at distinct stages. I think that promotion of autonomy should all start with the parents and the small family. Because, at an early age and at the pre-schooling time the child develops a set of assumptions that are shaped, by and large, through his interaction with parents. Then, comes to the relatively larger world which comprises peers, friends, and the society members.

5.1.4.1. Parents and family

Parents and family members, in the Algerian context, who are concerned with the success of their children, need to help them in promoting autonomous skills. They ought to believe that teaching children to be self-reliant serves their interest and helps them to attain not only academic achievement but social success as well. They have to be conscious that constant control and over supervision may diminish their capacity to propel forward towards independent learning and valuable life experiences. Through such supportive beliefs, it

becomes possible to prepare the children from an early age to assume personal as well as educational responsibility.

What is more, parents and relatives can install an independent mindset in pupils by regularly encouraging them first to activate their inner capabilities, second to make individual choices when dealing with issues, even with the smallest ones and third to seek help whenever they meet learning difficulties. Additionally, the familial surrounding can instigate children to do more home works and assist them in the process, which consequently increases their confidence and enhances their potential for learner autonomy. It is also important that the family supports pupils emotionally as well as academically. In this regard, Smith Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe, (2007) suggest some useful guidelines to families so that they can help their children:

1. Increasing motivation.
2. Fostering positive emotions about studying and learning.
3. Helping children identify and cope with negative emotions about learning.
4. Fostering positive behavior.
5. Fostering time management and organization at home.
6. Fostering children's mastery of study skills in specific areas.
7. Helping parents support their children as they prepare to take tests.
8. Fostering home–school communication and collaboration.

(Smith Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe, 2007, p.29)

Hence, Algerian families must be aware of the fundamental role they play in their children's school success. That is why, I believe that through parental involvement and assistance, there is a large possibility for fostering learner autonomy in our primary, middle and secondary schools.

5.1.4.2. Friends and peers

Furthermore, the social group to which pupils belong affects profoundly their academic performance. For instance, if a learner's friends or peers are good strategy users, high achievers and independent learners, he/she then tends to acquire those useful qualities in an unconscious way. Because, perceiving peers' effective functioning opens up the possibility for him/her to follow similar steps. On the contrary, if the learner is surrounded by passive, teacher-dependent or low achiever peers, he/she becomes more likely to feel unmotivated, reluctant and consequently tends to fail. In this way, pupils' narrow social group can be a

source of obstruction to their successful learning. For that reason, learners need to be aware of these facts and parents should help them to associate to the kind of peers with whom they can cope in seeking information and studying independently.

5.1.4.3. Society members

Although pupils' bigger social circle may seem unrelated to the learners' academic success, yet it has a vital role in creating an autonomy supportive environment. Because, the society members tend to be a model for learners to follow in terms of certain norms and attitudes. For example, if learners are brought up in a society that truly values the notion of reading books and seeking information, which would implicitly install the love of education within them, they will be more likely to put effort into their learning and eventually will tend to adopt a self-directed learning conduct.

Unfortunately, as for the Algerian society, we can notice some practices that are basically impeding the promotion of learner autonomy. For instance, it is common that many cyber space workers often provide ready-made learning projects to pupils (who are supposed to accomplish them by themselves) for the sake of financial gain. These agents are consciously or unconsciously performing an immoral act, since they contribute to the creation of a lazy dependent generation. So, awareness should be raised within these communities and measures need to be taken in order to reduce such social behaviors as well as to save our pupils from a deteriorated education. All members of the Algerian society, should contribute in this process and ought to drive our learners, by all means, towards a quality independent learning.

In a nutshell, implementing learner autonomy in the Algerian school involves an ongoing chain of mediators whose efforts should congregate to reach the desired objective. Thus, it is a shared responsibility between many agents: the parents, friends, peers, educators, curriculum designers, decision makers and above all the learner himself/herself. Accordingly, I believe that despite the constrains that may be encountered in the road to efficient autonomous learning we, as members of the Algerian society ought to rise to the challenge and work to achieve this worthwhile goal regardless of the role we may be playing. The figure below aims to better illustrate how each of these agents interrelates in the developing process.

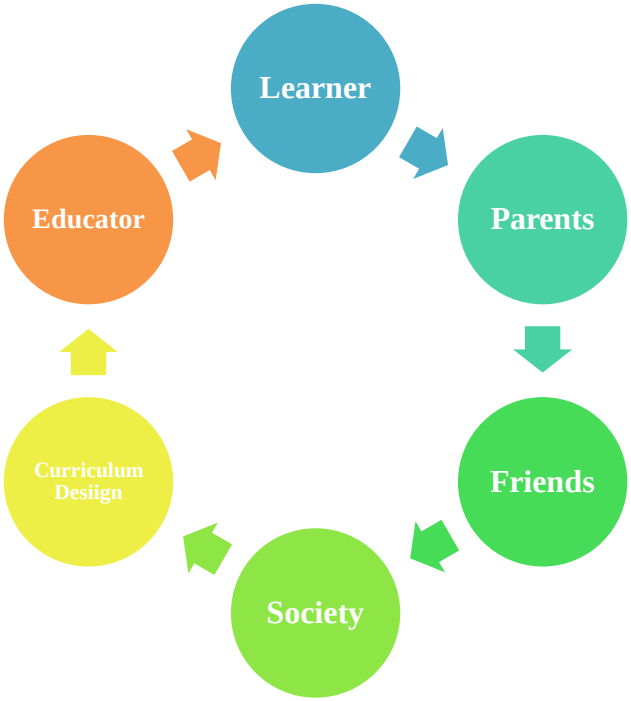

Figure 5.1: The active agents in learner autonomy promotion

5.2. Teaching models for promoting LA in the EFL Classroom: the four language skills

In this section, I endeavor to make learner autonomy moderately thrive in the Algerian language education. Not through a mere building of a hypothetical basis as previously done in section 5.1, but rather via setting a practical framework. In other words, I attempt to transit all the relevant notions that have been highlighted beforehand (such as responsibility shift, awareness, collaboration, reflection…etc) into applicable steps and strategies in the real language classrooms, with the ultimate goal of facilitating the implementation of autonomous learning in our educational institutions. To this end, teaching models are offered to secondary school English language mentors so as to help them prepare relatively independent listeners, speakers, readers and writers of English. Thus, the four language skills are addressed in detail so that a comprehensive picture of language instruction could be structured.

As a matter of fact, major obstructive realities of the current Algerian secondary school English classroom and various challenges encountered in this study have been taken into account in the teaching paradigm design. Such as, the large-sized classes, the overall low level of English proficiency, the lack of technological pedagogic aids, pupils' habitual dependent learning mode and insufficient teacher training. All of these obstacles led me to think of a preliminary model that tends to gradually and smoothly enhance pupils' independent language learning skills. This pedagogic model is certainly not meant to be an

ideal pattern, but it may serve as a directive lesson plan for English teachers to follow. It consists of six major constituents: (1) the lesson objective (2) material selection (3) teacher's role (4) basic teaching procedure (5) Pupils' role and finally (6) assessment.

5.2.1. The listening skill

Despite the fact that mastery of the listening skill is of great significance to an effective second/foreign language acquisition, since it "occurs twice as much as speaking, four times as much as reading, and five times as much as writing (Rivers, 1981; Morley, 1991 as cited in Saffari & Tabatabaei 2016), it is generally not given much importance by Algerian high school EFL learners. Many pupils perceive it as a subsidiary task that does not occupy part of their tests or exams. Plus, they believe that it is somehow difficult and demanding for most of them especially the low proficient ones. Indeed, it is not an easy assignment, for it entails learners to go through a set of mental processes such as: understanding pronunciation, detecting grammatical structures, identifying vocabulary, decoding meaning and remembering ideas, which all occur at a prompt pace. Nevertheless, this receptive skill should not be overlooked or neglected; it rather has to be strategically taught and adapted according to our EFL classrooms. Thus, English teachers need to work flexibly, through some gradual steps and appropriate strategies, to enable pupils help themselves in improving their own listening comprehension capacity.

5.2.1. An autonomous teaching model

To increase learners' sense of autonomy in the listening skill, English teachers can look up the following suggested sample; it might be useful for them.

5.2.1.1. The lesson objective

The purpose of the listening activity should always be clearly set to learners right from the start.

Example: my objective is to listen and understand the general meaning of the interview.

5.2.1.2. Material selection

Many of the difficulties in listening comprehension relate to the lack of listening material. Unfortunately, most of our secondary schools if not all, are devoid of language laboratories and lack the essential technical devices like: computers, overhead projectors, audio recorders and so forth. As a result, pupils' exposure to authentic listening resources is

particularly limited in the school. Therefore, learners need to be introduced to more listening input inside the class (audios, videos, songs, audio books, interviews) "so that they can develop a more balanced appetite for listening according to the topics of their interests and their comfortable level of difficulty" Wei, Y (2011, p 55). This is what Krashen referred to as "comprehensible input" which is a key condition for successful language learning as posited in his renowned theory of second language acquisition. Hence, teachers must take this into account while selecting the type and duration of the listening material. Plus, they need to moderately negotiate the listening input with the learners as it is vital for the autonomy-supportive classroom.

5.2.1.3. Teacher's role

Since the role of the instructor in a learner centered classroom is primarily a guide or a counselor, he/she is strongly required to follow some teaching steps to create an optimal learning environment. At first, inform pupils that listening tasks may be hard in their initial stages. That is to say, tell them that they must concentrate on the listening input carefully, as they may need to listen more than once. This can lower their anxiety level about the listening task and may consequently remove a psychological barrier. For the purpose of developing their meta-cognitive awareness, let them know about the listening goals so that they become conscious of when to focus on pronunciation: (stress, intonation, rhyme), when to try to comprehend the overall meaning (key ideas) and when to seek specific information. Guide them to use listening strategies like: guessing meaning, looking for key words/phrases, taking short notes…etc. Lastly, encourage them to expose themselves to English as much as possible and to practice out of class listening. For example, through: watching English series/movies, listening to songs and writing their lyrics or using any other material they may like. This can be an effective way to aid learners develop their aural comprehension skill autonomously.

5.2.1.4. Basic teaching procedure

The following table illustrates the suggested teaching procedure for the listening skill. It engages three aspects: anticipation (step 1/2/3), integration of the listening input (step 4/5/6) and assessment of the comprehension (step7).

Teacher guidelines	Purpose	Timing
1. Prior to the listening activity, let them think about the general topic. **2.** Ask few questions on this subject. **3.** State the purpose for their listening.	-To prepare pupils for the content and to activate their background knowledge. -To help them recognize specific vocabulary. -To make their listening task meaningful.	10 mn
4. Introduce the listening material for the first time at a moderate pace.	-To make them conceptualize the general picture.	10 mn
5. Before playing the listening for the second time, set your comprehension/ pronunciation questions. **6.** Then, ask pupils to take short notes while listening.	-To get them focus on specific information. -To use a listening strategy.	
7. Give them an opportunity to discuss, check and compare with their peers what they heard.	-To practice reflection and self-assessment.	5 mn

Table 5.2.: Autonomous teaching guidelines: the listening skill

5.2.1.5. Pupils' role

In the listening activity, learners are supposed to recognize the objective of their listening. Plus, they are expected to listen strategically and carefully to the input. Obviously, many of them would be unconfident and hesitant about what they heard as they may mishear, misunderstand or even make spelling mistakes when they take notes. Nevertheless, it is crucial that instructors encourage them to be responsive, interactive and cooperative. In other words, try to lead the learners to supply relevant responses, to ask for clarification whenever needed and to share their ideas with peers and the class.

5.2.1.6. Assessment

One way of evaluating pupils' listening comprehension is to open a short discussion about the content of the listening. If learners provide appropriate answers, then it is a good indicator of their understanding. Pupils can assess their own listening skill autonomously through examining the extent to which they could: identify main points, take notes, organize the ideas. In other words, they can consider whether they have successfully fulfilled the objective of the task or not. Self-assessment can also be done through working collaboratively with peers during and after the listening procedure.

5.2.2. The speaking skill

By and large, there is a lack of focus on the speaking skill in the English curriculum. It is as much neglected as the listening skill by most EFL learners in secondary education. As has been said mainly, for the fact that it is not officially examined and thus pupils are not really concerned about being evaluated on their poor spoken English. However, it is by no means justifiable to undervalue this basic productive skill. For, it is a major means to successful communicative competence, through which pupils can communicate ideas and information effectively. Thus, curricula designers and educators should seriously review their EFL listening pedagogies. Taking into account pupils' general level in the speaking skill, the following realistic goals would be viable: 1. The capacity to form and utter simple and well structured sentences 2. The ability to employ and pronounce words/phrases correctly 3. The ability to express ideas and opinions clearly. Indeed, in order to attain these objectives, more speaking opportunities should be offered in the classroom by integrating activities like: educational songs, storytelling, oral games, role plays, picture describing…etc. An efficient implementation of such activities would pave the way to more self-directed speaking practice.

5.2.2. An autonomous teaching model

The next model highlights for EFL instructors the necessary practices which tend to build independent speaking abilities.

5.2.1. The lesson objective

Pupils must be fully aware of their speaking task purpose, so that they can deliberately work to achieve it and to assess their own accomplishment by the end of the lesson.

Example: my objective is to talk about past habits using "used to".

5.2.2. Material selection

At the aim of fostering learner autonomy and catering for pupils' multiple needs and learning styles, the selection of speaking materials should be based on: *diversity, relevance, appropriateness* and *pupils' interest.* The teaching materials for the speaking skill generally fall under two major headings: first, the physical resources such as: the course book, the board, PowerPoint presentations, visual aids…etc. Second, the abstract material which cover different topics and various types of activities (such as role plays, interviews, expressing opinions…etc) engaging purposeful communicative situations. From time to time, instructors

should allow learners to decide upon the material they want to work with to give them an opportunity to practice English learning more freely and enjoyably.

5.2.3. Teacher's role

It is common that EFL learners in secondary education level have major difficulties in practicing the speaking skill. As a result, it is, to a large extent, intricate for teachers to help them become autonomous speakers. Therefore, instructors' major role is to create a supportive learning context to aid them overcome these obstacles. There are several ways and techniques to do so. Initially, tolerate the mistakes, assure them that errors are a natural part of learning and that they are not supposed to produce flawless sentences. This will help them to speak without the fear of humiliation, as it increases their self-confidence and motivates them to engage in more conversational tasks. Teach them conversational strategies that would enable them take control of their speaking: like rephrasing, rehearsal, asking for and giving clarification during interaction (using specific phrases). As pupils become aware of the various strategies and able to employ them, they will be more likely to expose themselves to out of class speaking opportunities and consequently develop the capability to manage diverse communicative situations independently.

5.2.4. Basic teaching procedure

The following table illustrates the recommended teaching procedure for the speaking skill. It involves three main aspects and explains the purpose behind each one: anticipation (step 1/2/3), interaction (step 4/6) and evaluation (step 5/ 6/7).

Teacher guidelines	Purpose	Timing
1. First and foremost, state the task objective. 2. Then, introduce the topic using pictures/short video and ask them to describe what they see.	-To let them know why they are doing the task. -To help them generate thoughts rapidly and share them openly.	5 mn
3. After eliciting multiple ideas, let them select what they like to tackle. 4. Allow them to work in pairs or small groups.	-To support their personal involvement, independent selection and collaboration.	10 mn
3. Give them sufficient time to organize their thoughts discuss, and prepare their talk. 4. Encourage them to use communication strategies	-To train them on the use of different speaking strategies.	
5. Ask them to reflect on their answers before presenting them to the class.	-To train them on the practice of	5mn

	reflection and self-evaluation.	
6. While speaking, do not correct every pronunciation or grammar mistake they make. 7. Limit your speaking time to maximize theirs.	-To increase their self-confidence and speaking chances.	10mn

Table 5.3: Autonomous teaching guidelines: the speaking skill

5.2.5. Pupils' role

Obviously, pupils are expected to be the fulfillers of the speaking task, and thus they should be communicative and talkative as well. Throughout the speaking activity process, they should be given , at times, the opportunity to select and decide upon the topics, materials and ways of completing the task according to their preferences. Additionally, even with a low proficiency level, they need to contribute actively in the speaking lesson, through raising questions, sharing views or making comments…etc. They are supposed to employ appropriate communication strategies to produce words and sentences that fit to the subject matter. In short, they have to act upon their competence and use English in the best possible way.

5.2.6. Assessment

Teachers can evaluate learners' performance according to their level of accuracy and fluency in communicating ideas. That is, evaluation of speaking depends mainly on the extent to which learners succeeded to transmit specific messages. Instructors can ask pupils to tell about the strategies they used while fulfilling the task. This will raise their meta-cognitive awareness and help them consciously reflect and asses their own performance in and out of class speaking assignments.

It is noteworthy that developing an efficient pedagogy is a lengthy process and that the effectiveness of the suggested plans depends, to a great extent on teacher's determination to help pupils in becoming more independent as well as on learners' responsiveness. Despite the fact that its implementation does not ensure the promotion of autonomy, yet it tends to put more focus on the learner rather than the teacher. Thus, the previous models can be a flexible source for teachers to generate more and probably better ideas that cope with their pupils' cognitive, affective and social needs.

5.2.3. The reading skill

Reading is another important skill that represents a real challenge for many English language learners. It engages an intricate formula that leads to the utmost objective of reading comprehension. Drawing from my own experience as a teacher, I noticed that pupils often read in a superficial way; keeping their eyes on the text, paying little attention; not really understanding how to properly approach the task. Hence, basic reading competences need to be developed in their reading approach, because "in order for students to become *independent learners*, they must go beyond basic reading skills and approach reading constructively, purposefully, and with a repertoire of self-regulatory strategies that enable them to make sensible choices as they read" (Smith Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe, 2007, p.170). Successful reading, thus, is a complex process that involves a set of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies. Helping pupils to self-regulate their own reading and to increase their reading comprehension entails an explicit and efficient training on the various reading strategies. This may take several weeks, as it has to go through some preparatory stages, where pupils start to understand the purpose of reading then the different reading methods.

5.2.3. An autonomous teaching model

The following scheme aims to present a teaching model that can help pupils develop awareness of their reading processes in order to enhance this skill.

5.2.3.1. The lesson objective

The purpose of the reading session should be clearly stated to learners before the beginning of the task.

Example: my objective is to locate the various reasons of global warming from the text. (i.e. to find specific information).

5.2.3.2. Material selection

Rather than sticking to the rigid use of the text only, pupils can make use of other relevant material to empower their reading comprehension and to increase their enjoyment with this task. These materials may include: internet, translation applications or dictionaries in mobile phones. Smith Harvey and Chickie-Wolfe (2007) suggest that in case of difficult reading input, pupils may employ alternative material (written, audio, or video materials) that tackle the same topic but in a simpler manner.

5.2.3.3. Teacher's role

Teachers should set the ground for a deliberate reading process through an explanation of fundamental reading aspects. For instance, they have to indicate to learners that their reading objective may vary from one text to another. That it can possibly be about: seeking information, identifying arguments, finding specific meanings, predicting events in a story…etc. Pupils must be trained on the use of the basic reading strategies such as: previewing before reading the text, skimming, scanning, identifying main ideas, extracting difficult vocabularies, guessing their meanings from context, taking notes, outlining, summarizing…etc. What is more, mentors need to familiarize pupils with self-evaluation techniques and ways of checking up their own understanding.

5.2.3.4. Basic teaching procedure

The table below demonstrates the suggested teaching procedure for the reading skill. It comprises three main phases: anticipation (step 1/2/3), conception of the reading input (step 4/5) and assessment of the comprehension (step 6).

Teacher guidelines	Purpose	Timing
1. Introduce the purpose of their reading.	1. To develop their metacognitive awareness.	about 5mn
2. Ask pupils to preview the text.	2. To use the strategy of previewing and to draw their attention to the text content.	
3. Before they read, discuss a time limit with them, then set it for their reading.	To train them on the use of proper reading pace.	30 minutes
4. While reading, check if they are using any of the perceptible reading strategies.	To help them employ reading strategies.	
5. After reading, ask them to select 3 out of 4 or 4 out of 5 comprehension questions then answer them.	To practice independent selection.	
6. Ask them to discuss with peers their answers to check their own understanding.	To train them on self-evaluation skill.	about 5mn

Table 5.4: Autonomous teaching guidelines: the reading skill

5.2.3.5. Pupils' role

The major act pupils need to play is to read the text attentively, to use suitable reading strategies and to manifest a capacity for comprehension and a relative awareness of their own reading method.

5.2.3.6. Assessment

To foster learner autonomy, it is quite vital for instructors to teach explicitly how pupils can check or assess their reading comprehension, for instance through: self-questioning, restating key ideas, summarizing…etc. Reflection about reading strategies also helps to readjust their use in future reading. Furthermore, in the appraisal stage, pupils should be able to identify their own reading difficulties and to review whether they succeeded or not in attaining the primary reading goal. In this way, learners become more likely to develop independent reading skills.

5.2.4. The writing skill

Writing in English is probably the most challenging and tedious task for the majority of Algerian pupils and the mission of making them independent in this particular skill appears to be even harder. For, learners often face barriers in producing correct sentences or short paragraphs, which ends them being unconfident with writing and deceived for getting bad marks. If truth be told, the blame is not to be put entirely on the learners. Taking their lack of interest, practice and effort as the major factors for their poor outcomes is not quite fair, because, teachers on their part have a large responsibility. English teachers generally require pupils to generate correct sentences using organized ideas and proper lexis. Yet, they usually do not teach them how to deliberately organize this complex writing process (in terms of content, coherence, adequate vocabulary and sentence structure). This might be justified, in the main, by the length of programs and time restriction which is the undeniable bitter reality.

Hence, I suppose that helping pupils to become autonomous and better writers in English, entails a kind of lengthy training that starts primarily with raising their consciousness about the various linguistic and systematic means involved in the process. The fact of becoming conscious about the writing mechanism can offer them multiple advantages such as:

1. The ability to identify what they should be writing and how they do it.
2. It makes them more engaged in their writing process.

3. It develops their critical thinking towards their own writing.

4. Encourages them to use strategies and to self-regulate their own writing.

5. Elliminates the complexity of the process and lessens pupils' fear from writing assignments.

5.2.4. An autonomous teaching model

The subsequent plan considers how teachers can cover up the writing lesson in class, obviously with a special focus on autonomous skills.

5.2.4.1. Demonstrating the writing process

At the beginning of the school year, it is necessary that mentors make a plan to prepare learners for the deliberate writing procedure by providing a detailed explanation of the basic following steps:

a. The pre-writing stage:

-Brainstorming, then independently selecting and organizing thoughts.

b. The while-writing stage:

-Learning how to write the various types of sentences (topic, supporting, and concluding sentences).

-Expressing and synthesizing ideas.

-Utilizing connectors and punctuation marks.

c. The post-writing stage:

-Proofreading and checking the clarity and correctness of one's own paragraph.

-Using the self-assessment grid for writing.

NOTE: Whenever teachers feel the need to restate these steps again in later writing sessions, they ought to do it.

5.2.4.2. The lesson objective:

As previously suggested, the lesson objective has to be made explicit to pupils in order to help them put specific focus on their learning end (as shown in the example below).

Example: my objective is to write a formal /informal letter.

5.2.4.3. Material selection

To enable pupils exercise the freedom of choice and to meet their different learning needs, allow them to produce their paragraphs (e.g. letters) using diverse resources, such as: textbook, their own experiences, dictionaries, film, song…etc. Though it might seem new or odd for pupils to independently select their own learning material, it is often enjoyable and helpful in developing their writing as well as autonomous skills. Hence, instructors should try to continuously encourage this practice. In addition, before writing, invite them to select their favorite topic (to choose a sub-topic out of two or multiple closely related sub-topics). Because, this helps to engage them affectively and cognitively in the writing process, as it gives them a sense of ownership for their own writing. Eventually, they become more likely to develop independent writing skills.

5.2.4.4. Teacher's role

It has been pointed out in various studies (Zipprich, 1995; Peresich, Meadows, and Sinatra, 1990 as cited in Negari, 2011) that concept mapping is quite effective in improving pupils' writing performance (an example is shown below in figure 5.2). Therefore, instructors are advised to use this efficacious strategy at an initial writing stage. During this process, they can discuss briefly with the pupils about their various suggested points to expand their thoughts and to deepen their understanding of the topic.

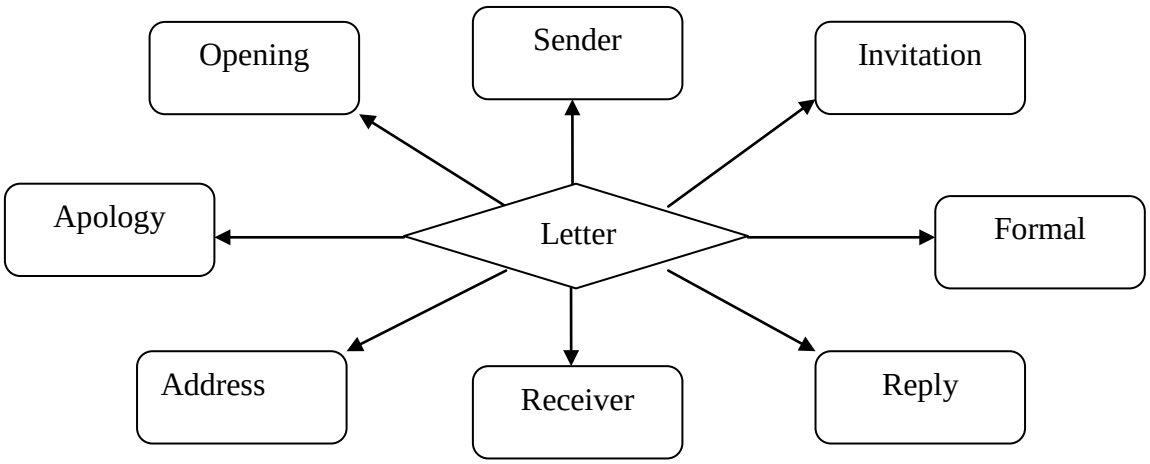

Figure 5.2: A concept mapping example

In the midst of pupils' writing activity, instructors need to provide equal guidance opportunities for learners while letting them feel unashamed with making mistakes. It should be noted also that teachers must allocate collaboratively with pupils a sufficient limited time to fulfill the task. Ask them to work in pairs or small groups, as cooperation and team work

are required for autonomy enhancement (van Lier, 1996; Schwienhorst, 2008). If you notice, slight progresses, in some way, praise their efforts so as to motivate them.

5.2.4.5. Basic teaching procedure

The following table displays the suggested teaching procedure for the writing skill with its associated objectives and timely ordered steps.

Teacher guidelines	Purpose	Timing
1. Make pupils brainstorm through concept making	To practice the strategy of concept mapping and to raise pupils' interest and motivation	about 5mn
2. Ask them to select their favorite ideas then to organize them.	To support their personal involvement and independent selection.	30 minutes
3. Encourage them to utilize different learning material when writing (e.g. hard or electronic dictionaries to find appropriate lexis).	To make them employ different learning strategies.	
4. Allow them to ask for help when they meet difficulties.	To help them take charge of their own learning.	
5. Ask them to revise their final product using the self-assessment kit.	To train them on the practice of self-evaluation skill.	about 5mn

Table 5.5: Autonomous teaching guidelines: the writing skill

5.2.4.6. Pupils' role

Pupils are expected to put into practice what has been said, to follow the steps of brainstorming, selecting, using different strategies, seeking assistance from peers, teacher, or other resources. The purpose behind that is to aid pupils develop the capacity to consciously identify the writing steps, their utilized strategies and to enable them assess their own piece of writing autonomously.

5.2.4.7. Assessment

Assessment naturally takes place after pupils finish their writing. Thus, at this stage, you can ask student to self-evaluate their work in few minutes using the self-assessment grid. In addition, you may advise them to exchange with their peers feedback about their written

composition before presenting it. Expectedly, many pupils would be ineffective and uncertain about their evaluation at initial times. However, through repeated practice, they become more likely to utilize their reflective and analytical reasoning. Once they reach this level, it becomes possible to direct them towards locating the strengths and weaknesses of their own writing.

5.3. Tools and materials to enhance learner autonomy

So far, we have highlighted multiple practical modes of teaching as a preparatory stage to autonomy enhancement in the language class. However, transferring the responsibilities from the teacher to the learner depends as well on the training and employing of particular tools and materials in the class for both pupils and instructor.

5.3. 1. Projects

As introduced in the curriculum, the project works are central to boost pupils' language learning as well as their autonomous skills, "the process of project materialising will certainly boost up their egos and make them take more initiative and responsibility for their learning" (Teacher's guide At the Crossroads, p19) . Projects target specific situations, they may draw on from multiple resources (such as: books, internet, peers, parents …etc) and can take different forms (booklets, posters, recorded videos, plays…etc). Thus, pupils are offered the possibility to exercise the freedom of choice, and decision making to a quite reasonable extent, which tends to increase their chances to become more autonomous. Pupils are supposed to work within their zone of proximal development (ZPD as posited by Vygotsky,1978) in order to produce a work that results from both individual and collaborative effort. However, in practice and based on my experience as an English teacher for more than five years, very few pupils seem to do so, because "it happens that the learners just copy and paste stuff from the Net and present it as a Project to get a 'good' mark" (Bouhadiba, 2015, p.9).

In addition, data reported in a study within the Algerian context (Bassou, 2008) indicated that actual performance of collaborative projects does not enhance learner autonomy. Basically, for the reason that teachers lack the systematic formula on how to use these projects as a tool to foster their pupil's autonomy. In view of that, the success or failure of projects' implementation depends largely on teachers' practice. Because, the latter plays a critical role in guiding learners towards responsibility and independent decision making, in

multiple ways. That is to say, how teachers launch instructions, the way they follow learners' steps, and how they evaluate the project outcomes matters significantly.

Therefore, to move towards autonomous language learning through project assignments, language teachers should initially consider the significance of their roles in the process. They have to deliberately target pupils' potential for independent practice, and have to take learners' hands smoothly to the realm of self-reliance, and self-fulfillment in language learning. I suggest that this can be done through the adoption of four main components namely: collaboration, independent choice, reflection and self-evaluation. If each of these parameters is efficiently maintained throughout the project implementation, its success will be almost guaranteed. Hence, as its name suggests, the project should definitely project such essential learning features.

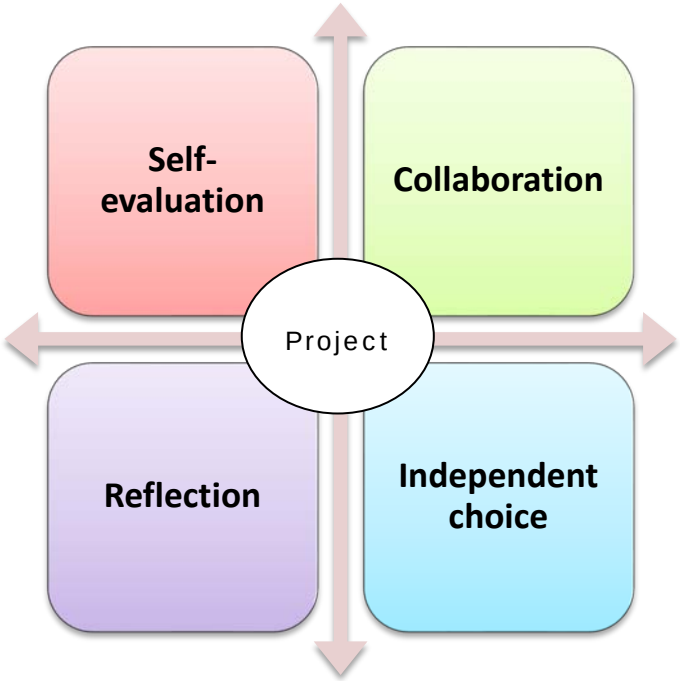

Figure 5.3: Four key constituents of project works

Furthermore, I suppose that mentors in the project realization process, ought to adhere to the following essential steps:

a. Prior to the project

- Explain the main objective of the project.
- Negotiate about the sub-topics, thoughts, length and time of the project.
- Let the pupils decide on the members of their groups.

- Agree with the learners on the project stages and forms.
- Show previous project works to help learners conceive their required outcome.

b. Throughout the project realization

- Constantly check the project's progression and provide assistance whenever necessary.
- Make sure that all members of the group are working collaboratively, by asking them simple questions.
- Encourage the less confident learners and guide them to use specific strategies.
- Make them reflect and self-evaluate their own work using a set of simple criteria (set by the teacher) and ask them to submit it with their final work, (an example is given below in Table 5).

Reflective questions	Yes	No
• Did all of us contribute in the work?		
• Did we follow the steps?		
• Is our written work correct and clear?		
• Did we achieve the project major aim?		
• Are we happy with our final work?		

Table 5.6: The project self-assessment grid

c. Subsequent to the project presentation

- Thank the learners for their efforts as it would motivate them.
- Shed light on the strengths and weaknesses of each project to help pupils develop a more critical eye.
- Correct the most common mistakes.
- Ask the pupils few simple questions to make them explain their work using the target language.

- Praise the good project works and congratulate their achievers to increase their self-esteem.
- Support learners producing low-quality projects with pieces of advice.

5.3. 2. Learning diaries

Journals or diaries are valuable contributors to the process of developing autonomous learning. They are multiple-form tools that learners employ to record data in or after each learning session. The recorded data can be a description or a reflection upon learners' own performance in terms of strengths and difficulties. The interesting point about learning diaries is that they are efficient means for self-expression that boost learner reflection, self-evaluation, critical thinking and metacognitive skills. The act of taking notes on one's understanding of the lesson helps to review, plan and monitor language learning (Thanasoulas, 2000). Thus, gaining these fundamental skills, would naturally lead to more independent learning.

Unfortunately, such tools are barely known or used in Algerian learning rituals within basic, secondary and even higher education. This realism manifested clearly through the failure of its implementation in this research project. Several participants in this study could not use their diaries effectively, as it was the first time they knew about it and eventually most of them stopped completing it. Therefore, keeping a learner diary needs to become more frequent in the Algerian 'learning culture'. Pupils need to get purposeful training on their use from the early educational stages. In my opinion, it should be compulsory at primary school where it should cover all subject matters (literary and scientific disciplines) each in their own proper ways. Once it becomes well practiced and deeply understood, instructors at high school can give freedom and choice to their pupils to write them voluntarily.

However, one must recognize the potential challenges that teachers may face in the implementation process, especially with the current educational conditions in Algeria such as large classes and overloaded schedules. As, it is quite difficult for instructors to constantly keep an eye on every learner's diary and evaluate it, mainly because this is time-consuming. Therefore, it has not to be set for the purpose of rigorous evaluation but rather to create a channel for transmitting learners' thoughts and opinions to the teacher. This would enable mentors to gain an insight on learners' practice, to uncover their thoughts and to access their perception of the lesson. As a result they will be able to focus on the major problems encountered and can make adequate instructional decisions.

5.3. 3. ICTs

Plenty of researchers have recognized the valuable role of information and communication technologies in enhancing autonomous language learning (Hennessy, 2005; Braul,2006; Ariza & Sanchez, 2013 and many others). Because, ICTs are one of the most accessible, dynamic and flexible tools that allow learners to take control of their own learning and to detach themselves from teacher's instructions. Using ICTs in and outside the classroom offers limitless opportunities to exercise self-directed learning. It enables learners to apply independent choice and decision making, which creates a greater sense of ownership to learning and demands higher levels of responsibility. In addition, through technological means, learning becomes more individualized because pupils can accommodate their learning material (audio recordings, video, images, flash disk, internet, computers, smart phones, tablets…etc) anytime and anywhere according to their own preferred and unique learning styles. Hence, teachers have definitely to encourage the use of technological devices both inside and outside the classroom.

Since technology use has become part of everybody's daily practice, integrating it in class, can be much easier and more practical than many other learning materials (like journals or diaries). No rigorous training on its practice is really required, especially with the current young generation who is growing up in an increasingly digital world. Besides, it is a pleasurable learning means that increases pupils' motivation and creates an exciting learning atmosphere. That is why, I suppose that supporting the use of ICTs in the EFL class must be one of the most imperative priorities that educational decision makers should consider for the betterment of language learning and the promotion of autonomous learning.

Practically, authorities can make it happen by providing a reasonable number of computers in special rooms at schools where pupils can have regular access to them at least once (one hour) every two weeks for their English learning class. Moreover, it should be noted that certain technologies (mobile devices like: smart phones and tablets) are officially banned in the Algerian learning classroom. Thus, in my opinion, language policy makers should review the possibilities of using them (with certain constraints) inside the class. Because, they can greatly empower language learning and pupils can take advantage from them in many ways for example: to look up a word in digital dictionaries, to make recording of their own pronunciation or to check out English learning applications. These suggested practices can gradually help to foster learner autonomy in the Algerian EFL context.

Conclusion

This final chapter goes basically in a similar direction with several research works on autonomy all over the globe. Such as: Littlewood (1999) in Hong Kong, Chang (2007) in China, Aoki (2008) in Japan, Balcikanli (2010) in Turkey, Dang, (2010), Le (2013) in Vietnam and many others that aimed to adapt the implementation of learner autonomy according to their own specific contexts. Likewise, I attempted in the Algerian context, to found a gradual and adequate framework for integrating autonomous learning in EFL secondary education.

At a broad level, radical measures were proposed based on the belief that fostering autonomy results from a collaborative work that encompasses a series of partners: learners, teachers, parents, administrative staff, decision makers as well as society members. Each agent ought to contribute effectively in their own specific ways to create the desired change. At a deeper level, I suggested detailed English teaching models in the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing). The latter concentrated primarily on pupils' engagement in their own EFL learning process giving them wide opportunities to make selection and uncomplicated decisions over their EFL learning. This would hopefully allow English teachers to develop more consciousness about the significance of enhancing autonomy and would give them hints for implementing it.

To sum up, this chapter is not supposed to be a comprehensive ideal framework for the design and implementation of autonomous learning in the Algerian EFL classroom. Yet, it is a humble attempt to outline and emphasize the basic principles for planting the seeds of autonomy in the Algerian educational setting. Its utmost aim was to bring a smooth shift from a common overreliance on the mentor to a moderate level of responsibility and independence in English learning.

General Conclusion

The present research was fundamentally set out to investigate possible approaches to foster autonomy in the Algerian EFL class at secondary education. It took me to an interesting journey in which I sought to explore the notion of autonomy via the implementation of distinct teaching strategies and multiple research instruments. The latter constituted of a pre-study and a post-study questionnaire comprising of a set of close-ended questions. Plus, an interview that focused upon four main aspects of autonomy so that sufficient and precise data could be elicited. Finally, it involved a class observation which allowed me to record my own practice as well as pupils' learning behavior along the research course. This study worked towards attaining two chief objectives: firstly, developing a sense of autonomy within EFL secondary school pupils and secondly offering a practical effective EFL teaching model that can boost up pupils' levels of autonomy.

The findings of the current study suggest that the intervention plan of the research project cannot be claimed to be an efficient model for autonomy development in the local context. After analyzing the participants' responses on their English learning experience at different stages, it was found that the overwhelming majority of pupils held initial positive perceptions and attitudes towards autonomous learning. Yet, this abstract mental standpoint did not show evidence then in their actual behavior. For, most of them demonstrated a non-cooperative attitude in many autonomy-based tasks. Few of the participants only exhibited an ongoing acquisition of independent learning skills and a moderate progress in autonomy levels. Hence, my research suggests that fostering autonomous learning in the Algerian EFL context has multiple dimensions which entail taking radical measures. These measures are not bound solely to the classroom practice, but rather include the amendments of pedagogic programs and the efficient contribution of parents, administrative staff, decision makers as well as social agents. In view of that, it cannot be presumed that the planned and desired change that was set at the commencement of the research has been successfully made. Admittedly, I may not have succeeded, to a certain extent, in reaching effective outcomes regarding the attainment of higher levels of autonomy. However, I was able, on the whole, to detect and perceive in the learners' eyes a slight understanding of what autonomy is and a mere increase in their independent learning habits.

It should be noted that despite my constant guidance and intensified attempts to better support learners' autonomy, the process was complex as many problems seemed to arise in the class setting. Chief amongst them is: time restriction, pupils' lack of intrinsic motivation, a resistance to adapt the new learning mode and a low sense of responsibility towards English learning. Perhaps I was too idealistic when I set out to increase my pupils' autonomy within a short-term process with no deep-grounded anticipatory stages. I now have discovered that planting the seeds of self-directed learning entails much investment of time, a restructuring of EFL teaching curricula and an introduction of new courses designed on the basis of autonomy development.

Based upon the discussion of the theoretical part, this study might have potentially contributed in providing new insights to the literature of learner autonomy. Besides, it displayed an account of a concrete exercise of learner autonomy in the language class through teacher intervention and learners' reactions. Consequently, it has possibly supplied a critical understanding of the difficulties faced within the Algerian EFL classroom. This may allow other teacher researchers to expand their knowledge on investigating areas of autonomous learning in this context. Moreover, the current research suggested important teaching ways for implementing autonomy in English learning. Thus, it has partially answered my first research question on ways of fostering autonomy in the class. Additionally, based on the research findings and my own reflection, a new perspective to look at the notion of autonomy is proposed for the Algerian setting. This outlook may serve, in my viewpoint, as a good basis for cultivating autonomy in this particular area. Because, the suggested pedagogy provides a slight and a smooth transition from the actual dependent-mode to a more autonomy-based state of ELT in Algeria. Therefore, I believe that I have answered my second research question and could reach, to a certain extent, the second research purpose.

What seems of interest about this study, I suppose, lies in the fact that it adds an insight on systematic ways to foster learner autonomy in the Algerian EFL class. It demonstrates how pupils can possibly shift from traditional ways of an EFL learning characterized mainly by passivity and overdependence on the instructor to a more independent learning mode which puts them at the heart of the learning process. In addition to that, this action research utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods of inquiry. Employing the two data collection methods has generated a large amount of information allowing for a statistical and qualitative analysis of the findings. These results tended to explain the

individual experiences of participants, prior to, while and after exercising autonomy. Therefore, feedback from the respondents helped to gain in-depth insight on their true reflections and reactions towards autonomous tasks. What is more, the use of different teaching strategies such as diaries and self-assessment rubrics had the potential of helping pupils to reflect upon their own English learning in ways they have not done before and it could thus be useful as a formative aid in increasing their autonomy.

As with every research work, this study has a number of limitations. One of them relates to the small sample of participants that was taken only from a single Algerian high school. Probably, the action research would have been more beneficial and reliable, if applied to a larger scale. Plus, the research time scale might not be sufficient to bring about a remarkable change or to reach the goals as desired. Thus, the results might not be assertively generalizable about all the other EFL learners across Algeria. Even so, it might serve as an example for other researchers interested in the area of learner autonomy in the local setting, as it might help to shape future educational mindsets and policies. Additionally, despite highlighting (in chapter1) and being aware of the significance of the cultural component in developing learner autonomy, the present study did not refer to the participants' cultural background while analyzing the data, which I consider another drawback in my work.

Due to the realities and obstacles faced throughout the implementation process of the autonomy-based teaching plan, I came to draw some crucial conclusions. First, educational curricula of all levels ought to adopt an approach that is oriented towards building autonomous confident self-reliant learners within a long-term process. To reach this, I think curricula designers must primarily introduce an adequate strategy training program for both learners and teachers. Second, in this twenty-first century learning era, they need to provide the necessary autonomy-based learning resources and materials. They have to supply the pedagogic and financial support for the efficient use of communication technologies (ICTs) inside educational institutions. Moreover, I believe that English language educators should make learners foresee their learning purposes, and should help them relatively negotiate their learning content and method. They need also to trust their pupils' capacities and should constantly put them in situations that make them assume greater responsibility for their own learning. This way will ensure a sense of ownership to language learning, will make it more dynamic, more meaningful and consequently will possibly result into higher levels of autonomy.

To conclude for this research, I would like to suggest open questions that may lead into further studies. Thus, it would be interesting if scholars concerned with the issue of promoting learner autonomy in the Algerian context seek answers to important questions like: Which specific self-study skills have to be acquired in primary schools to set the ground for autonomous learning in Algeria? How can English textbooks install self-directed learning in middle, secondary and higher education in Algeria? What effective pedagogical ways can ensure pupils' out of school language learning? What contribution can the local social environment provide to promote learner autonomy?

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Appendices

Appendix A: The Pre-study Questionnaire

Dear pupil,

This questionnaire is designed to explore your current approach to English learning. It aims to investigate the extent to which you are autonomous in your English learning. The information provided will be used for educational research purposes. Therefore, you are kindly required to answer the following questions honestly, by selecting the choice which describes best your opinion, tick (√) in the appropriate box.

Note: There are no correct or incorrect responses; I am merely interested in your personal opinion.

Part A: Beliefs and Attitudes

1. In your opinion, learning English is:

Important ☐ Not important ☐

2. Do you think that learning English is difficult?

Yes ☐ No ☐

3. According to you, what is the most difficult skill in English learning?

Reading ☐ Writing ☐ Listening ☐ Speaking ☐

4. Do you think that you can learn English from resources other than the teacher?

Yes ☐ No ☐

5. Do you believe that your English will be better if you rely on yourself more than on the teacher? ☐ ☐

Yes No

6. Which way do you think helps you to understand the lesson better?

Learn about the lesson before the class ☐ learn it in class ☐

7. Are you ready to take more responsibility in your English study in order to be more successful?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Part B: Learning styles and preferences

8. What do you prefer your teacher to use in the English lesson?

Pictures and graphs ☐ Practical exercises ☐ Texts for reading ☐ Discussion ☐

9. What sort of materials do you usually prefer to learn English with?

Videos ☐ Lectures ☐ audios/music ☐ Projects ☐

10. Do you often feel comfortable with an individual work?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Part C: Learning strategies

11. Do you often review the newly learned words and grammatical structures?

Yes ☐ No ☐

12. Do you try to understand the meaning of what you read using the dictionary?

Yes ☐ No ☐

13. When you encounter a new English word, do you?

Guess the meaning ☐ Use the dictionary ☐ Ask the teacher ☐ Do not care about it ☐

14. Do you know your strengths and weaknesses in your English study?

Yes ☐ No ☐

15. What do you do when you feel bad about English learning?

You encourage yourself ☐ You let it go ☐ You ask for help ☐

16. When you do not understand something about the lesson do you ask your teacher/classmate or others to explain it?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Part D: Self-reliance

17. Do you try, at times, to learn new English words and expressions from different resources?

Yes ☐ No ☐

18. Do you often try to read and understand simple English texts independently?

Yes ☐ No ☐

19. What is your role in the English class?

Only listen to the teacher ☐ Listen and answer questions ☐ Listen, ask and discuss ☐

20. Who is responsible for your English study success or failure?

The teacher ☐ You ☐ Both ☐

Thank you very much for your answers

Appendix B: The Post-study Questionnaire

Dear pupil,

This questionnaire is designed to assess your English leaning method. It aims to perceive the extent to which you have developed a capacity to learn English independently. Thus, you are kindly required to answer the following questions honestly, by selecting the answer which describes best your opinion, tick (√) in the box that is most suitable for you.

Note: Rememer there is no right or wrong answers.

Statements	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
A: Learning Strategies					
1. I use images, sounds to help me remember new words**.**					
2. I usually look up for the meaning of an English word in the dictionary**.**					
3. I can comprehend an English text without understanding every word**.**					
4. I know what is easy/difficult for me in the English class.					
5. I feel good and congratulate myself when I do well in the English class**.**					
6. I join a group every time I need, to do my class activities**.**					
B: Metacognition					
7. My writing skill improved after using "self-evaluation sheet" .					
8. Doing homework helped me to understand the lesson better.					
9. My speaking skill has developed because of active my participation in class.					
10. My learning diary helped me to understand my English learning process.					
11. I can evaluate my written paragraph on my own.					
12. I understand the lesson better when I know my learning goal from the start.					
13. I know the learning method that suits me best and I use it**.**					

C: Self-reliance and Responsibility

14. I am ready to learn new words even when the teacher does not ask me to do so.					
15. It is my responsibility to improve my English learning.					
16. The teacher must give me all the information in class**.**					

D: Capacity for Independent Action

17. I am able choose the content and the members of my group project.					
18. I can take time to study English outside the class.					
19. I can select tasks and do them on my own					
20. I know how to seek help when it is necessary.					

Thank you very much for your contribution!

Appendix C: Sample Transcript of the Interview Data

The following is a transcription of an extract randomly selected from the interviews conducted with the pupils in the current study. The following are the notational conventions used along the transcriptions (adapted from Bouhass, 2007):

- (…) inaudible or imcomprehensible instace(s) in the recordings
- ( ) additional information supplied by the author, most of the time related to what has been observed.
- └┐ Overlap, i.e two or more interlocutors speaking at the same time
- + hesitation timed up to 3 seconds
- + + pause timed between 4 and 8 seconds
- + + + long pause timed over 8 seconds
- __ lengthened sound

The interview

Teacher: *How often did you manage to achieve your learning goal?*

P1: *I am not understand +Miss*

Teacher*: I mean, were you able to achieve your learning goal in every session? Or sometimes, always, rarely?*

P1: *Ah+++ sometimes yes, sometimes no.*

Teacher: *when it was not achieved, did you know why?*

P1: *Yes,++because++ sometimes I__* Miss ما نتبعش معاك

Teacher: okay + yes.

Then, what is the best way to improve your English learning?

P1: __euh__

Teacher: I mean __ في نظرك ما هي أفضل طريقة لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟

P1: Euh__ ss+ speak it+ speak English

Teacher: ++ okay, *how do you feel when I give you a home work?*

P1: كيفاش؟ ++

Teacher: *When I give you a home work, do you feel good? bad? or you do not care about it?*

P1: *Ah__* (smile)++ I not like home work Miss.

Teacher: *Who contributes mostly to your English study success or failure?*

P1: *Em__*+ repeat please.

Teacher: *I mean The teacher? You? Who? من الذي يساهم بشكل كبير في نجاحك أو فشلك في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟*

P1: *++ the teacher.*

Teacher: *Okay++now, How can you learn English by yourself? I mean without the help of the teacher?*

P1: *Yes, ++ صعيب +++ نحتاج الاستاذ باش يفهمني*

Teacher: *What activities do you do outside the class to learn English?*

P1: *I not understand*

Teacher: *ماهي التمارين التي تقومين بها خارج القسم من اجل تعلم الانجليزية؟*

P1: *خارج القسم؟*

Teacher: *Yes*

P1: *Em__ Miss ماندیرش تمارین*

Teacher: *okay, then question seven: did your English study method change?*

هل طريقة تعلمك للغة الانجليزية تغيرت أم لا؟

P1: *+ Yes, yes__* Miss من قبل ماكناش نعرفو الهدف من الحصة و ضروك رانا نعرفوه

Teacher: *ok, so thank you very much for your answers.*

Appendix D: My English Learning diary

Name: …… **Class: ……..**

Date: ……..	**What I learnt today**	**What I didn't learn**	**Observation** / **Suggestion**
My goal is: …….…..……. …...…… …….. …….. **Achieved** ☐ **Not achieved** ☐			

Appendix E: Self-evaluation Writing Sheet

Date: ……. Topic title: …….. Class: ……... Name: ……..

How I structured my paragraph	Yes	No	Teacher's comment
1. I have used an introducing sentence.			
2. I have used a concluding sentence.			
3. I used enough information about the topic.			
4. I used simple correct sentences (that contain subject +verb+ object).			
5. I organized well my ideas in the paragraph.			
6. I added my own words to the ones given in the book.			
7. I used punctuation marks appropriately.			
8. My paper is neat and clear.			
9. I think that my paragraph is good.			
10. I did this task with the help of others.			

Appendix F: The Participant Consent Form

Towards Developing Learner Autonomy in the Algerian EFL Classroom

Ms FEDJ Samia
Doctoral researcher in Applied Linguistics and Didactics of English
University of Mostaganem, Algeria

Dear pupil,

I will conduct a research project on 'developing learner autonomy' which will involve your direct participation and interaction in the classroom. To do this, I need to observe and analyze your English learning process, I will also ask you to fill questionnaires and make interviews about your understanding of your language learning process. This research aims to develop a level of autonomy in your English study and will hopefully help you gain more understanding about your English learning process. Therefore, your responses and opinions are highly valued as they will help me to figure out any progress throughout the courses. This is why I would really appreciate your participation. All of your personal information will not be revealed; your answers will be used for research purposes only and will not influence your grades at all. If you have any questions please feel free to ask me.

After reading this consent form, please sign your name if you agree to participate in this research. Thank you very much!

Name: ..... Date: ……..

Signature: …… Researcher's Signature: ……

Appendix G: Autonomy-based teaching model- A sample

Level: 2nd year (Class B) **Date: 09/03/2017**

The lesson core: writing a biography of a famous scientist.

	TEACHING PROCEDURE	Aim
Pre-writing Phase	Initially, the aim of the lesson was written on the board. ***Aim:*** to write a short biography of a well-known scientist.	To develop pupils' metacognitive awareness.
	Before giving the instruction, I discussed with pupils information about biography. Then, we allocated a time-limit (twenty minutes) to fulfill the task.	To make pupils interactors and negotiators of the learning content.
	The learners were encouraged to work in groups (Collaborative work).	To create an optimal learning environment.
	They were allowed to change their seating arrangement	To manage their anxiety and to enjoy a degree of freedom and motivation.
While-writing Phase	I proposed that each group selects one scientist out of three: **a**. Michael Faraday **b.** Albert Einstein **c**.Thomas Edison	To practice independent choice and decision making.
	They collaboratively organized and synthesized the given ideas/notes.	To ensure their active involvement in the writing process
	While writing their paragraphs they were encouraged to utilize dictionaries (hard or electronic). They had the possibility to ask for help from peers or the instructor.	To help them employ different learning resources and writing strategies (cognitive and social).
Post-writing Phase	They were asked to check their written product using the self-writing evaluation sheet.	To train them on the practice of reflection and self-assessment.
	After reading the groups' works, we have agreed upon the selection and correction of one paragraph as a sample.	

Résumé

Basé sur une philosophie éducative qui favorise l'idée de préparer des apprenants en tant que citoyens indépendants responsables au lieu du capital humain mondial et suivant la forte croyance en l'importance de l'apprentissage auto-initié dans l'amélioration de la qualité de l'enseignement des langues étrangères. Cette recherche vise à explorer les moyens et les approches qui peuvent favoriser la pratique autonome dans le contexte Algérien de l'apprentissage d'anglais. Elle compte conduire progressivement un groupe contrôlé d'élèves du secondaire à assumer une plus grande responsabilité pour leur propre apprentissage d'anglais et vise à les aider à devenir modérément autonomes. Pour atteindre cet objectif, une recherche-action a servi comme méthode optimale en raison de son caractère pratique et de sa faisabilité. Au cours de la recherche, des questionnaires, des interviews et des observations de classe ont été utilisés comme instruments de collecte de données afin de permettre au chercheur d'analyser et d'évaluer les résultats de façon quantitative et qualitative. Les perceptions et les attitudes des élèves à l'égard des différents aspects de l'apprentissage autonome ont été examinées avant et après la réalisation de la recherche-action. La thèse actuelle se compose de cinq chapitres couvrant les deux parties théoriques et pratiques. La section théorique met en lumière le concept d'autonomie de l'apprenant par rapport aux notions les plus pertinentes dans la littérature, comme elle examine la position de l'autonomie au sein du contexte éducatif Algérien. Alors que la partie pratique tente d'étudier, de mettre en œuvre et d'évaluer de multiples techniques et stratégies d'enseignement pour améliorer l'apprentissage autonome dans l'environnement immédiat de la classe. En fait, les résultats obtenus ont montré que la plupart des participants ne présentaient pas une amélioration remarquable des niveaux d'autonomie. Cependant, ils ont commencé à développer des compétences autonomes de base telles que la connaissance des objectifs et stratégies d'apprentissage, la capacité de détachement dans des activités d'apprentissage spécifiques et la pratique de certaines techniques d'auto-évaluation. Par conséquent, en s'appuyant sur les résultats de l'étude et sur un certain nombre de modifications apportées à la pédagogie mise en œuvre, un ensemble de recommandations et d'implications pédagogiques a été soumis aux agents sociaux, aux concepteurs de programmes et aux tuteurs des écoles secondaires ayant pour but de faciliter l'intégration graduelle et le développement d'autonomie dans la classe d'anglais Algérienne

Mots clés : Autonomie de l'apprenant, Anglais comme langue étrangère, École secondaire en Algérie.

ملخص

استناداً إلى فلسفة تعليمية تعزز فكرة إعداد المتعلمين كمواطنين مسؤولين مستقلين بدلاً من رأس مال بشري عالمي، واتباعا للاعتقاد الراسخ بأهمية التعلم الذاتي في تحسين نوعية تعليم اللغات الأجنبية، يهدف هذا البحث إلى استكشاف السبل والمناهج التي يمكن أن تعزز ممارسة التعلم الذاتي على مستوى التعليم الثانوي بالجزائر. هذا البحث يطمح أن يقود تدريجيا مجموعة من تلاميذ نحو تحمل مسؤولية أكبر عن تعلمهم ويهدف إلى مساعدتهم على أن يصبحوا مستقلين إلى حد ما. وفي سياق البحث وبغية تحقيق هذا الغرض، استخدم بحث العمل الطريقة المثلى نظرا لعمليتها وجدواها ، استخدمت الاستبيانات والمقابلة وملاحظة الصف كأدوات لجمع البيانات لتمكين الباحث من تحليل وتقييم النتائج كما ونوعا وفحص تصورات الطلاب ومواقفهم تجاه الجوانب المختلفة للتعلم الذاتي قبل وبعد تنفيذ البحث. وتتألف الرسالة الحالية من خمسة فصول تغطي كلا الجزأين النظري والعملي. يسلط القسم النظري الضوء على مفهوم استقلالية المتعلم فيما يتعلق بأهم المفاهيم الواردة في الأدبيات بينما يحاول الجزء العملي استقصاء تقنيات واستراتيجيات التدريس المتعددة وتنفيذها وتقويمها لتعزيز التعلم الذاتي في الفصل الدراسي .والواقع أن النتائج التي تم التوصل إليها أظهرت أن معظم المشاركين لم يظهروا تحسناً ملحوظاً في مستويات استقلالية التعلم ومع ذلك، فقد بدأوا في تطوير مهارات ذاتية أساسية معينة مثل: الوعي بأهداف واستراتيجيات التعلم ، والقدرة على الفصل في أنشطة تعلم محددة، وممارسة بعض تقنيات التقييم الذات وبناء على ذلك، واستنادا إلى نتائج الدراسة وعدد من التعديلات في طرائق التدريس المنفذة، قدمت مجموعة من التوصيات التربوية إلى مصممي مناهج التعليم الثانوى ومعلمي المدارس الثانوية من اجل تيسير الاندماج التدريجي للتعلم الذاتي وتطويره في الجزائر.

الكلمات الرئيسية: استقلالية المتعلم، الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية، المدرسة الثانوية في الجزائر