

Teachers' Experience with Boosting Autonomous Learning in the EFL Classroom

تجربة الأساتذة في تحفيز التعلم المستقل في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية

Madiha SENOUCI

Mohamed Lamine Debaghine Setif2 University (Algeria), m.senouci@univ-setif2.dz

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Abstract:

The purpose of the current research is to explore EFL teachers experience with promoting autonomous learning; it aims at identifying both teachers' roles and their corresponding challenges in fostering autonomous learning at MLD Setif-2 University. For this purpose, a questionnaire was administered to 29 EFL teachers. As a sampling technique, the researcher opted for the convenience sampling. The data were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS.22. The results revealed that teachers frequently performed the role of a "resource" for enhancing autonomous learning. Additionally, they occasionally acted as either a "manager", "counselor" or "facilitator", respectively. A further finding indicated that teachers faced a number of challenges in relation to students, context, and teachers themselves. Accordingly, a number of pedagogical implications were suggested for teachers, administrators, and policy-makers.

Keywords: teacher's role, challenges, experience, autonomous learning, EFL classroom.

ملخص:

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو استكشاف تجربة الأساتذة في تحفيز استقلالية التعلم. تهدف هذه الدراسة الى معرفة دور الاستاذ في تعزيز استقلالية التعلم والتحديات التي يواجهها في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد لمين دباغين سطيف 2. لجمع البيانات، تم تكييف استبيان منظم وتوزيعه على 29 أستاذًا من أساتذة اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية الذين تم اختيارهم بناءً على تقنية أخذ العينات الملائمة. تم تحليل البيانات كمياً باستخدام برنامج الحزمة الاحصائية للعلوم الاجتماعية SPSS.22. تشير النتائج إلى أن الاساتذة كثيراً ما يعملون "كمورد" كدور رئيسي لتعزيز استقلالية المتعلم. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، في بعض الأحيان، يؤدي الأستاذ دور "مدير" أو "مستشار" أو "ميسر" على التوالي. أشارت نتيجة أخرى إلى أن المعلمين واجهوا عدداً من التحديات المتعلقة بالسياق والطالب والمعلم. وبناءً عليه، تم اقتراح عدد من التوصيات التربوية للأساتذة والإداريين وصانعي القرار.

كلمات مفتاحية: دور الأستاذ، التحديات، تجربة، التعلم المستقل، قسم اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

1. Introduction:

During the past four decades, the concept of “learning autonomy” has become a central concern among theorists and educators, and learners in Higher Education all around the world, are required to become independent decision-makers to maximize their opportunities for success in life. This shift towards a more student-centered approach has created new responsibilities and challenges for EFL teachers. This latter is no longer a knowledge provider; he/she should implement new practices to perform different roles to facilitate the learning process and train learners on how to learn. This new realm for EFL teachers needs more exploration of the components of teachers’ roles and the challenges they face when trying to foster LA.

1.1. Definition of Learning Autonomy in EFL Context:

The concept of “learning autonomy” has become a trend and a desirable goal in modern language education. Holec, the father of LA., first introduced the term “autonomy” in 1981 and defined it as the capacity to assume control of one's learning. Another definition concerning EFL context is provided by Little (1991, p.4), who defined LA as a scenario in which the learner is responsible for all decisions related to their learning and the execution of those decisions. Accordingly, Benson (2006, p.22) introduces a more comprehensive definition combining Holec’s and Little’s definitions. He claims that LA in language learning depends on developing and practicing the capacity for critical reflection, decision making and independent actions. The autonomous learner takes responsibility for determining the purpose, content, process and methods of his/her learning, monitoring their progress, and evaluating and their achievement. Hence, autonomous learners are those who apply learning strategies with “their own free will” to learn more effectively (Dörnyei, 2003, cited in Senouci, 2019, p.13). In this regard, teachers are supposed to play a significant role in promoting of LA.

1.2. Teacher’s Role in Fostering Learning Autonomy:

Since adopting LA to EFL classroom is a teacher’s decision, promoting LA depends highly on the teacher, who needs to redefine and re-examine his role (HollCrabbe, 1999), and deviate from the traditional teacher role. Accordingly, teachers are required to learn new strategies to take different roles in promoting LA. Thavenius (1999) argues that “developing learner autonomy involves a lot

more for the teacher role than most teachers realize" (p.159). Reviewing the related literature concerning the most emphasized roles, teachers may perform the roles of a facilitator, counselor, resource, and, or manager. These roles may vary according to the context.

a) Facilitator: The facilitator usually means a helper who makes learning easier (Chiu, 2005 cited in Alonazi, 2017, p.186). In this regard, by serving as a facilitator, the teacher develops students' self-confidence, interest and enthusiasm in LA (Zhao, 2018, p.70); and makes the learning process more flexible and successful. A facilitator assists learners in planning and executing independent learning. On the other hand, the facilitator provides learners with psychosocial support to raise their awareness of the importance of LA (Alonazi, 2017, p. 186). Hence, the teacher needs be a facilitator to encourage LA.

b) Counselor: In this role, the teacher should accompany the learner through the learning process and be ready to react meaningfully to the learning problems and anticipate their occurrence (Camelleri, 1999, p.38). In this respect, Zhao (2018, p.70) claims that when the teacher functions as a counselor, he/she should offer feasible suggestions for learners to find the best solutions for their learning problems. In doing so, the teacher helps learners to learn more efficiently and be more self-directed (Voller, 1997). Therefore, the counselor aids students in discussing their accomplishments, challenges, and problem-solving approaches, placing a focus on individualized one-on-one interactions.

c) Resource: The resource role helps learners to optimize the learning opportunities and conditions by providing them with a range of alternatives: knowledge, information, learning materials, and strategies to promote LA and meet students' needs (Zhao, 2018, p.70; Camelleri 1999, p. 36). In this regard, Alonazi (2017, p.186) claims that learner autonomy involves ensuring that learners have access to suitable resource materials that can be utilized individually or collaboratively in group settings. Hence, the role of a resource is particularly fitting for students who aspire to learn independently but still require assistance from their teacher.

d) Manager: The teacher must be capable of devising and coordinating various games and activities, including roleplay, group discussions, presentations, and debates. They should articulate explicit instructions for the activities and elucidate the significance of tasks for the purpose of learning (Harmer, 2007).

Accordingly, the manager role implies the ability to identify the possible directions for learners to achieve their goals. Hence, to promote LA, teachers are encouraged to establish opportunities for learners to engage in spontaneous learning and to take the initiative in constructing their own knowledge. (Camelleri, 1999, Alonazi, 2017).

Therefore, teachers have a crucial role in helping learners practice autonomy inside and outside the classroom. Therefore, teachers should clearly know the practices for performing their role successfully to develop LA. In this regard, Little (2000) argues that successful learning involves the development of independence in learners, encompassing both the method and substance of learning. However, I also maintain that, for the majority of learners, achieving autonomy necessitates the support, enlightenment, and direction provided by a skilled teacher” (cited in Zhao, 2018, p.70). Other roles of minor emphasize are a trainer, an instructor, a coordinator, a cooperator, an assessor, a monitor, a researcher, and a developer. However, most of their related practices are included in the four previously explained roles.

1.3. Challenges Faced by Teachers when Fostering Learning Autonomy:

In trying to fulfill the requirements of the roles for fostering LA, teachers may face several constraints and challenges. These challenges are related to three major factors: the teacher, the student, and the context. To start with, teacher-related challenges are various. First, teachers lack autonomy and experience in LA training. If teachers are not initially exposed to the significance of learner autonomy during their training, they may face challenges in fostering and encouraging learner autonomy later on. (Borg & Albusaidi, 2012). Second, 2) teachers’ beliefs and perceptions since teachers who believe in the idea of student-centered learning is better to develop and promote LA than those who believe in the traditional teacher-centered approach (Alonazi, 2017). Third, the lack of knowledge of teaching strategies that can promote learner autonomy and a lack of time in the curriculum for promoting LA. Finally, teachers fear of losing authority if students develop LA. Furthermore, student-related challenges include the following elements. First, students’ limited proficiency in English, which may inhibit their ability to develop LA. Second, students lack of motivation to become autonomous learners, and students’ lack of the ability and skills to use resources or learning strategies for LA. Third, students’ total dependence on the teachers’ instructions and decisions. Fifth, students’ focus on

exam results rather than learning progress. Finally, students' limited exposure to English outside the classroom makes the opportunities for practicing LA limited (Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012; Alialbakhshi, 2015). Third, context- related challenges include the following categories. First, policy constraints and institutional inflexibility, limit the freedom of the teacher to promote LA, and neglect the role of the learner in the canvas with its prescribed objectives, materials, and assessment system. Second, the lack of resources, and ICTs for teachers and students for example, the webs, the Internet, and videos, makes it difficult for both to develop LA (Alibakhshi, 2015; Le & An, 2019). Third, the lack of autonomy-oriented workshops or training for teachers; and finally, the insufficient time allotted for the modules (Le & An, 2019).

1.4. Previous Related Studies on Teacher's Role and Faced Challenges when Fostering Learning Autonomy:

Empirical research focusing on different issues of teacher's role and challenges of promoting LA is developing (Balçikanlı, 2010; Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012; Alibakhshi, 2015; Alonazi, 2017; Le & An, 2019, 2020; Wiraningsih & Dewi, 2020). In the following sections, a summary of the major results of those studies is implemented.

Balçikanlı (2010) explores teachers' beliefs about LA in 112 Turkish EFL teachers at Gazi University. The findings indicate that teachers hold positive beliefs about LA principles. They include students in the decision-making process (e.g., objectives of course, classroom management, homework task, and selecting materials). However, they refuse to involve students in decision-making about time, place, and textbook, of course. Another study was conducted by Borg & Al Busaidi (2012) to investigate the beliefs and practices of LA of English teachers at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. The results reveal that teachers hold positive beliefs about LA and teachers agree that LA has positive impacts on EFL learning. Another finding entails that teachers face challenges in promoting LA in relation to the institution, the teacher and the students.

Furthermore, Alibakhshi (2015) investigated the challenges in promoting LA following a qualitative research design with 23 Iranian EFL teachers in different universities in Tehran. The results reveal that the most frequently mentioned challenges are related to the institution including prescribed objectives, materials, and assessment methods, followed by challenges related to

learners. The least mentioned challenges are the ones related to the teacher. Alonazi (2017) conducted a study to explore the roles played by teachers in promoting LA in Saudi EFL secondary schools with 60 EFL teachers in Riyadh. The results reveal that English language teachers frequently encourage autonomous learners in their classrooms. They implement different practices about the four roles: facilitator, counselor, resource, and manager. Another finding show that teachers face challenges in promoting learner autonomy, including students' insufficient independent learning skills, administrative constraints, and teachers' lack of strategies and experience in fostering autonomy.

In addition, Le & An (2019) investigated the perceptions of students and teachers' roles and challenges in promoting LA in English classes at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology-Vietnam with 12 teachers and 160 first-year EFL students. The research results indicate that most EFL teachers employ strategies such as responsibility-informing practices and in-class activities to facilitate and encourage learner autonomy. In addition, findings indicate that teachers face several challenges, among which are the lack of students' motivation, dependence on the teacher, and the low language proficiency. Finally, Wiraningsih & Dewi (2020) conducted a descriptive-qualitative study to describe the roles of four EFL teachers in promoting LA in high schools. The results reveal that in promoting LA, EFL teachers perform the roles of facilitator, counsellor, resource, and manager/organizer. Following the result of the study, a teacher should engage their students in the decision making about learning activities and all aspects of the learning process, such as selecting objectives of the course, managing classroom and selecting the materials.

1.5. The Rational of the Study:

In the Algerian context, promoting LA was first introduced in 2004 with adoption of the LMD system. This latter emphasizes on the learner-centered approach and seeks to promote LA as one of the central tenets of teaching in Higher Education. According to the system, learners need to acquire certain skills to support, control, and take responsibility for their learning process (Senouci, 2018, p.380). Hence, the teachers' role is very crucial within this system. However, teachers seem to face many obstacles when trying to perform their roles in promoting LA. Despite the existence of legitimate research on the topic about teachers' perceptions and practices of LA (Balçıklı, 2010; Joshi,

2011; Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012; Al Asmari, 2013, Alhaysoni, 2016; Harati, 2017; Mesiani & Ramber, 2017; Senouci, 2018), research about teachers' role and challenges in promoting LA is not well, and the Algerian teachers' case is not well investigated with no study tackled the topic at the English department of Mohamed Lamine Debaghine University. Therefore, this study bridges the gap by further exploring Algerian EFL teachers' roles and encountered challenges when trying to foster LA.

1.6. Purpose of the Study:

This research aims is to investigate EFL teachers' experience with fostering LA at the Mohammed Lamine Debaghine Setif2 University. It attempts to identify the roles performed by the teacher in promoting LA along with the major corresponding challenges.

2. Research Methodology:

This section presents the research questions, participants, data collection tools and procedures.

2.1. Research Questions:

The study attempts to address the following research inquiries:

- What are the roles performed by teachers for fostering LA in the EFL classroom?
- What are the challenges teachers face when trying to foster LA in the EFL classroom?

2.2. Participants:

This study was conducted with 29 teachers from the Department of English Language and Literature at Mohammed Lamine Debaghine University, Setif2, Algeria. The sample consists of 26 females and three males with teaching experience that varies between 1 to 22 years and educational qualification that ranges from License to Doctorate.

2.3. Instrument:

The tool used for collecting data is an adapted structured questionnaire from Alibakhshi (2015), Alonazi (2017), and Le & An (2019). It consists of three major sections. The first section is about the background information of participants about age, highest qualifications, age and teaching experience. The second section is about the role of the teacher in promoting LA. It consists of 20 items about the four roles namely: facilitator, counselor, source and manager. The items are evaluated on a five-point Likert-scale from “never to very frequently”. The third section is about the challenges facing teachers when trying to promote LA. It consists of 15 challenges set on a five-point Likert scale from “strongly disagree, to strongly agree”. Cronbach’s alpha for internal reliability of the questionnaire measured at level $\alpha = .79$, which is superior to .70 which entails that the tool is reliable and meets the research purposes.

2.4. Procedures:

For choosing the participants in this research, a convenience sampling technique was implemented, and teachers were selected based on their availability and willingness to participate. A total of 35 questionnaires were administered to teachers; 29 questionnaires were completed and returned. For data analysis procedures, since the questionnaire is structured with close-ended questions only, the answers were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS.22 via frequencies, percentages, mean and rank.

3. Results and Discussion:

The results are structured and analyzed under two sub-headings related to the two research questions namely the roles of teachers in promoting LA and the challenges of fostering LA.

3.1. Teachers’ Roles for Fostering Learning Autonomy in EFL Classroom:

This section answers the first research question about the roles played by the teacher in promoting LA in EFL classrooms.

3.1.1. Teachers' Role as a Facilitator for Fostering LA:

In this subsection, the analysis for the EFL teachers' practices of the role "Facilitator" will be provided along with possible interpretations and discussion.

Table1

Teachers' Role as a Facilitator for Fostering LA

Item	Mean	%	Response Level	Rank
1. Helping students set up their own learning objectives.	1.94	38.8	Rarely	4
2. Helping students select their learning materials.	3.22	64.4	Frequently	1
3. Helping students evaluate their own learning and progress.	2.22	44.4	Occasionally	3
4. Encouraging students reflect on their learning process.	2.44	48.8	Occasionally	2
Total	2.45	49	Occasionally	

Source: Statistical Analysis of the Current Research Data

As shown in Table 1, the total mean value is (2.45) indicating that teachers perform the role of "facilitator" *occasionally*. Item 2 has the highest mean value (3.22), meaning that teachers *frequently* help students select their learning materials. On the other hand, Item 3 and Item 4 received mean values of (2.22) and (2.44) respectively, which means that teachers *occasionally* aid students to assess their learning development and think about their learning process. However, teachers *rarely* help students set their learning objectives, as indicated in Item 1, with the lowest mean value (1.94). The findings in this section indicate that teachers perform the role of a "facilitator" mainly by helping learners select their learning material. When it comes to evaluating and reflecting upon learning, teachers use the practices occasionally, as they seem to be reluctant to give learners the chance to assess their learning. This might be the result of some student related-challenges, such as low English proficiency. This finding contradicts Joshi (2011), Balçıkanlı (2010) and Alonazi (2017), Zhao (2018) in which teachers perform the role of a "facilitator" by supporting learners to think about and assess their learning, which helps learners to think critically upon their learning competence. The specific findings about teachers refusing to allow students decide their learning objectives is similar to a finding from Wiraningsih & Dewi (2020). This can be explained due to teachers' belief that students still need guidance and that the teacher is responsible for setting students' learning

objectives. However, to be a “facilitator” the teacher should involve students in deciding about the the content and process of their learning.

3.1.2. Teachers’ Role as a Counselor for Fostering LA:

In this subsection, the analysis of the EFL teachers’ practices of the role of “Counselor” will be provided, along with possible interpretations and discussion.

Table2

Teachers’ Role as a Counselor for Fostering LA

Item	Mean	%	Response Level	Rank
5. Making students aware of the skills and strategies needed to learn by their own.	3.05	61	Frequently	2
6. Identifying psychological problems that inhibit students’ progress.	1.94	38.8	Rarely	5
7. Making dialogues with students to find solutions for their learning difficulties.	2.94	58.8	Occasionally	3
8. Encouraging students to make study plans.	2.33	46.6	Occasionally	4
9. Being positive and supportive especially when giving feedback	3.08	61.6	Frequently	1
Total	2.66	53.36	Occasionally	

Source: Statistical Analysis of the Current Research Data

From Table 2, the total mean value is (2.66), indicating that teachers perform the role of “counselor” *occasionally*. Item 5 and Item 9 have the highest mean values of (3.05) and (3.08), respectively; which means that teachers *frequently* raise students’ awareness of the skills and strategies needed to learn independently and are positive and supportive especially when giving feedback. On the other hand, Item 7 and Item 8 received mean values of (2.94) and (2.33) respectively; which means that teachers *occasionally* engage in conversations with students to identify and address their learning challenges, fostering a collaborative atmosphere. Motivate students to develop personalized study schedules. However, teachers *rarely* identify psychological problems that inhibit students’ progress, as indicated in Item 6, with the lowest mean value (1.94). The finding indicates that EFL teachers perform the role of “a counselor” mainly through raising learners’ awareness of the strategies to be learned and providing positive, supportive feedback. However, teachers seem to neglect the one-to-one teacher/learner dialogue and identify and anticipate learning problems, which are

considered the basics for the role of “a counselor”. This can also be justified with the constraints facing teachers for promoting LA, such as the fear to lose authority. This finding disagrees with results from Alonazi (2017) and Wiraningsih & Dewi (2020), in which teachers are reported to perform the role of “counselor” by advising and making dialogue with learners to establish a positive autonomous environment and solve learning problems. It was reported that teachers acting as counselors should offer help to students and manage to react to students’ inquiries and solve their learning difficulties (Al Asmari, 2013; Zhao, 2018).

3.1.3. Teachers’ Role as a Resource for Fostering LA:

In this subsection, the analysis of the EFL teachers’ practices of the role of “Resource” will be provided along with possible interpretations and discussion.

Table3

Teachers’ Role as a Resource for Promoting LA

Item	Mean	%	Response Level	Rank
10. Suggesting tools and techniques for self-assessment	3.11	62.2	Frequently	6
11. Using computer-based learning materials.	3.38	67.6	Frequently	3
12. Selecting and evaluating resources according to students’ needs and levels.	3.19	63.8	Frequently	5
13. Suggesting websites that motivate students to use the English outside classroom	3.61	72.2	Frequently	2
14. Encouraging students to read English sources outside classroom.	3.86	77.2	Frequently	1
15. Encouraging students to study with their peers.	3.36	67.2	Frequently	4
Total	3.41	68.36	Frequently	

Source: Statistical Analysis of the Current Research Data

Table 3 reveals the total mean value (3.41), indicating that teachers perform the role of “Resource” *frequently*. All the six items in this table have mean values > three which means that teachers *frequently* suggest tools and techniques for self-assessment (3.11); use computer-based learning materials (3.38); select and evaluate resources according to students’ needs and levels (3.19); suggest websites that motivate students to use English outside classroom (3.61); encourage students to read English sources outside classroom (3.86) and encourage students to study with their colleagues (3.36). Item 13 and Item 14

have the highest mean value of (3.61) and (3.86) respectively. The findings of this subsection entail that EFL teachers frequently perform the role of a “resource” trying to provide learners with a wide range of techniques, strategies, learning materials and resources, assessment techniques, and study habits. In this regard, Harmer (2017) claims that teachers should guide learners through the available sources of information and encourages them to search for it independently. This finding goes hand in hand with Balçıkanlı (2010) Alonazi (2017), and Wiraningsih & Dewi (2020), who claim that the role of a resource is more appropriate in situations where learners try to work independently but are still in need of teachers’ guidance.

3.1.4. Teachers’ Role as a Manager for Fostering LA:

In this subsection, the analysis for the EFL teachers’ practices of the role “Manager” is to be provided along with possible interpretations and discussion.

Table 4

Teachers’ Role as a Manager for Fostering LA

Item	Mean	%	Response Level	Rank
16. Organizing different kinds of games and activities in the classroom.	2.38	47.6	Occasionally	3
17. Providing clear instructions of the tasks assigned to students.	4.05	80.4	Very Frequently	1
18. Explaining the purposes and the significance of the tasks assigned to students.	3.25	65	Frequently	2
19. Giving learners opportunities to tell their opinions about the classroom management.	2.38	47.6	Occasionally	3
20. Giving learners opportunities to tell their opinions about learning activities	2.30	46	Occasionally	4
Total	2.87	57.32	Occasionally	

Source: Statistical Analysis of the Current Research Data

As indicated in Table 4, the total mean value is (2.87) indicating that teachers perform the role of “manager” *occasionally*. Item 17 and Item 18 have the highest mean values of (4.05) and (3.25) respectively; which means that teachers *very frequently* offer explicit guidance on assigned tasks and *frequently* elucidate the objectives and importance of those tasks for students. On the other hand, Item 16, Item 19 and Item 20 received mean values of (2.38), (2.38), and (2.30), respectively, which means that teachers *occasionally* organize different kinds of

games and activities in the classroom, provide learners with opportunities to express their opinions about the classroom management and their learning activities. This result indicates that teachers perform the role of “manager” mainly by explaining the objective and the value of the activities assigned to students clearly. However, teachers do not involve learners in decisions about the provided learning activities and classroom management, which can be again a result of teachers’ fear to lost authority. This finding is similar to Alonazi (2017) and Wiraningsih & Dewi (2020). However, they disagree with the fact that teachers do not frequently organize games and activities in the classroom, and students are occasionally encouraged to give opinions about learning activities and classroom management. In previous studies (Balçıkanlı, 2010, Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012, Alonazi, 2017; and Wiraningsih & Dewi, 2020), teachers are reported to support the involvement of learners in decision-making about learning tasks and classroom management.

Table5*The Means and Ranks of the Four Roles*

Roles	Mean	Percent	Response Level	Rank
1. Facilitator	2.45	49	Occasionally	4
2. Counselor	2.66	53.36	Occasionally	3
3 Resource	3.41	68.36	Frequently	1
4. Manager	2.87	57.32	Occasionally	2
Total	2.84	56.8	Occasionally	

Source: Statistical Analysis of the Current Research Data

The data in Table 5 show that the total mean for the four roles is (2.84), indicating that EFL teachers *occasionally* perform the roles of fostering LA. Ranked from the highest to the lowest are: 1) “Resource” with a mean value of (3.41); 2) “Manager” with a mean value of (2.87); 3) “Counselor” with mean value of (2.66); and 4) “Facilitator” with a mean value of (2.45), as the most minor role performed by teachers. Although the fact that the roles for promoting LA are not frequently performed by the participants in this study, the finding goes hand in hand with the ones of Balçıkanlı (2010), Joshi (2011), Borg & Al Busaidi (2012), Alonazi (2017), in which EFL teachers are found to perform multiple roles to foster learner autonomy with different degrees. However, to promote LA successfully, teachers should concentrate mainly on the roles of facilitator, counselor, resource and manager.

3.2. The Challenges of Fostering Learning Autonomy in EFL Classroom:

Teachers' attempts to promote LA can be influenced by several hindrances. In this section, teachers are asked about the challenges they face when trying to promote LA. Their answers will be discussed to answer the second research question.

3.2.1. Teacher- Related Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers when Fostering LA:

In this subsection, the analysis of the student-related challenges faced by EFL teachers when promoting LA is to be provided, along with possible interpretations and discussion.

Table 6

Teacher- Related Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers When Fostering LA

Item	Mean	Percent	Response Level	Rank
1 Teachers lack the necessary strategies to foster learner autonomy.	3.06	61.73	Agree	3
2 Teachers themselves are not autonomous and lack the experience in LA.	3.13	62.75	Agree	2
3 Teachers' are afraid of losing authority	3.96	79.31	Agree	1
Total	3.46	67.66	Agree	

Source: Statistical Analysis of the Current Research Data

As indicated in Table 6, generally, teachers seem to face some teacher-related challenges when promoting LA with a total mean value of (3.46) indicating that the participants agree with the three items for challenges. The majority of teachers *agree* that the fear of losing authority, lack of teacher autonomy and the experience in LA, and teachers' lack of the necessary strategies to foster LA are the major potential challenges with mean values of (3.96), (3.13), and (3.06) respectively. The finding of this section concerning teachers' fear of losing authority agrees with Alibakhshi (2015) results, which indicate that teachers are afraid to lose authority if they tolerate learners developing LA; and their status as teachers might be threatened. In addition, the findings confirm the results of Alonazi (2017), in which teachers are reported to lack autonomy and the different strategies to develop autonomy, and contradict results from Le & An (2019) in which teachers are found to be autonomous and

aware of the strategies to foster LA. Teachers in the current study may not be aware of the roles they have to perform to foster LA; and need to learn about the metacognitive strategies, which are prerequisites for teachers to succeed in the role of LA promoter, and in turn, help the teachers develop teaching autonomy. Hence, the cultivation of autonomy in teachers is improbable without undergoing training that prioritizes autonomy-oriented teaching methodologies (Balçıkanlı, 2010). As a result, teachers can incorporate the promotion of LA into their teaching practice.

3.2.2. Student- Related Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers when Fostering LA:

In this subsection, the analysis of the student-related challenges faced by EFL teachers when promoting LA is to be provided, along with possible interpretations and discussion.

Table 7

Student- Related Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers When Fostering LA

Item	Mean	Percent	Response Level	Rank
4. Students lack the knowledge and skills for identifying their needs and becoming autonomous learners.	3.48	69.65	Agree	5
5. Students lack motivation in learning English.	3.68	73.79	Agree	3
6. Students always rely on teachers' instruction and decisions.	4.03	80.68	Strongly Agree	1
7 Students have limited opportunities to use English outside the classroom.	3.27	65.51	Agree	6
8. Students focus on passing exams with high grades.	3.62	72.41	Agree	4
9. Students' have a low English proficiency	3.89	77.93	Agree	2
Total	3.66	73.23	Agree	

Source: Statistical Analysis of the Current Research Data

As indicated in table 7, generally, teachers seem to face many student-related challenges when promoting LA with a total mean value of (3.66) indicating that teachers *agree* with all the six items for challenges. The majority of teachers *agree* that students' low English proficiency, students' lack motivation to learn, students' focus on passing exams with high grades, students' lack of knowledge and skills for identifying their needs and becoming autonomous learners, and students' limited opportunities to use English outside the

classroom are the major potential challenges in this area with mean values of (3.89), (3.68), (3.62), (3.48) and (3.27), respectively. On the other hand, teachers *strongly agree* that the students' total reliance on teachers' instruction and decisions is the major challenge facing teachers in promoting LA, with mean value of (4.03). The results from the table agree with the ones of Alialbakhshi (2015), and Le & An (2019) in which teachers claim that their students' reliance on the teachers' instructions, their low motivation and English proficiency are among the major hindrances towards promoting LA. This finding of students' total reliance on the teacher may result from low English proficiency and leads to low levels of learning motivation (Ramos, 2006). At the same time, teachers cannot help learners with low motivation and English proficiency to become autonomous. Therefore, learners need to be trained in using LA strategies to create a certain degree of LA with teachers' support.

3.2.3. Context- Related Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers when Fostering LA:

In this subsection, the analysis for the context-related challenges faced by EFL teachers when promoting LA is to be provided along with possible interpretations and discussion.

Table 8

Context- Related Challenges Faced by EFL Teachers When Fostering LA

Item	Mean	%	Response Level	Rank
10. Technology is insufficiently provided for EFL learning in the context.	3.65	73	Agree	6
11. Rules and regulations of the faculty limit teachers' freedom in making choices and decisions on their instruction.	4.2	84	Strongly Agree	2
12. Professional development workshops on autonomy have never been provided.	3.86	77.2	Agree	5
13. Prescribed objectives, materials and assessment system hinder teachers' creation	4.1	82	Strongly Agree	3
14. Ignoring the role of the learner in the canvas	4.31	86.2	Strongly Agree	1
15. The weekly allotted time for the modules is limited.	4.06	81.2	Strongly Agree	4
Total	4	80	Strongly Agree	

Source: Statistical Analysis of the Current Research Data

As indicated in Table 8, in general, teachers seem to face many context-related challenges when promoting LA, with a total mean value of (4), indicating that teachers *strongly agree* with all 6 items for challenges. The majority of teachers *strongly agree* that rules and regulations of the faculty, the prescribed objectives, materials, and assessment system, ignoring the role of the learner in the canvas, and the limited weekly-allotted time for the modules are the major potential challenges with mean values of (4.2), (4.1), (4.31) and (4.06) respectively. On the other hand, teachers *agree* that the insufficient technology provided for EFL learning and the lack of professional development workshops on autonomy are further challenges facing teachers, with mean values of (3.65) and (3.86) respectively. These findings are similar to the ones from Alibakhshi (2015), Le & An (2019) and Alonazi (2020) in which the limited time allotted for the modules, the regulations of the faculty, and the prescribed objectives, materials, and assessment systems are found to be the main hindrances facing teachers. In this regard, Little (2007) asserts that “institutional constraints include rules and regulations, curricula, prescribed adjectives, and assessment, and classroom practices are all potential hindrances for the teachers’ roles in promoting LA (cited in Wiraningsuh & Dewi, 2020, p.298). Hence, institutional inflexibility and pressure are factors working against teachers’ attempts to develop LA. On the other hand, Le & An (2019) study revealed that the lack of workshops and training on LA is considered a further central context-related challenge for the teachers, which is not the case for this study as that challenge ranks last.

Table9*The Three Categories of Challenges in Promoting LA*

Challenges	Mean	Percent	Response Level	Rank
Teacher-Related Challenges	3.46	69.2	Agree	3
Student- Related Challenges	3.66	73.2	Agree	2
Context-Related Challenges	4	80	Strongly Agree	1
Total	3.70	74	Agree	

Source: Statistical Analysis of the Current Research Data

From Table 9, it is shown that EFL teachers face multiple challenges with a total mean value of (3.70), which indicates teachers’ agreement with all the 15 challenges mentioned. Ranked from the highest to the lowest are: 1) context-related challenges with a mean value of (4); 2) student- related challenges with mean value of (3.66); and 3) teacher-related challenges with mean value of (3.46). In general, the findings of the current study go hand in hand with the majority of

the mentioned related research about the challenges of LA (Alibakhshi, 2015; Alonazi, 2017; Le & An, 2019), in which teachers are reported to face different challenges concerning the teacher, the student, and the context. The challenges are found to be common in all studies with slight differences in their ranking. The current study results are identical to results from Alibakhshi (2015) , in which context-related challenges are ranked first, followed by student-related challenges, then context-related challenges. However, in Alonazi (2017) and Le & An (2019) study, student-related challenges are ranked first, followed by context related teacher related challenges respectively.

Conclusion:

The purpose of the current study is to explore EFL teachers' roles and challenges in fostering LA at the university level. The results from the questionnaire revealed valuable information about the practices teachers use to perform roles in order to develop LA in EFL classrooms. Teachers are reported to frequently perform the role of a resource of language input and strategies meant to enhance LA. On the other hand, teachers are found to occasionally perform the roles of a manager, counselor, and facilitation, which are considered at the heart of the process of promoting autonomous learning. Concerning the challenges faced by EFL teachers, the findings reveal that participants are encountered with all types of challenges related to teacher, students and context. First, context-related challenges, the most encountered by teachers, are policy inflexibility since the Ministry of Higher Education is responsible for all decisions and teachers are forced to follow the prescribed canvas with little room for teachers or students to make changes in objectives, types of materials used and the assessment criteria applied. Second, learners-related challenges, such as students' total reliance on the teacher, passiveness and de-motivation, and poor language proficiency level. Finally, teacher-related challenges, such as lack of teacher autonomy, lack of experience with implementing LA, and the fear of losing authority while promoting LA. In a nutshell, EFL teachers' performance in their roles to promote LA is limited and mainly exhibited through the role of a resource with less focus on the roles of facilitator, counselor and manager. This can be justified due to the wide range of challenges facing EFL teachers when trying to promote LA.

Following the revealed results, a number of pedagogical implications are offered. First, teachers should be aware of their important role in promoting LA

in EFL classrooms and adjust their roles to adopt the roles of facilitator, counselor and manager more frequently to promote LA for effective learning. Second, policy makers and administrators are invited to organize professional development programs, training, or workshops for teachers to learn how implement LA strategies into their practice and help learners gradually become autonomous. Third, policy makers should consider the principles of LA when designing their canvas to make it easier for the teacher to create appropriate learning situations to practice autonomous learning. They should involve teachers in the decision-making process about objectives, materials and assessment, and teachers should involve their learners in the process. Third, teachers should not perceive LA as a factor that affects their authority and learners' discipline in the classroom and should work in parallel with the Ministry of Higher Education to overcome the potential challenges in the way of promoting LA. Finally, developing LA in EFL classrooms is time and efforts consuming process that needs collaboration among all parties in the Higher Education context, including policymakers, administrators, teachers, and students.

Future Researchers may replicate the study using a mixed-method approach to cross validate the findings. In addition, researchers may deal with students' encountered challenges in developing LA and the solutions to these challenges. Further research may tackle the effect of teacher-related, student-related or context-related challenges on developing LA. Finally, researchers may conduct a quasi-experimental design to measure the effect of teachers' roles of facilitator, counselor, resource or manager on the development of LA and learning.

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