

## Investigation of Teacher Autonomy and Learner Autonomy in Turkish EFL Setting

Inst. Dr. Eda Duruk  
School of Foreign Languages  
Pamukkale University, Turkey  
Email: durukeda@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. İlknur Keçik  
English Language Teaching Department  
Anadolu University, Turkey

### Abstract

Over the past 30 years, the concept of autonomy has become increasingly influential in the field of second language acquisition (Benson, 2001). Most of this work in the past three decades is concerned with learner autonomy. However, with the development of the current approaches such as communicative language teaching and learner-centeredness, teachers have become less likely to dominate classroom events in contrast to traditional classrooms, and learners have started to be more involved in classroom actions (Voller, 1997). In communicative classrooms, the teachers are supposed to be involved in tasks such as setting up activities, organizing material resources, guiding students in group-work, encouraging contributions, monitoring activities, and students are considered more responsible for their own learning. Therefore, the idea of teacher autonomy has also come to the fore in the past decade (Smith, 2003). The present study aims to investigate the effect of teacher - learner autonomy in Turkish EFL setting.

**Key Words:** Learner autonomy, teacher autonomy, second language acquisition

### I. Introduction

#### 1.1. The Concept of Learner Autonomy

One of the terms that have been occupying a great place in the language learning literature in recent years is "learner autonomy". It is not always clear whether the term is meant to refer to a behavior or an attitude; a right or a responsibility. It is widely defined as a psychological attribute of individual learners, implying a capacity and willingness to take responsibility for one's own learning and actively manage it, both inside and outside the classroom (Holec, 1981; Dickinson, 1987; Leathwood, 1996).

Fostering autonomy in language learners is mostly emphasized on pedagogical grounds. Nowadays, the teaching of foreign languages is based on the communicative approach that focuses on the use of language in authentic, everyday situations, rather than the passive memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary lists, and therefore presupposes more active involvement on the part of the learner. There is also some empirical evidence suggesting that approaches which encourage independent learning can be more successful than the more traditional, teacher-led approaches (Dam and Legenhausen, 1996). Nunan (2000) claims that the balance of research lends support to the view that second language learning will be accomplished most effectively on condition that learners are permitted to develop and exercise their autonomy.

The concept of learner autonomy is also criticized by some researchers in that it is often defined too restrictively. For instance, Blin (2004) points out that learner autonomy is a 'multi-dimensional' concept, involving not just technical and psychological aspects (learning without the intervention of a teacher and having the ability to take responsibility for your learning), but also

social and political dimensions. Benson (2001) also argues that we should not focus on the development of individual autonomy at the expense of social and political autonomy. These researchers see autonomy as a political right and social responsibility, a group of learners collectively taking responsibility for, and control of, the processes and content of their learning. Others (Pennycook, 1997; Leathwood, 1996) claim that the notion of autonomy is problematic; in particular, that the model of the independent learner is a masculine and Western one. These researchers point out that it sometimes blocks dependence and undervalues communication and collaboration – skills associated with women and students from non-Western cultures. They add that giving access to self-study materials and encouraging independent learning can also be seen as a cynical cost-cutting exercise that leaves many students feeling demoralized and unsupported. Felix (2003) also claims that it is important to realize that autonomy is not the same as self-instruction or working totally independently without the help of others. Little and Dam (1998) point out that the independence that we exercise through our developed capacity for autonomous behavior is always conditioned and constrained by our inescapable interdependence.

## **1.2. The Concept of Teacher Autonomy**

Although discussions of autonomous learning tended to focus on the learner first, many started to believe that the development of learner autonomy depends crucially on the development of teacher autonomy. Littlewood (1996) argues that, in fostering autonomy in language learning, the most important factor will always be "the nature of the pedagogical dialogue" (175).

The concept of 'teacher autonomy' is defined as the capacity for self-directed professional action and development or freedom from control by others over professional action or development (Smith, 2003). As Smith points out, total freedom from control over professional action is both unrealistic and undesirable. Teachers and students are assigned different roles, rights and responsibilities, and teachers' primary responsibility is to their students.

As for the relationship between learner and teacher autonomy, learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interdependent and the promotion of learner autonomy depends on the promotion of teacher autonomy (Littlewood, 1996; Smith, 2003).

## **1.3. Empirical Studies**

### **1.3.1. Learner Autonomy**

With respect to empirical studies related to learner autonomy, some researchers proposed giving some controls to learners. In her study, Brown (2003) compared teacher-centered and learner-centered classrooms and concluded that an instructional paradigm shift is required to implement a learner-centered approach. Her research indicates that more control should be given to students. Benson (2002) explored the relationship of self-access and autonomy and thought that teachers should develop students' autonomy through self-access learning and one major characteristic of self-access learning is that learners have more control than ever.

On the other hand, some other researchers disagreed to give all the controls to learners. Chanock (2003) points out that although one major principle of autonomous learning is that students should take responsibility for their own learning, but in non-Western cultures where students are particularly resistant to that idea and are overly dependent on their teachers, it is not responsible to be dependent and depending on others can be a responsible way to learn. Methods of autonomous learning are not in fact incompatible with depending upon teachers. Following his point, it can be seen that teachers should not give all the controls of learning to students in non-Western cultures. Garcia (1996) explored the effects of autonomy on motivation and performance in the college classroom and concluded that fostering a sense of autonomy among college students

need not mean a submission to anarchy or to complete student control. In other words, teachers should give some control to students, for example, by allowing students to participate in course policy-making, college students reported greater levels of motivation at the end of the semester.

In *Autonomy in language learning*, Nunan (2000) explored four ways to encourage autonomy in which teachers can begin to sensitize learners to the learning process, and thereby begin to encourage a greater degree of autonomy. He suggested (1) integrating language content and learning process through learner strategy training, (2) incorporating reflective lessons into your teaching, (3) drawing up learning contracts, and (4) using learner diaries.

Yang (1998) explored a new role for teachers to promoting learner autonomy by combining learning strategy instruction with the content course of second language acquisition. The new role of teachers is to develop students' learning strategy so as to promote their student's learning autonomy and one way is to let students have more control of their own study.

Dickinson (1995) reviewed some studies on the relationship between autonomy and motivation and found that the common theme in justifications for autonomy, especially in general education but also in language learning, is that autonomous learners become more highly motivated and that the autonomy leads to better, more effective work.

From the concept of autonomy it can be seen that control is one of the key components of learner autonomy. In the broadest sense, learner control is the degree to which a learner can direct his/her own learning experience (Shyu & Brown, 1992). More specifically, learner control can be defined as the degree to which individuals control the path, pace, and/or contingencies of instruction. The meaning of learner control, however, has evolved over time to include the characteristics of new learning paradigms as well as new technologies such as a web-model.

### **1.3.2. Teacher Autonomy**

Little (1995) emphasizes responsibility, control and freedom which he claims in line with learner autonomy:

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

In their study, Smith (2000) suggest an overview of existing dimensions of this concept. They made distinctions between *teaching* (and teacher autonomy) and *teacher-learning* (and teacher-learner autonomy), and between *capacity* and *freedom*, to clarify the concept which lacks immediate transparency. They claim that the extent to which teachers have the capacity to improve their own teaching through their own efforts (through reflective or research-oriented approaches) clearly indicates one conceptualization of teacher autonomy. Lamb (2000) also proposed that the relationship between autonomy and motivation implies that teachers who perceive themselves as powerless to behave in an autonomous way may become disaffected, possibly leaving the profession.

Chan (2003) also examined teachers' perspectives related to learner autonomy by means of a questionnaire administered to 41 English teachers. Results revealed that generally teachers perceive themselves to be more responsible for the methodological and motivational aspects of learning, but they reported themselves less responsible for students' engagement in outside class activities.

Although current studies emphasize the importance of learner autonomy and teacher autonomy, there is not enough research exploring the effect of teacher - learner autonomy in Turkish EFL setting.

## II. Methodology

The study focused on investigating EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions towards learner-teacher autonomy. It is conducted to gain insight into whether there is a match or mismatch between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy and to get further information about English language teachers' beliefs and practices related to the two notions. In accordance with these research purposes, three research questions are addressed:

1. Do English language instructors at ESOGÜ FLD believe that they possess teacher autonomy? If so, to what extent do they have?
2. Do they autonomously design their courses to foster learner autonomy?
3. Is there a match between teachers' level of autonomy and learners' level of autonomy?

### 2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were both instructors and students: first, Turkish EFL instructors of Pamukkale University, School of Foreign Languages. The reason behind choosing them was twofold: first, one main aim of the study was to examine EFL teachers' perceptions and there were two departments in the university in which English teachers were working at the time of the study: school of foreign languages and English language teaching. Second, there were more instructors in the former one which would make the sampling more representative. Thus, 36 instructors in total participated in the study and demographic information about them is provided below, all of which was gathered by means of the learner questionnaire.

**Table 2.1.** Instructors as participants of the study.

Gender	Age	Experience	Department*	Degree	Teaching level
Male: 6	20-30: 27	0-5: 26	ELT: 17	Bachelors: 20	Elementary: 18
Female: 30	30-40: 7	6-10: 8	ELL: 13	Masters: 13	(Pre)int: 17
	40-50: 2	11-15: 1	LP: 1	Doctorate: 3	Advanced: 5
		16-20: 2	ACL: 2		
			TIS: 3		

\* The abbreviations stand for:

ELT: English language teaching

ELL: English language and literature

LP: Linguistics/Philology

ACL: American culture and literature

TIS: Translation and interpreting studies

As can be seen from Table 2.1, there are far more females (n: 30) than males (n:6) in the study. Most of them (n: 27) are between the ages 20-30. The experience of the participants are ranging from 0-5 years (n: 26), 6-10 years (n: 8), 16-20 years (n: 2), and 11-15 years (n: 1), respectively. With respect to departments they graduated, 17 were from English language teaching, 13 were from English language and literature, 3 were from Translation and interpreting studies, 2 were from American culture and literature, and 1 was from Linguistics/Philology. Most of the participants (n: 20) have bachelors degree, which is followed by masters degree (n: 13) and doctorate degree (n: 3), respectively. As for the teaching level, nearly same numbers of participants are teaching to elementary level (n: 18) and pre-intermediate level (n: 17), which is followed by advanced level (n: 5).

The second participant group of the study was preparatory students of Pamukkale University, School of Foreign Languages. 53 students in total participated in the study. One of the aims of the study was to investigate EFL learners' perceptions and that's why they were included in the study.

## **2.2. Instruments**

In order to investigate teachers' perceptions towards learner- teacher autonomy, first, a teacher questionnaire was used in the study. The Questionnaire was applied to the instructors. The questionnaire consists of two sections. The first section was designed to gather demographic information from the participants and the gathered data was discussed in the previous section. The second section has 18 items which require participants to reflect on their perceptions of their own responsibilities in their language teaching process. In each item of the section, respondents were required to rank their answers on a four-point Likert scale. Benson (2001) defines learner autonomy as the capacity to take control over, or responsibility for, one's own learning. According to Holec (1985) responsibility operates in five main areas that are of great importance to practice learner autonomy. They are formulated as follows: (a) defining objectives; (b) defining contents; (c) defining materials and techniques; (d) defining the place/time and pace of learning; (e) evaluating what has been learned. Items in the second section of the questionnaire focus on those five main areas and ask teachers to report on their perceptions of responsibility of their own on those five areas. Students answer the questions on a four-point Likert scale: (1) definitely false, (2) more or less false, (3) more or less true, (4) definitely true.

The second instrument used in the study was the observations made by the researcher. The observation checklist was formed by following the criteria proposed by Mynard and Sorflatlen (2003) in order to specify the tasks and activities used within and beyond the classroom to promote autonomy of the learners. The researcher observed 3 different instructors, each of which lasted two hours, and graded each course according to the frequency of the activities on the observation form on a scale of 1-5 with 5 showing the highest, and 1 showing the lowest frequency of the learning opportunities observed. Besides, she took notes on other points not included in the checklist.

The third instrument was the semi-structured interview conducted with the three observed instructors. It was used to probe the results of the teacher questionnaire. Though the sample was small, it was supposed to clarify some of the interesting patterns emerging from the teacher's questionnaire or observations.

The last instrument was the learner questionnaire including 54 items in four sections. It was adopted from Yıldırım's (2005) study. The first section includes 13 items which require participants to report on their perceptions of their own and their teachers' responsibilities in their language learning process. The next section is comprised of 11 items focusing on students' perceptions of their own abilities to operate in the five main areas: (a) defining objectives; (b) defining contents; (c) defining materials and techniques; (d) defining the place/time and pace of learning; and (e) evaluating what has been learned. In the third section students are required to report the activities they carry out which could be considered as manifestations of acting autonomously in the language learning process. The last section focuses on students' employment of metacognitive language learning strategies.

## **2.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedure**

First, the questionnaires were administered to the participants of the study in the fall term of 2010-2011 academic year. The participants were instructed to consider the language learning

process while they are answering the questions. In the data analysis procedure of the questionnaire, descriptive statistics (percentages) were calculated.

In addition, in order to support the quantitative data with qualitative data, observations and interview sessions were conducted. Observations and interviews were conducted by considering the concept "convenience sampling" which included 3 instructors. Each instructor was observed during three different classroom hour. Participants for the interviews were the instructors observed by the researcher. While the researcher was observing the class, the class was also video-taped, and then transcribed. During the interview, interview sessions were tape recorded, and then the recordings were again transcribed.

### **III. Results and Discussion**

#### **3.1. The EFL Teachers' Perceptions Related to Autonomy**

In the first section of the Teacher Questionnaire, demographic information about the teachers was gathered and discussed while explaining the participants. In the second section, participants were informed to report their teaching experience in language teaching process. Students ranked these responsibilities on a four point Likert Scale that goes from 1 (Definitely False) to 4 (Definitely True). Table 3.1 reflects the percentages of responses related to each question.

**Table 3.1.** The EFL teachers' perceptions of Autonomy- % of respondents

Items %	Definitely false	More or less false	More or less true	Definitely true
1. I am free to be creative in my teaching approach.	-	-	47, 2	52, 8
<b>2. The selection of student-learning activities in my class is under my control.</b>	-	5, 6	69, 4	25
3. Standards of my behavior in my classroom are set primarily by myself.	-	13, 9	47, 2	38, 9
<b>4. My job does not allow for much discretion on my part.</b>	16, 7	44, 4	36, 1	2, 8
5. In my teaching, I use my own guidelines and procedures.	-	19, 4	52, 8	27, 8
<b>6. I have little say over the content and skills that are selected for teaching.</b>	13, 9	25	50	11, 1
7. The scheduling of use of time in my classroom is under my control.	13, 9	19, 4	41, 7	25
<b>8. My teaching focuses on those goals and objectives I select myself.</b>	13, 9	38, 9	38, 9	8, 3
9. I seldom use alternative procedures in my teaching.	38, 9	33, 3	22, 2	5, 6
<b>10. I follow my own guidelines on instruction.</b>	8, 3	19, 4	52, 8	19, 4
11. I have only limited latitude in how major problems are resolved.	25	55, 6	16, 7	2, 8
<b>12. What I teach in my class is determined for the</b>	-	44, 4	44, 4	11, 1

<b>most part by myself.</b>				
13. I have little control over how classroom space is used.	<b>52, 8</b>	<b>30, 6</b>	<b>11, 1</b>	<b>5, 6</b>
<b>14. The materials I use in my class are mostly chosen for the most part by myself.</b>	<b>8, 3</b>	<b>36, 1</b>	<b>38, 9</b>	<b>16, 7</b>
15. The evaluation and assessment activities are selected by others.	<b>8, 3</b>	<b>16, 7</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>50</b>
<b>16. I select the teaching methods and strategies I use with my students.</b>	<b>5, 6</b>	<b>19, 4</b>	<b>36, 1</b>	<b>38, 9</b>
17. I have little say over the scheduling of use of time in my classroom.	<b>30, 6</b>	<b>33, 3</b>	<b>22, 2</b>	<b>13, 9</b>
<b>18. The content and skills taught in my class are those I select.</b>	<b>13, 9</b>	<b>47, 2</b>	<b>30, 6</b>	<b>8, 3</b>

As shown in Table 3.1, more teachers totally disagreed on certain items (9 and 13). In other words, more teachers totally disagreed on the items, "I seldom use alternative procedures in my teaching" and "I have little control over how classroom space is used", 38, 9 % and 52, 8 %, respectively.

On the other hand, on some items (1, 15, and 16) more teachers totally agreed. For instance, on the item "I am free to be creative in my teaching approach", more teachers (52, 8 %) agreed. Similarly, more teachers agreed on the items "the evaluation and assessment activities are selected by others" and "I select the teaching methods and strategies I use with my students", 50 % and 38, 9 %, respectively.

### 3.2. The EFL Students' Perceptions Related to Autonomy

In the first section of the Learner Questionnaire, participants were informed to report their perceptions of their teachers' and their own responsibilities in language learning process. Students ranked these responsibilities on a five point Likert Scale that goes from 1 (Not at all) to 5 (Completely). Table 4.2 reflects the percentages of responses related to each question. To make the interpretation easier, the 'not at all' and 'a little' categories have been categorized in the same column, and similarly the 'mainly' and 'completely' categories have been combined in the table.

As can be seen from Table 3.2, for certain items (2 and 13) students indicated that students themselves have more responsibility than teachers. For instance, 47, 1 % of the students said that they have more responsibility in making sure they make progress outside class. Similarly, 50, 9 % of the students said that they have more responsibility in deciding what they learn outside class.

On the other hand, for some items (3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, and 12) students indicated that teachers have more responsibility than students themselves. To illustrate, 73, 5 % of the students said that teachers have more responsibility in stimulating students' interest in learning English. 54, 7 % of the students said that teachers have more responsibility in identifying students' weaknesses in English. Similarly, they indicated that making students work harder, deciding the objectives of English course, deciding what students should learn next in English lessons, deciding how long to spend on each activity, choosing what materials to use to learn English in English lessons, and evaluating students' course are all teachers' responsibilities, 54, 7 %, 54, 7 %, 56, 6 %, 58, 5 %, 64, 1 % and 50, 9 %, respectively.

**Table 3.2.** The EFL students' perceptions of their teachers' and their own responsibilities - % of respondents

Item (%)		Not at all / A little	Some	Mainly / Completely
<b>1.</b> Make sure you make progress during lessons	student teacher	17 11, 3	26, 4 28, 3	56, 6 60, 4
<b>2.</b> Make sure you make progress outside class	student teacher	26, 4 35, 9	26, 4 35, 8	47, 1 28, 3
<b>3.</b> Stimulate your interest in learning English	student teacher	26, 4 7, 6	22, 6 18, 9	50, 9 73, 5
<b>4.</b> Identify your weaknesses in English	student teacher	24, 5 5, 7	39, 6 39, 6	35, 9 54, 7
<b>5.</b> Make you work harder	student teacher	30, 2 17	24, 5 28, 3	45, 3 54, 7
<b>6.</b> Decide the objectives of your English course	student teacher	28, 3 15, 1	32, 1 30, 2	39, 6 54, 7
<b>7.</b> Decide what you should learn next in your English lessons	student teacher	32, 1 18, 8	34 24, 5	34 56, 6
<b>8.</b> Choose what activities to use to learn English in your English lessons	student teacher	30, 2 28, 3	18, 9 17	51 54, 7
<b>9.</b> Decide how long to spend on each activity	student teacher	28, 3 15, 1	26, 4 26, 4	45, 3 58, 5
<b>10.</b> Choose what materials to use to learn English in your English lessons	student teacher	47, 2 11, 3	17 24, 5	35, 9 64, 1
<b>11.</b> Evaluate your learning	student teacher	34 11, 3	35, 8 22, 6	30, 1 36
<b>12.</b> Evaluate your course	student teacher	39, 6 13, 2	26, 4 35, 8	34 50, 9
<b>13.</b> Decide what you learn outside class	student teacher	17 34	32, 1 24, 5	50, 9 41, 5

Finally, for the other items (1, 8, and 11) students indicated that both teachers and students have responsibility. For instance, for making sure students make progress during lessons, students claimed that it's both their own and their teachers responsibility, 56, 6 % and 60, 4%, respectively. Similarly, students said that it's both their own (51 %) and their teachers (54, 7%) responsibility to choose what activities to use to learn English in English lessons. Finally, they claimed that evaluating students' learning is the responsibility of students (30, 1 %) and teachers (36 %).

In section 2 of the questionnaire, students were instructed to report their perceptions of how successful they would be if they were given the chance of operating in various aspects of learning such as choosing learning activities and materials, evaluating learning, etc. Students reported their views on a five point Likert Scale that goes from 1 (Very Poor) to 5 (Very Good). Table 3.3 presents the percentages of answers related to each question. Again, to make the interpretation

easier, the ‘very poor’ and ‘poor’ categories have been combined in the table, and similarly the ‘good’ and ‘very good’ categories.

Table 3.3 reflects that for certain items (15, 17, 19, 20, 21, and 24) more students perceived themselves as being successful. For instance, students judged themselves as being very good at choosing learning activities outside class, choosing learning objectives outside class, choosing learning materials outside class, evaluating your learning, evaluating your course, and deciding how long to spend on each activity.

On the other hand, students judged themselves as being unsuccessful for some items (16 and 23). In other words, more students indicated that they are bad at choosing learning objectives in class and deciding what they should learn next in your English lessons.

**Table 3.3.** The EFL students' perceptions of their own abilities in learning - % of respondents

Item (%)	Very Poor / Poor	OK	Very Good / Good
<b>14.</b> Choosing learning activities in class	24, 5	49, 1	26, 4
<b>15.</b> Choosing learning activities outside class	24, 6	34	41, 5
<b>16.</b> Choosing learning objectives in class	35, 8	34	30, 1
<b>17.</b> Choosing learning objectives outside class	28, 3	30, 2	41, 5
<b>18.</b> Choosing learning materials in class	34	34	32, 1
<b>19.</b> Choosing learning materials outside class	30, 2	30, 2	39, 6
<b>20.</b> Evaluating your learning	17	35, 8	47, 2
<b>21.</b> Evaluating your course	22, 7	34	43, 4
<b>22.</b> Identify your weaknesses in English	20, 7	41, 5	37, 7
<b>23.</b> Deciding what you should learn next in your English lessons	39, 6	26, 4	34
<b>24.</b> Deciding how long to spend on each activity	24, 5	34	41, 5

Finally, for the rest items (14 and 22) students were neutral. To illustrate, students perceived themselves as being neither so much successful nor so much unsuccessful in choosing learning activities in class and identifying their weaknesses in English.

In the third section of the learner questionnaire, students were asked to report the language learning activities they carry out outside class. Students were instructed to report the frequency of their engagement in these activities on a five point Likert Scale that goes from 1(Never) to 5 (Very Often). Table 3.4 gives the percentages of answers related to each activity. Similarly, to make the interpretation easier, the ‘Never’ and ‘Rarely’ categories have been combined in the table, and similarly the ‘Frequently’ and ‘Very Often’ categories

**Table 3.4.** The EFL students' engagement in outside class learning activities - % of respondents

Item (%)	Never / Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently / Very Often
<b>26.</b> Read newspapers in English	73, 6	17	9, 4
<b>27.</b> Sent e-mails in English	52, 8	32, 1	15, 1
<b>28.</b> Read books or magazines in English	58, 5	28, 3	13, 2
<b>29.</b> Watched English TV programs	30, 2	34	35, 9
<b>30.</b> Listened to English radio	52, 8	30, 2	16, 9
<b>31.</b> Listened to English songs	22, 6	13, 2	64, 1
<b>32.</b> Practiced using English with friends	52, 8	26, 4	20, 7
<b>33.</b> Done English self-study in a group	43, 4	41, 5	15, 1
<b>34.</b> Done grammar exercises on your own	30, 1	52, 8	17
<b>35.</b> Watched English movies	13, 2	17	69, 8
<b>36.</b> Written a diary in English	88, 7	5, 7	5, 7
<b>37.</b> Used the internet in English	28, 3	22, 6	49, 1
<b>38.</b> Used English with a native speaker	47, 2	22, 6	30, 2

As can be seen in Table 3.4, among the outside class learning activities, the most frequently used ones are watching English movies, listening to English songs, using the internet in English, and watching English TV programs.

On the other hand, there are some activities which most students reported to have never/rarely used such as writing a diary in English, reading newspapers in English, reading books or magazines in English, sending e-mails in English, listening to English radio, and practicing using English with friends.

Last section of the questionnaire focused on students' employment of metacognitive language learning strategies which are considered to help them develop more active and autonomous attitudes. Table 3.5 presents the percentages of answers related to each question. Again, to make the interpretation easier, the 'ever' and 'generally not' categories have been combined in the table, and similarly the 'generally' and 'always' categories.

As Table 3.5 shows, more students (52, 8 %) indicated that they always/ generally decide in advance to pay special attention to specific language aspects. Similarly, more students (47, 1 %) said that they always/ generally identify the purpose of the language activity. Again, more students (37, 7 %) pointed out that they always/ generally arrange their physical environment to promote learning.

On the other hand, more students (58, 5 %) indicated that they (almost) never preview the language lesson to get a general idea of what it is about, how it is organized, and how it relates to what they already know. They (54, 7 %) said that they (almost) never plan what they are going to accomplish in language learning each day or each week. The students (52, 9 %) said that they (almost) never plan their goals for language learning. Finally, most of them (51 %) pointed out that they actively look for people with whom they can speak the new language.

**Table 3.5.** The EFL students' metacognitive language learning strategies - % of respondents

Item (%)	Never / Generally not	Somewhat	Always / Generally
<b>39.</b> I preview the language lesson to get a general idea of what it is about, how it is organized, and how it relates to what I already know.	58, 5	18, 9	22, 7
<b>40.</b> When someone is speaking the new language, I try to concentrate on what the person is saying and I don't think anything else.	22, 7	37, 7	39, 6
<b>41.</b> I decide in advance to pay special attention to specific language aspects; for example, while watching a film I focus the way native speakers pronounce certain sounds.	18, 9	28, 3	52, 8
<b>42.</b> I try to find out all I can about how to be a better language learner by reading books or articles, or by talking with others about how to learn.	35, 8	28, 3	35, 8
<b>43.</b> I arrange my schedule to study and practice the new language consistently, not just when there is the pressure of a test.	49	34	17
<b>44.</b> I arrange my physical environment to promote learning; for instance, I find a quiet, comfortable place to review.	32, 1	30, 2	37, 7
<b>45.</b> I organize my language notebook to record important language information.	45, 2	22, 6	32, 1
<b>46.</b> I plan my goals for language learning.	52, 9	22, 6	24, 6

<b>47.</b> I plan what I am going to accomplish in language learning each day or each week.	54, 7	34	11, 3
<b>48.</b> I prepare for an upcoming language task (such as making an oral presentation in the new language) by considering the nature of the task, what I have to know, and my current language skills.	30, 2	43, 4	26, 5
<b>49.</b> I clearly identify the purpose of the language activity; for instance, if the purpose of a class activity requires specific listening, I recognize it.	28, 3	24, 5	47, 1
<b>50.</b> I take responsibility for finding opportunities to practice the new language.	39, 6	37, 7	22, 7
<b>51.</b> I actively look for people with whom I can speak the new language.	51	24, 5	24, 5
<b>52.</b> I try to notice my language errors and find out the reasons for them.	26, 4	45, 3	28, 3
<b>53.</b> I learn from my mistakes in using the new language.	22, 7	37, 7	39, 6
<b>54.</b> I evaluate the general progress I have made in learning the language.	16, 9	47, 2	35, 8

### 3.3. Observations and Interviews

After applying the questionnaires, three instructors were observed during three different classroom hour. While observing them, the checklist guided the researcher. Table 3.6 reflects the percentages of the observed learning opportunities. Again, to make the interpretation easier, the ‘ever’ and ‘generally not’ categories have been combined in the table, and similarly the ‘generally’ and ‘always’ categories.

**Table 3.6.** The EFL teachers' observed learning opportunities - % of opportunities

Item (%)	Never / Generally not	Somewhat	Always / Generally
a) Giving choices	11, 1	22, 2	66, 6
b) Encouraging cooperative work	11, 1	22, 2	66, 6
c) Encouraging learners to predict how well they did on tests	100	-	-
d) Encouraging learners to set some learning goals	100	-	-
e) Encouraging learners to use authentic materials outside the classroom	55, 5	44, 4	-
f) Encouraging learners to keep learner diaries	100	-	-
g) Encouraging learners to build extension into activities	-	33, 3	66, 7
h) Encouraging peer editing	22, 2	44, 4	33, 3
i) Creating a self-access facility in the classroom	100	-	-
j) Encouraging self-assessment	66, 7	33, 3	-
k) Encouraging learners to adopt critical thinking skills	44, 4	55, 6	-
l) Replicating real-world communicative tasks	22, 2	55, 6	22, 2

m) Offering hints	-	-	100
n) Time listening	33, 3	66, 7	-
o) Students talking time	33, 3	55, 6	11, 1
p) Offering encouragements	-	44, 4	55, 5
q) Providing rationales	55, 5	44, 4	-
r) Being responsive to student generated questions	-	11, 1	88, 9

As can be seen from Table 3.6, among the observed learning opportunities, the most frequent ones are offering hints (100 %), being responsive to student generated questions (88, 9 %), encouraging learners to build extension into activities (66, 7 %), giving choices and encouraging cooperative work (66, 6 %).

Interviews supported this view. In the interviews teachers generally stated that giving choices, offering hints and extension of activities play important role in the process. The last quotation given below also reflects teachers' opinions on being responsive to student generated questions. Following are examples from the interviews:

*[In order to learning to be achieved at the end of the teaching (process), a student needs to be motivated by various methods, such as attracting his / her attention to the subject, including different materials and activities, raising awareness and making the subject enjoyable.]*

*[In order to attract the attention of the students showing off-task behaviors, choosing the questions appropriate with the purpose; asking questions which are suitable for the level of every student, in other words preparing some easy and some difficult questions; in order to provide the comfort for thinking and answering, asking only one question at a time; after asking the question waiting for a few seconds to let students organize their thoughts and answers; making use of other questions and giving clues to enable students to revise their answers; listening to students' answers and giving the necessary feedback are of great importance.]*

On the other hand, some learning opportunities are observed to be (almost) never applied in the classrooms. For instance, teachers (almost) never encouraged learners to predict how well they did on tests (100 %). They (almost) never encouraged learners to set some learning goals (100 %). Similarly, they (almost) never encouraged learners to keep learner diaries (100 %) and created a self-access facility in the classroom (100 %). However, when teachers' opinions about setting some learning goals are asked in the interviews, they yielded different responses compared to the observations. Following is the general tendency:

*[Students' forming their own learning goals is important in terms of motivating themselves. Such students do not expect a reward from outside; on the contrary they motivate themselves. This makes them much more successful in the class and learning is facilitated in a much more efficient way.]*

Finally, teachers were observed to somewhat carry out certain learning opportunities. To illustrate, listening time (66, 7), encouraging learners to adopt critical thinking skills (55, 6 %), replicating real-world communicative tasks (55, 6 %), and students talking time (55, 6 %) were noted to be most common ones.

When the researcher asked the teachers in the interviews for their perceptions towards student-teacher interaction, they generally held different point of views. Following are samples from the interviews, which are about Item "n" (time listening) and Item "o" (students talking time) in the observation checklist:

*[The process of classroom interaction is one of the most important factors in enhancing the quality of teaching. In the process of classroom interaction when teacher – student relationship is examined, every class has an atmosphere and climate which can affect learning adversely or positively. What is important here is the conversation and the one who asks questions is not continuously unilateral. Ideally both sides should have roles equally. What is ideal is to give the roles equally to both sides.]*

*[In teacher-student relationship, the teacher has power and authority. This is the requirement of the teacher's role. The teacher has a great advantage. He/she sets rules, determines specific goals and tries to reach them with various methods and the students interact in accordance with this.]*

#### **IV. Conclusion and Implications**

According to data analysis related to students' perceptions of their own and their teachers' responsibilities in their language learning process, it can be said that students seem to be taking more responsibility in the areas of making sure they make progress outside class and deciding what they learn outside class. As they accept that the teacher is not the only person who is responsible for these cases, autonomy can be promoted by gradually giving more responsibility in these areas of learning. Scharle and Szabo (2000) suggest that increasing the level of responsibility gradually in these areas would help in the promotion of learner autonomy.

Students reported that it is teachers' responsibility to define objectives. Therefore, they can be given more chance to be involved in taking decisions related to defining objectives. As the first step, they can be trained on how to define short and long term objectives for their own learning. Rubin and Thompson (1994) state that clarifying their own objectives would bring more motivation to students and more motivation would bring more success in language learning.

For the cases related to deciding what students should learn next in English lessons, deciding how long to spend on each activity, choosing what materials to use to learn English in English lessons, and evaluating students' course students gave more responsibility to their teachers. These aspects of learning are considered important for the development of learner autonomy by many researchers (Benson, 2001; Chan, 2003). Therefore, students should be involved in the decisions related to those methodological aspects of learning to make them more autonomous. Thus, teachers should give more responsibility to their students in these methodological aspects of learning.

With respect to metacognitive strategy use, they stated that they always/ generally decide in advance to pay special attention to specific language aspects, identify the purpose of the language activity and arrange their physical environment to promote learning. However, for the rest cases students reported that they generally don't employ those strategies. This has a negative effect on the part of students in terms of the promotion of learner autonomy because many researchers emphasized the importance of metacognitive strategies on the development of learner autonomy (Dickinson, 1995; Reinders, 2000). Hence, it would be beneficial to provide strategy training to students in order to increase the frequency of their metacognitive strategy use.

**References:**

- Benson, P. 2001. Teaching and Researching Autonomy in Language Learning. Harlow, UK: Longman.
- Benson, P. (2002). Rethinking the relationship of self-access and autonomy. *Self-Access Language Learning* 5: 4-10. (Newsletter of the Hong Kong Association for Self-Access Learning and Development)
- Blin, F. 2004. CALL and the development of learner autonomy: Towards an activitytheoretical perspective. *ReCALL* 16, no. 2: 377–95.
- Chan, V. (2003). Autonomous Language Learning: the teachers' perspectives. *Teaching In Higher Education*, 8 (1), 33-54.
- Chanock, K. (2003). Autonomy and responsibility: same or different? Paper Presented at the Independent Learning Conference 2003.
- Dam, L., and L. Legenhause. 1996. The acquisition of vocabulary in an autonomous learning environment – the first months of beginning English. In *Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning*, ed. R. Pemberton, E.S.L. Li, W.W.F. Or, and H. Pierson, 265–80. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Dickinson, L. 1987. Self-Instruction in Language Learning. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Dickinson, L. (1995). Autonomy and Motivation: A Literature Review. *System*. Vol. 23, No. 2, 165-174.
- Felix, U. 2003. Teaching languages online: Deconstructing the myths. *Australian Journal of Educational Technology* 19, no. 1: 118–38.
- Garcia, T. (1996). The Effects of Autonomy on Motivation and Performance in the College Classroom. *Contemporary Education Psychology* 21, 477-486
- Holec, H. 1981. Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning. Oxford, UK: Pergamon.
- Lamb, T.E. 2000. Finding a voice – Learner autonomy and teacher education in an urban context. In *Learner Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy: Future Directions*, B. Sinclair, I. McGrath & T.E. Lamb (eds), 118–127. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Leathwood, C. 1996. Technological futures: Gendered visions of learning? *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* 4, no. 1: 5–22.
- Littlewood, D. 1996. ‘Autonomy’: An anatomy and framework. *System* 24, no. 4: 427–35.
- Little, D. 1995. Learning as dialogue: The dependence of learner autonomy on teacher autonomy. *System* 23(2): 175–182.

- Little, D., and L. Dam. 1998. Learner autonomy: What and why. *The Language Teacher Online* 22, no. 10 (October), <http://jalt-publications.org/tlt/files/98/oct/littledam.html>
- Nunan, D. 2000. Autonomy in language learning. Plenary Presentation at ASOCOPI 2000, October, in Cartagena, Colombia.
- Pennycook, A. 1997. Cultural alternatives and autonomy. In *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning*, ed. P. Benson, and P. Voller, 35–53. Harlow, UK: Longman.
- Reinders, H. W. (2000). *Do It Yourself. A Learners' Perspective on Learner Autonomy and Self-Access Language Learning in an English proficiency Program*. M.A. Thesis Submitted to Groningen University. Available at [www.hayo.nl](http://www.hayo.nl).
- Rubin, J. & Thompson, I. (1994). *How to Be a More Successful Language Learner*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle.
- Scharle, A. & Szabo, A. (2000). Learner autonomy: a guide to developing learner responsibility. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Smith, R.C. 2000. Starting with ourselves: Teacher-learner autonomy in language learning. In *Learner Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy: Future Directions*, B. Sinclair, I. McGrath & T.E. Lamb (eds), 89–99. Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Smith, R.C. 2003. Teacher education for teacher-learner autonomy. In *Symposium for Language Teacher Educators: Papers from Three IALS Symposia*, (CD-ROM), ed. J. Gollin, G. Ferguson, and H. Trappes-Lomax. Edinburgh, UK: IALS, University of Edinburgh. [http://www.warwick.ac.uk/%7Eelsdr/Teacher\\_autonomy.pdf](http://www.warwick.ac.uk/%7Eelsdr/Teacher_autonomy.pdf)
- Shyu, H. Y., & Brown, S. W. (1992). Learner control versus program control in interactive videodisc instruction: What are the effects in procedural learning? *International Journal of Instructional Media*, 19 (2): 85-93.
- Voller, P. (1997). Does the Teacher Have a Role in Autonomous Language Learning?. In Benson P. & Voller P. (Eds.) *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning*. London: Longman.
- Yang, Nae-Dong. (1998). Exploring a new role for teachers: promoting learner autonomy. *System* 26 (1998) 127-135.