

**Learner autonomy, a key factor for success in English learning
in Algerian schools, how can it be fostered?**

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Abstract

It is necessary to promote EFL learner's autonomy, because the knowledge provided at schools and universities is insufficient. People need to continue studies, if they want to adapt to such a changeable world of science and information in which English is a vehicle for international communication. This research is concerned with learner autonomy in formal language learning contexts (secondary education). It is a case study designed to investigate reasons behind unsuccessful English learning in Algerian schools. It investigates as well learners' readiness for autonomous learning. The purpose of the study is to provide both EFL teachers and learners with suggestions and recommendations to foster learner autonomy for better learning.

Key words: learner autonomy- foster- EFL teachers- learners- Algerian school

ملخص

من الضروري تعزيز استقلالية المتعلم في تعلم اللغة الأجنبية، وذلك لأن المعرفة التي تقدم في المدارس والجامعات غير كافية. جميع التلاميذ بحاجة إلى مواصلة الدراسة، إذا كانوا يريدون التكيف مع هذا العالم السريع التغيرات في مجال العلوم حيث الإنجليزية هي وسيلة للاتصال الدولي. لذا قمنا بهذا البحث الذي يعنى بالاستقلالية والاعتماد على الذات في تعلم الانجليزية في المستوى الثانوي. صممت هذه الدراسة من اجل البحث في الأسباب الكامنة وراء فشل تعلم الانجليزية في المدارس الجزائرية. كما أنها تحقق في مدى استعداد التلاميذ ليكونوا أكثر استقلالية في التعلم. الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو تزويد أساتذة الانجليزية والتلاميذ باقتراحات وتوصيات لتعزيز استقلالية المتعلم من اجل تعلم أفضل.

الكلمات الرئيسية: استقلالية المتعلم - تعزيز - المدرسة الجزائرية- الأساتذة - التلاميذ

1 Introduction

The Algerian Ministry of Education has launched educational reforms in the academic year 2002-2003 so as to change the teaching methodologies. The Competency-Based Approach was implemented in Algerian schools. It is supposed that the CBA has reshaped teacher and learner roles and their responsibility in the language classroom. This approach aims at producing responsible and autonomous learners who are expected to take charge of their learning. Autonomy is one of the bases on which learner –centeredness stands on because: **“autonomy is a precondition for an effective learning.”(Benson, 2001:24)**. In fact, learners nowadays are expected to assume responsibility and take charge of their learning. However, this does not mean that learner autonomy aims at establishing a “teacher less” learning. On the contrary, the teacher role is necessary in fostering his learners’ autonomy. In this context Little says that: **“in formal educational contexts learners do not automatically accept responsibility for their learning, teachers must help them to do so.” (Little, 1996:176)**. So, teachers’ help is essential in promoting learner autonomy through giving a helping hand to learners. However, it is not clear whether or not EFL learners are ready to be more autonomous in learning, and whether or not EFL teachers are ready to put some responsibilities of learning at learners hand, this will be investigated in this study in addition to the reasons for unsuccessful English learning in Algerian schools from teachers’ perspectives. However, a definition of autonomy is highly recommended at first.

2 What is Learner Autonomy?

There is no consensus on the concept of autonomy in education. It is a multifaceted concept whose meaning has been discussed from many perspectives. One of the fields in which the concept of autonomy was firstly developed is politics. Autonomy as a political concept originated in the Ancient Greek, philosophers such as: Aristotle, and Socrates who claimed for citizens’ right to self-government. Imported originally from the fields of politics and moral philosophy, autonomy as a political concept was popular in the Enlightenment period and the French revolution in 1789. The word autonomous comes from the Greek words "auto–nomus" referring to someone or something which lives by his/her own rule. It is, therefore, understood that autonomous learning is related to self directed studies. The concept of autonomous learning has been given a great importance since the 1970's; it is one of the most valuable spin-offs of communicative language learning environment. It is generally agreed that the concept of autonomy first entered the field of learning and teaching through the council of Europe's Modern Languages Project which was founded in 1971. The current debate about autonomy in second and foreign language learning originated in Holec's Autonomy and foreign language learning first published in 1979, where he provides a definition of learner autonomy as: **To say of a learner that he is autonomous is to say that he is capable of taking charge of his own**

learning and nothing more...to take charge of one's learning is to bear responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning. (Holec, 1981:3) The above mentioned roles cannot all be played by the Algerian pupils in the secondary education. Thus, learner autonomy as viewed by Holec is really a far reaching aim in the Algerian context.

Other researchers do not agree with him and maintain that Holec's account of learner autonomy does not take into consideration **"the nature of the cognitive capabilities underlying effective self-management of learning."** (Benson, 2001:49). Little (1991) also realizes this in Holec's definition and argues that: **Autonomy is a capacity - for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action. (Little, 1991: 3-4)** For this reason, Benson (2001) is for Little's definition and argues that this definition adds a vital psychological aspect to Holec's one in that it describes autonomy as a cognitive and self - management processes of learning.

A more elaborated definition of learner autonomy is also put forward by Jeffries (1990) who views it as **"learning in which an individual or a group of learners study on their own possibly for a part or parts of a course, without direct intervention from a tutor, so that to take a greater responsibility for what they learn."**(Jeffries, 1990:35). Jeffries' definition of learner autonomy seems to be the most suitable for the purposes that are dealt with in this study. This is because we are much more concerned with this kind of partial autonomy not with the full or total autonomy, i.e, absence of the teacher either throughout all the phases of the overall learning process (total autonomy) or throughout one or a number of these phases (partial autonomy).

3 Individual and Group Autonomy

Learner autonomy is not only individual but also collaborative and entails some: **"capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others."** (Dam, 2003:1). Learning does not necessarily imply learning individually, in fact, interaction; negotiation and collaboration are important factors in promoting learner autonomy. Littlewood (1999) attributes two characteristics to the practice of autonomy

which he calls proactive and reactive autonomy. Proactive autonomy according to Littlewood (1999) is when: **"learners take charge of their own learning, determine their objectives, select methods and evaluate what has been acquired."**(Littlewood, 1999:75). whereas reactive autonomy is: **"the kind which does not create its own directions but one direction has been initiated."** (ibid). This is an important distinction since it allows the practice of autonomy as a matter of individual expression, and a feature of collaborative environments such as the project workshops which are introduced in the middle and the secondary school. The individual is supposed to interact negotiate and share responsibility and work within the group.

Another distinction is made by Dam (2003) who puts forwards full and partial autonomy. With full autonomy learners are in charge of their own learning decisions and actions. With partial autonomy a learning programme combines autonomous and non-autonomous elements. This may happen in the classroom where autonomous activities are done both individually or in peer and group work, within the interference of the teacher so as to provide guidance. Before dealing with full autonomy in the Algerian context, partial autonomy should be fostered as a first step in the long journey towards full autonomy.

4 The Rise of Autonomy in Language Education in Algeria

The concept of autonomy in language learning is linked to the communicative approach both historically and theoretically. The rise of autonomy in language learning in the 1970's and 1980's was connected to a broad rejection of behaviorist assumptions about the nature of second language acquisition. Some researchers started looking at language as a tool for communication. Indeed the communicative approach has put an emphasis on communicative functions of language, individuals' needs, social norms and autonomy. In the 1990's, several researchers associated with the development of the communicative approach have explored the relationship of autonomy to their work (Littlewood, 1997, 1999; Nunan, 1995).

As far as our research is concerned, and throughout the history of teaching methods in Algeria, the notion of autonomy is about to be absent in certain approaches such as: the grammar translation method. Though learners were asked to do plenty of activities on translation at homes for which they use bilingual dictionaries. Thus, autonomy was not fully absent in this method. However, in the audio lingual method the notion of autonomy was more reduced no room is left for learners to learn autonomously as teaching was based on repetitions and drillings. Autonomy is supposed to be gradually implemented in CLT, since learners were encouraged to do self-study tasks so as to improve their pronunciation and communicative skill in general. Autonomy is now highly esteemed and very much emerged with the CBA in secondary education. Partly due to the shift from teacher-centeredness to learner-centeredness. In the CBA autonomy is one of the bases of language learning mainly through doing project works and the use of self-evaluation strategies.

5 Reasons for Learner Autonomy

Many scholars and researchers in the domain of language teaching have believed that autonomy is a very essential characteristic of successful learners. This belief justifies the rationale behind introducing it into the language classroom. Autonomy has become a desirable goal for three reasons: psychological, practical and philosophical.

Psychological reasons	Practical reasons	Philosophical reasons
- learners in general learn better when they are in charge of their own learning. (aware of what and how to learn?) - learners involved in the process are more likely to feel motivated in their learning and motivated learners are generally successful learners	- the need of more suitable teaching situations. The traditional approaches are not practical - there is a wide gap between knowledge obtained at school and the real life outside of it - learners could use the language neither in conversation nor in writing tasks. - in the classroom the teacher may not always be available to assist, due to the large number of students in a classroom, so learners need to be able to learn on their own	- the philosophical rationale behind autonomy is the belief that the individual has the right to be free to make his or her own choices not only in learning a language but also in other subjects - it is important to prepare learners for a swiftly changing future, where independent learning will be indispensable for effective functioning in society.

Such preparation for learner autonomy in learning helps learners also to maximize their life choices, since the attitude and the conception of the role of the individual in society has been a move from: **“man as product of his society” to “man as the producer of his society”** (Holec, 1981:3). According to Holec, if democratic states are to develop and flourish as democracies, they must undertake educational measures to develop the capacity of their citizens to think and act as free and self-determining individuals. So if Algeria is to flourish as a democratic country, plenty of educational measures should be made first, so as to make Algerian learners and in an early age autonomous in their learning, free and self-determining simply because children of today are men of tomorrow. Once they have developed their autonomy as learners in a later stage they develop their autonomy as persons and citizens.

6 Research procedure

Beyond the shadow of doubt, autonomy in learning nowadays is a desirable goal not only in English learning but in education in general, and not only in Algerian context but throughout the world. For this reason, we tried to investigate if EFL learners in Algeria are really autonomous in English learning, we tried as well to find out the reasons behind unsuccessful English learning in Algerian schools. The main focus of this study is to look for ways to foster learner autonomy in English learning. To do so, a questionnaire is submitted to both EFL

teachers and learners in addition to a classroom observation. The study took place in one of the secondary schools in Ain Temouchent (called Tafna). As hypothesis, we may say that both teachers and learners are not familiar with the notion of autonomy,(may have a negative attitude towards it) though the lack of it is one of the major reasons behind unsuccessful learning.

7 Case study: objectives and application

The selection of the type of research is based mainly on the nature of the research itself. Learner autonomy is a phenomenon that actually happens both inside and outside the class. So, a case study was selected as an empirical investigation because as Nunan states:“**a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real- life context.**”(Nunan1997:76). This is why we used a questionnaire to both teachers and learners and a classroom observation to investigate autonomy in the class and responsibility in learning. According to Nunan methodologically, the case study is: “**a “hybrid” in that it generally utilizes a range of methods for collecting and analyzing data, rather than being restricted to a single procedure.**” (Nunan, 1997:74). Thus, we use three research instruments, their choice is justified.

The questionnaire is chosen as an instrument of research because it saves time and effort; one can collect a huge amount of information in a short time. Furthermore, if the questionnaire is well structured, processing data can be fast and relatively straightforward. In the present investigation, a questionnaire has been chosen for eliciting data from the informants to investigate the research questions. It has been administered to 58 teachers and another one to 36 pupils. Classroom observation is one of data-collection techniques; it facilitates the gathering of various aspects of teacher’s teaching practices. It is worth mentioning that in this study both teacher and pupils are targeted. It is not a way of evaluation, but rather a way of gathering information to what extent the observed classroom is an autonomous one.

The teachers were randomly selected from several secondary schools in the wilaya of Ain Temouchent (met during the correction of the Baccalaureat exam). Pupils from Tafna secondary school were as well randomly selected from 1st, 2nd, and 3rd years. The reasons behind the choice of such sample population are justified too. First, pupils have been chosen precisely because they have been learning English through the CBA for many years. Moreover, these pupils are actually taking lessons in computing in school, which would normally allow them to do individual researches on the internet for their projects. Furthermore, these pupils are in the right age to decide about their studies, either to join literary or scientific streams. That is to say, they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses not only in language learning but also in other subjects. The classroom that has been observed is 1AS literary stream 1, in Tafna secondary school which is situated in Hassi El Ghella, an area 20 KM West of Ain

Temouchent. Second, teachers are aware enough to which extent their pupils are autonomous, they are better aware of reasons that make pupils unsuccessful in English learning. Moreover, they can provide a useful insights to this research, through suggesting ways, through which, autonomy can be fostered not as a theory but as a practical construct in the English classroom.

8 Findings and discussions

After collecting data through administering the questionnaire to the informants (teachers and pupils) and after observing an EFL classroom. It comes the phase of analyzing and interpreting the collected data. Findings of the research are discussed from teachers' as well as learners' perspectives.

8.1 Teachers' Responses to the Questionnaire

According to the teachers, the main reasons behind unsuccessful English learning in Algerian schools are psychological, social, and pedagogical as follows

1- In Algeria, English starts to be learned at about 13 of age, which is regarded by many scholars to be the critical age for language learning. The delay in learning English, and the little exposure to this language make learners much influenced by their first language or by French.

2- Secondary pupils are not autonomous instead they are over-reliant on the language teacher. They are less motivated than they ought to. Motivation in fact, is a basic condition for autonomous learning, it is one of the key factors that influence the rate and success of second or foreign language.

3- Low coefficient of foreign languages in Algerian schools is one of the reasons (except for the foreign languages stream) In secondary education pupils give much attention to subjects of high coefficient

4- In Algeria, one can easily notice that students are much influenced by different sources of attitudes. Parents, for instance, are felt to be a crucial source of positive or negative attitudes. In addition to the fact that Algerian EFL learners don't come in touch with English outside the school. According to the questioned teachers, Successful learning also depends on the quality of teaching and the amount of exposure to the target language. That is, learners must be much more exposed to the target language in classroom and even outside the classroom.

5- Besides age, EFL teachers see that psychological side plays a crucial role in language learning. Some affective variables such as stress and anxiety undermine learning.

6- Some pedagogical factors such as lack of, or inadequate teacher training, the large number of pupils in the EFL classroom (reach sometimes 45-50 per class), and lack of preparation of both teachers and learners when innovating and introducing new methods of teaching.

Teachers are asked whether learner autonomy is important in English learning. The aim is in fact to reveal their attitude towards learner autonomy. 96% of the informants have given positive answer. According to most of them

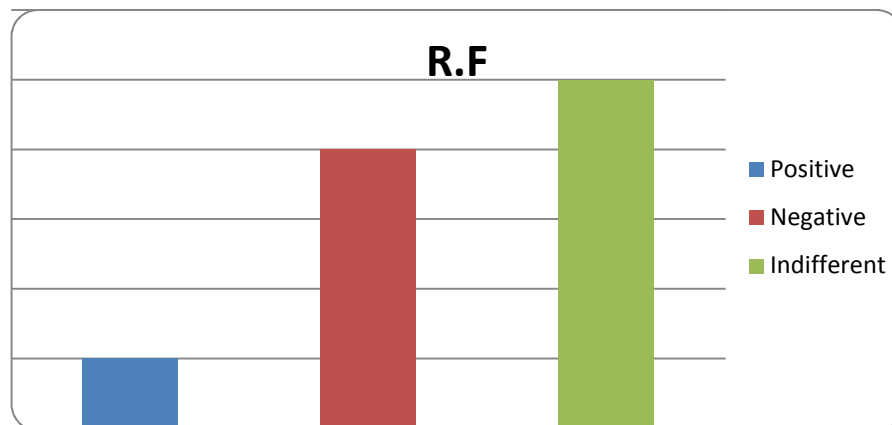
Learner autonomy, a key factor for success in English learning in Algerian schools

autonomy is important except 04% claim the opposite. Generally most teachers have a positive attitude towards learner autonomy.

If secondary teachers' attitude towards learner autonomy is positive, how about that of pupils? To discover this, another question is addressed to teachers whom 10% consider their attitude positive, however, according to 40% of them, pupils' attitude is negative, and half of the informants 50% think they are indifferent. In a word, pupils are either indifferent or have negative attitude towards learner autonomy. Question (07) aims at eliciting teachers' views of a possible change in pupils' attitude. Most of the informants are optimistic for a possibility of change, 80% think that pupils' attitude can be positive. They justify their answer by saying that through motivating learners, raising their awareness, as well as, the use of variety of materials inside and outside the classroom pupils' attitude can be changed so they enjoy English learning and become more and more independent. 20% seem to be pessimistic, they claimed that it is not easy to change pupils' attitude as they are much more reliant on the teachers.

Pupils attitude towards autonomy	A.F	R.F
Positive	05	10 %
Negative	20	40 %
Indifferent	25	50 %
Total number	50	100 %

Table 1 Pupils' attitude towards autonomy.



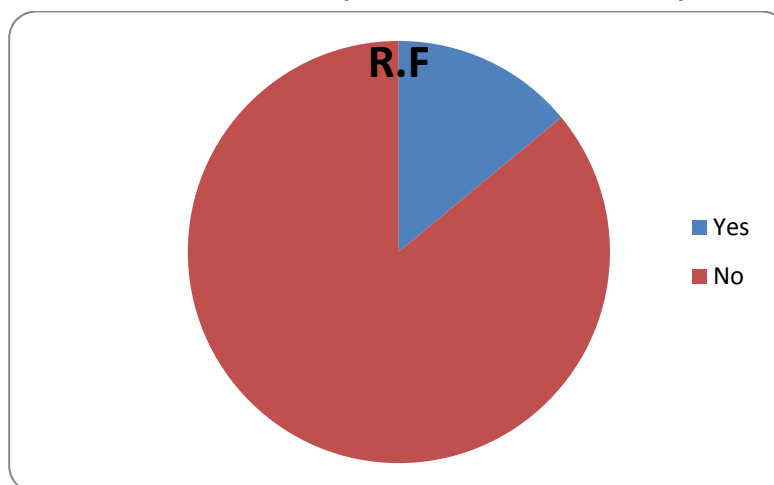
Graph 1 Pupils' attitude towards autonomy

As for proficiency in English learning, teachers are asked whether there is a relation between proficiency and autonomy. The aim is to discover to what extent autonomy effects proficiency. 84% of the respondents claim that both are tightly related. They argue that pupils are not in general highly proficient, because they feel satisfied with the knowledge provided in the classroom, but if they do

further research their level will surely be improved. The question (08) is one of the pillars on which our research is built up on. It is addressed to teachers so as to veil the ambiguity on pupils' readiness for learning autonomously. As expected 86% of the informants considered pupils not ready to take responsibility in English learning. They think that they are so reliant on the teacher and have no readiness for relying on themselves. Only very few teachers (14%) think that pupils are ready to rely on themselves in English learning.

Pupils' readiness for autonomy	A.F	R.F
Yes	07	14 %
No	43	86 %
Total number	50	100 %

Table 2 Pupils' readiness for autonomy



Graph 2 Pupils' readiness for autonomy

Readiness of pupils is essential to foster autonomy. Teachers' readiness too, whether or not teachers are ready for such a change, the answers show that 70% of them are not yet ready to make pupils more responsible in English learning. According to 54.28% of them if responsibility is put in pupils' hands learning is not going to advance since most of them are indifferent. It seems to 24.12% that those pupils are not highly proficient in English to the degree that allows them to be responsible. 11.42% of the informants think that responsibility should not be given to such pupils since they are not provided with strategy based training in learning autonomously.

Teachers who aim at promoting their learners' autonomy should start by themselves (Little, 2002). In fact, we cannot expect secondary teachers in Algeria to foster pupils' autonomy if they do not know what autonomy is. Unexpectedly 55.81% of the informants considered that learner autonomy is dependent on that of the teacher. In contrast, 44.18% of the teacher claimed that the notion of

autonomy should be dealt with at the level of university not in secondary education. Since according to them, English secondary teachers are not independent since the curriculum, the syllabus as well as the approach of teaching are imposed on them, thus, no room for freedom is left for them.

Since the general objective of this study is looking for ways to promote learner autonomy, secondary teachers are asked about the bases on which they should rely in promoting learner autonomy. 40% considered learners' readiness as the first basis while 34% of them think that teacher's role is basic in making pupils gradually relying on themselves in English. Whereas 26% of the informants consider that the availability of materials and study aids are the first condition that should be provided for learners so that they become self-reliant and autonomous.

As for English teachers in the secondary school their pre-service training is mainly done at universities. The informants are required to give their opinion towards the training programs. Surprisingly 94% of the teachers consider themselves as poorly trained towards developing pupils' autonomy. Clearly said, the training programs did not offer them any strategies or techniques so that they make their learners more self-reliant. Few other teachers' opinion is dissimilar 06% of them consider the programs beneficial in paving the way to autonomous learning.

Finally, Relying on their classroom experience, teachers are required to make suggestions on how to promote learner autonomy in and outside the classroom. Teachers made the following suggestions: 1- Change the textbooks in the secondary level or at least enrich them with self-study tasks, reading texts, games, further activities, etc.

2- Provide teachers with autonomy oriented training and learners with strategy based training. 3- Give secondary teachers a larger room for exercising freedom and do not impose on them what and how to teach. 4- Provide teachers with step-by step project preparation and presentation. 5- Motivate learners and augmenting the coefficient of English. 6- Teachers must avoid being spoon feeders. 7- Train teachers to do needs analysis and accept the change in the way of teaching. 8- Reducing the number of pupils in the classroom.

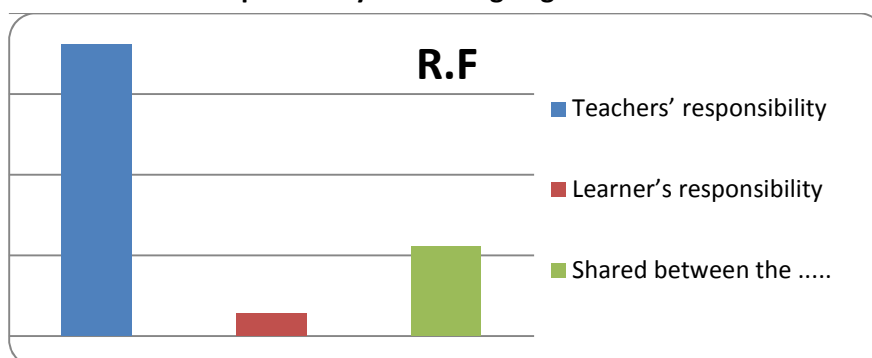
8.2 Pupils Responses to the Questionnaire

The informants while asked about the responsible of English learning in the classroom most of them (72.22%) consider the teacher as the first and the most responsible. 22% of them are somehow more autonomous while claiming that the responsibility of English learning in the classroom is shared between pupils and teachers. only 5.55% of the informants seem to be autonomous. The informants whose answers are negative justify this by saying that they used to rely on the teacher since he knows best. Whereas 5 pupils do not know which strategies to follow so that to be independent in one's learning in a ratio of

15.62%. 4 of them only think that the lack of materials is the first cause of their over-reliance on the teacher in a ratio of 12.5%.

Pupils perception responsibility	A.F	R.F
Teachers' responsibility	26	72.22 %
Learner's responsibility	02	05.55 %
Shared between the.....	08	22.22 %
Total number	36	100 %

Table 3 Responsibility in learning English in the classroom

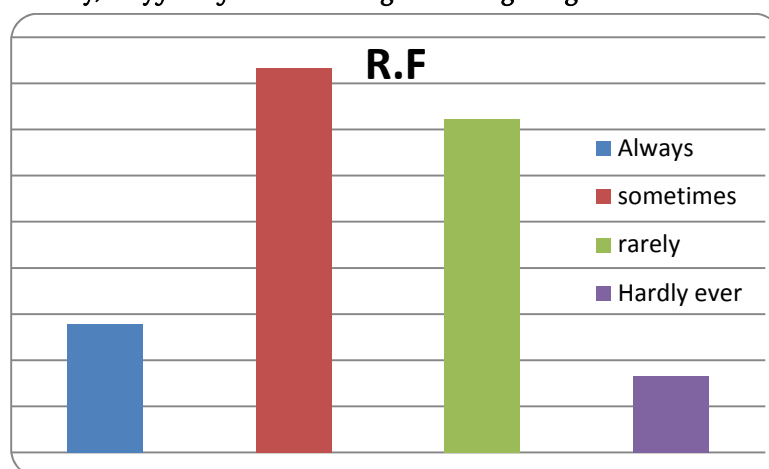


Graph 3 Responsibility in learning English in the classroom

English learning should not stop as the session finishes, instead the successful language learners tend to work out, doing independent research. Pupils who sometimes do are 15. Those who rarely do are about 13 and only 5 pupils always learn English outside school. Those who never do are about 03 pupils. Since most of them are not autonomous and independent enough in learning English. We try to discover which activities they do outside the classroom so that to improve their level in English. Most of pupils are watching films in English language 41.66%. 13 of them navigate on the internet, whereas, 5 of them read books and magazines in English, only 3 pupils use dictionaries and grammar books. In fact, watching films is the easiest and the most comfortable way for pupils to improve their English (of course if they really do it for that purpose).

Learning English out of school	A.F	R.F
Always	05	13.88 %
sometimes	15	41.66 %
rarely	13	36.11 %
Hardly ever	03	08.33 %
Total number	36	100 %

Table 4 Times for learning English out of classroom



Graph 4 Time for learning English out of classroom

In basic terms autonomy is defined as taking the responsibility for one's learning. However, this is not as simple as it may look. Pupils responses to the questionnaire show that they are neither ready to be independent from the teacher nor to take charge of their learning. They still consider the teacher as more responsible for most of the tasks during their own learning process. This study has also showed that pupils are unwilling to take responsibility and continue to see the teacher as a dominant figure who is the decision maker in the classroom. In fact, this is one of the remainings of the traditional approach. Moreover, the pupils are not sufficiently motivated and not self- reliant, therefore, they will deal with learning a language like English in an uninteresting manner.

8.3 Data Collected from the Classroom Observation

Classroom observation facilitates the gathering of various aspects of teacher's teaching practices. It is worth mentioning that in this study both teacher and pupils are targeted. It is not a way of evaluation but rather a way of gathering information to what extent the observed classroom is an autonomous one. The classroom observed consists of 36 pupils, 16 boys and 20 girls. Their curriculum comprises 10 subject matters. They attend 32 lectures hours a week, four hours are devoted to the English lessons. We gathered the following data

1- After having observed this classroom over a period of nearly two months, the observation confirmed that this classroom was far to be autonomous. Still the teacher centeredness appears. The teacher was still the dominant and the most responsible of learning. In fact, pupils are not motivated enough. What is clearly noticeable is that only few pupils are actively engaged in their learning.

2- It is said if the lesson is the journey the lesson plan is the map, in fact, after having a look at the lesson plan, it is prepared in accordance with principles of the CBA. However, during the lesson the teacher has found himself altering many

techniques and replacing many questions, because he has spent much time waiting in vain for pupils' responses.. Thus, the teaching method makes pupils more dependent on the teacher.

3- Self-correction and self-evaluation are the first steps in fostering learner autonomy. However, in the observed classroom the teacher has stopped the pupils and corrected them, even the smallest error has been corrected. While speaking pupils did not correct each other. Even self-correction is rarely used (only by good pupils)

4- All along my presence with him in the classroom the teacher has not given any task where pupils work together, collaborate, negotiate and discuss. Nevertheless few pair work tasks have been given. Because the classroom is crowded, the teacher decides to keep order.

5- According to Julia Dobson (1981) teaching English without a language laboratory is just like teaching swimming without swimming pool. In fact, the laboratory is of great importance. However, it is not available in the secondary level, other than the routinized materials: white board, pens and the textbook, the teacher use some pictures only.

6- It is true the aim behind introducing the projects in the Algerian schools is fostering learner autonomy as stated by the Ministry of Education. However, most pupils do not make sufficient efforts in them. In the contrary, they just bring ready made projects and read them sometimes without understanding of what they are reading. Noautonomy can be achieved from such projectworks.

To conclude with what E. Ushioda (2003) says: **"The concept of autonomy in the classroom invariably brings to mind the vision of learners working happily in groups, pairs or individually while the teacher hovers in the background."**(E. Ushioda, 2003:9). Taking into consideration what she says and the results obtained from the classroom observation, we confirm that the observed classroom is not an autonomous one. The problem is that neither teachers nor pupils can be blamed since both have been poorly prepared for autonomy.

9 Suggestions and Recommendations for Promoting Learner Autonomy

The task of moving from learner autonomy as a philosophy to an application in the classroom is really a demanding one on teachers since they must learn to "let go" and pupils must learn to "stand on their feet". Thus, learner autonomy can be promoted in Algerian schools if the following recommendations and suggestions are taken into consideration.

9.1 Teachers and Learner Autonomy

1-Pedagogy for autonomy appears to be particularly powerful means for developing teacher autonomy, in particular. It is necessary to prepare teachers for taking the first steps towards such an engagement or what is generally refer to as (pre-service) "teacher training".

2- Professional development is one of the basic needs for teachers so as to overcome all barriers in their job, and to promote their autonomy as well as that of their learners in particular. To do so, teachers have to reflect on their teaching.. Reflective teachers think about what went well or did not go well in a lesson. Think about the reasons why something went well. Think about how they can improve on the things which did not go well (such as learner autonomy) through professional portfolios, diaries and classroom action research.

3- EFL teachers in Algerian schools are advised to keep diary writing. It is based on honest reflections, and perhaps a less time consuming method, such as videotaping, to look at one's teaching. Thanks to professional diaries, teachers truly begin to understand more about their teaching environment and themselves.

9.2 Preparing Learners for Autonomy in Language Learning

Innovation in language teaching in Algeria in general is applied without consideration of teachers and learners in the field. Before there should be a preparation for both, so that, the change can be easily accepted and applied. For this reason, we can blame neither teachers nor pupils for their resistance to change and their unreadiness for the notion of learner autonomy. All what pupils need is to raise their awareness, motivate them to learn English and train them using strategies that make them learning a language somehow independently from the teacher.

1-Learning English successfully is based on the motivation of the learner himself. The teacher strives to make the learner learns in vain if the learner is uninterested as Scharle and Szabo (2000) invoke the saying: **“you can bring the horse to the water, but you cannot make him drink.” (Scharle and Szabo, 2000:4)**. If the English teacher seeks effectiveness in his teaching, he should start first by motivating the learners.

2- EFL learners in Algeria mainly those in the secondary education in general are unwilling to take responsibility in English learning. According to them the first and major responsible figure in the language classroom is the teacher. EFL learners should take responsibility for their learning, and believe that their success and failure in English learning is due to, their own attitudes and responsibilities in learning. Developing learner responsibility is crucial in establishing learner autonomy, however, learners should go through stages, so as to, become gradually independent from the teacher, these stages are illustrated by Scharles and Szabo (2000) in the table 5 below:

3-In order to improve their language skills, pupils in the secondary education are recommended to keep a reflective journal. In these journals pupils can write about all what happened in school in general and in the classroom in particular. Pupils should focus on areas where they experience difficulties. The benefits of the writing of a journal is besides raising pupils' awareness and

responsibility in English learning. It helps learners in bettering their writing skill and ability in English.

4- EFL teachers in Algeria claimed that pupils are not responsible and not ready to be so in English learning. In fact, teachers might feel insecure, especially in the situation with 50 students in a class feeling it impossible and impractical to promote autonomous learning, and any attempts would result in chaos. For this reason, they keep their spoon feeding method in the English classroom. Here some helpful steps towards responsibility:

Stages	Name of the stage	Characteristics
Stage 1	Raising Awareness	-Presenting new viewpoints and new experiences to the learner. -Most activities in this stage are structured -Students are not yet very responsible.
Stage 2	Changing attitudes	-A slow process requiring a lot of practice and patience. -Preparation to practice new roles -Breaking away from stubborn old patterns.
Stage 3	Transferring Roles	-Considerable change in the classroom management. -demanding phase on the teacher. -Giving freedom to learners to accomplishing tasks and even deciding about tasks.

**Table 5 Stages in the process of developing learner responsibility.
(adapted from Scharles and Szabo, 2000: 9)**

5-Thanasouls (2000) has stressed the fact that one of the principal goals of education is to alter learners' beliefs about themselves by showing them that their putative failures or shortcomings can be ascribed to a lack of effective strategies rather than to a lack of potential. Here lies the importance of diaries that make pupils aware of their progress and problems in language learning. The advantage of writing diaries is to make pupils plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, identifying any problems they face and suggesting solutions (Thanasoulas, 2000). EFL teachers in Algeria are highly recommended to keep a diary writing as a tool for professional development and so EFL learners.

9.3 Suggested Materials for Promoting Learner Autonomy

In the information age, the availability of a variety of instructional materials can facilitate the task of becoming autonomous and independent from the teacher as far as our pupils are concerned. The widespread use of information

technology in several domains of life and in schools particularly enables EFL learners in Algeria to enhance and take charge of their own

learning. Both EFL published and authentic materials play a great role in fostering learners' independence and self-reliance. There is a perceived relationship between technology and learner autonomy in the language teaching. Students are seen as becoming increasingly empowered when using such technology because they develop their confidence. Benson and Voller have discussed these issues and state that: **"Computer software for language learning is an example of a technology which claims to promote autonomy simply by offering the possibility of self-study."** (Benson and Voller, 1997:10). They go on to argue that all educational materials including the textbook and the computer can be perceived to be more or less supportive of autonomy.

The internet is the up to date tool available for language learners to improve their level. It is one of the motivating and the most interesting material in English learning for most of the students. Learner autonomy can be greatly enhanced through the use of the internet of course if students' intention is to learn English independently out of the school. The internet is a fundamental tool in fostering learner autonomy because of the followings:

1- Different forms of communication are provided in the internet such as: discussion boards, interactive blogs, online forums, etc.

2- English learners can download English movies, music and get exposure to different accents around the world.

3- According to Nowlan (2008) Social networks such as facebook, My Space and Second Life create awareness about the language, and make people at a very young age motivated in learning it.

4- Thanks to the internet language learners can interact in real time with millions of subscribers around the world. The fact that broaden their horizon and enrich their cultural background of the target language.

5- Chat programs such as Skype, iChat, and messenger programs such as MSN and Yahoo can be used to improve language ability. When initial connections are made through social networks on the internet in English.

9.4 Semi-Autonomous Learning as a Preparatory Phase

Pupils are used to being taught by teachers not learning English by themselves. And if they are asked to study by themselves only for a period of time, they will find themselves in a loss. In fact, without training, this move towards autonomy would be impossible in Algerian EFL context. We cannot expect pupils to be fully autonomous over night. For this reason, a transitional phase is necessary to be implemented, so as to, ensure a safe move to autonomy in our schools. At the same time, teachers should adopt a new teaching method to complete the transitional phase from total dependence of pupils on them to

more independence in English learning. This learning process can be called "Semi-autonomous learning".

Semi-autonomous learning is for bridging the gap between secondary and university in term of English learning. If pupils are well prepared in the secondary level(to be at least partially autonomous) the problem of spoon feeding and overreliance on the EFL teachers will be solved. EFL learners can be fully autonomous only when they reach university, because learner autonomy in the secondary level as put by Milliani (1991) is more a decision taking rather than a decision making. Semi-autonomous learning is a first and basic step to take for promoting learner autonomy in Algerian schools.

10 Conclusion

This study has been reserved to recommendations and suggestions for promoting learner autonomy in English learning. EFL teachers in Algeria and pupils alike are poorly prepared for the move to learner autonomy and training them both is necessary. In Algerian EFL context, teacher training programs should provide teachers with adequate training to foster their autonomy as well as that of their learners. As for learners, the first basic step in fostering their autonomy is to raise their awareness of the importance of autonomy in their learning. Teachers can do this through creating basic motivational conditions and prepare them for taking much more responsibility in their learning. In attempts to promote a higher level of learner autonomy in Algerian schools, it is important to encourage project works as well as the use of a variety of published and authentic materials, that will help students explore greater interest in autonomous learning. And as it is hard to establish learner autonomy in our schools in which both teachers and learners need preparation. Semi-autonomous learning may be the best solution. It is a preparatory step towards achieving the goal of learning autonomously in Algerian secondary education. This research work is an attempt to expand an awareness of teachers and students concerning the necessity of autonomy in English learning. And suggesting ways to foster it since autonomy is one of the key factors of success in English learning.

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