

Promoting EFL Learners' Autonomy through Strategy-based Instruction

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Abstract

The motivation underlying this research is the lack of learner autonomy among first-year undergraduate EFL learners. Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the effect of strategy-based instruction (SBI) on promoting learner autonomy in relation to the use of metacognitive strategies with different language learning skills and tasks. A quasi-experimental study is conducted with a sample of 51 first-year undergraduate EFL learners at Mohammed-Lamine Debaghine University, Setif2, Algeria. Participants are divided into a control group (N26) and an experimental group (N25). This latter receives a strategy-based instruction course over a period of 11 weeks. Learning autonomy strategy use in both groups is evaluated using an adapted questionnaire as a pretest and a posttest. The findings indicate that after the completion of the intervention course, participants in the experimental group shows significant improvements in metacognitive strategy use as an indication to their learner autonomy development. The study suggests that SBI should be incorporated into the EFL classroom as a course towards promoting learners' autonomy.

Keywords: EFL learners; learner autonomy; metacognitive strategies; strategy-based instruction.

الملخص:

الدافع وراء هذا البحث هو انعدام استقلالية المتعلم لدى متعلمي السنة الاولى لغة انجليزية كلغة اجنبية. يهدف هذا البحث إلى دراسة تأثير دورة تدريبية حول استراتيجيات التعلم على تعزيز استقلالية المتعلم فيما يتعلق باستراتيجيات التعلم ما وراء المعرفية. أجريت دراسة شبه تجريبية مع عينة مكونة من 51 متعلما في السنة الأولى ليسانس لغة انجليزية كلغة اجنبية في جامعة محمد الأمين دباغين سطيف2. تم تقسيم المشاركين إلى مجموعة ضابطة (26 متعلم) ومجموعة تجريبية (25 متعلم).

تلقى متعلمو المجموعة التجريبية دورة تدريبية تعتمد إلى استراتيجيات التعلم ما وراء المعرفية على مدى فترة 11 أسبوعا. تم تقييم استخدام استراتيجيات التعلم المستقل في كل من المجموعتين باستخدام استبيان مكيف كاختبار قبلي و بعدي. تشير النتائج إلى أنه بعد الانتهاء من دورة التدريب، أظهرت المجموعة التجريبية تحسنا ملحوظا في استخدام استراتيجيات ما وراء المعرفية كدليل على تطور استقلالية المتعلم لديهم. وتقترح الدراسة أن تدرج دورات تدريبية حول استراتيجيات التعلم في الفصول الدراسية كطريقة لتعزيز استقلالية المتعلمين.

الكلمات الرئيسية: استقلالية المتعلم ، التعليم القائم على الاستراتيجية، استراتيجيات التعلم ما وراء المعرفية. متعلمو اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية .

Introduction

The concept of learning autonomy has emerged as a result of the shift from the teacher-centered classroom towards a learner-centered one. Helping learners become independent decision makers has gained much of attention within the foreign language educational setting. Consequently, several approaches and initiatives to design effective programs and courses to foster learner autonomy are suggested (Cotteral, 1995; Chamot et al, 1999; Cohen, 2000; Tassinari, 2012). Among these approaches, strategy-based instruction has frequently been used by a large number of studies (Nakatani, 2005; Huang & Ma, 2007; Gu, 2007; Garvillidou & Papins, 2009; Mizumoto & Takeushi, 2009; Medina, 2012; Nguyen & Gu, 2013; Chan, 2014; Khademi, Mellati & Etela, 2014; Liu, 2015; Sarafianou & Garvillidou, 2015; Wang, 2016; Course, 2017) to examine its effectiveness on learning strategy use and learning autonomy. As a reaction to the problem of this study about first-year undergraduate learners' lack of learner autonomy, this study attempts to investigate the effect of a strategy-based instruction course on promoting learners' autonomy in relation to the metacognitive strategies, and to elicit learners' attitudes towards the introduced course

1. Learner Autonomy and Language Learning

In relation to language learning, Macaro (2008, p.59) explains autonomy of language learner as *learners' decisions about their own language learning as the language learner or user taking control of the language being learnt and the goal and purpose of that learning.* This type of autonomy entails being able to *convey one's meaning* rather than producing the language of others, because the ultimate objective of foreign language learning is not the acquisition of ready-made given knowledge, but the ability to *communicate one's meaning* in a different language. Sinclair (1999) adds that for learners to be autonomous, they should be provided with situations and opportunities for exercising a degree of independence. These kinds of situations and opportunities are activities in the classroom, which provide learners with chances to choose what they want to learn, or activities which allow them to participate in out-of-class project work or through cooperative learning.

Accordingly, Qi (2012, p.36) defines autonomous learners as the ones who take responsibility for their own learning activities, set their goals, select learning materials, monitor and assess their own learning practice and finally evaluate the effects and effectiveness of their learning. Similarly, Dickinson & Wenden 1995 (cited in Wang, 2014, p.1552) explains that learner autonomy is learners' ability of managing their own study, including setting learning objectives, self-monitoring and self-evaluation. He lists autonomous learners' basic features as the ones who can understand teaching objectives and teaching methods, set their own leaning target, choose suitable learning strategies, monitor their own learning strategies and establish their own learning outcome. In the same line, Little (1991) adds that autonomous learners are the ones who "*understand the purpose of their learning program, explicitly accept responsibility for their learning, share in the setting of goals, take initiatives in planning and executing learning and evaluate its effectiveness*"(p.1). Besides, Holec (1981, p. 3) provides a list of characteristics of the autonomous learner, which fit perfectly with the skills a university language learner should possess concerning all aspects of his learning, which are: 1) determining the objectives; 2) defining the contents and progressions; 3) selecting methods and techniques to be used; 4) monitoring the procedure of learning (material, time, place, etc.); and 4) evaluating what has been learned.

Briefly speaking, autonomous learners are those who frequently use the meta-cognitive strategies of planning, which are

related to selecting materials and strategies to complete learning tasks, in addition to monitoring while learning and evaluating after learning. Since learners having the power and right to learn for themselves is seen as a crucial aspect for autonomous learning, developing learning autonomy and promoting learning strategy-use among learners is highly recommended.

2. Learning Strategies and Strategy-Based Instruction

Learning strategies are defined as those “specific actions, behaviors, steps, or techniques such as seeking out conversation partners, or giving oneself encouragement to tackle a difficult language task used by learners to enhance their own learning” (Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p.61). These strategies fall within the how to learn scope. In this respect, Yang (2005, p. 75) states that researches have emphasized the fact that learning how to learn is a core component for autonomous learning, and tended to stress the question of strategy use, since for being autonomous requires strategic use of learning strategies. Therefore, training learners to use strategies successfully may enhance the efficiency of the learning process. Language learners are believed to succeed in being autonomous as soon as they understand how to practice appropriate strategies at appropriate tasks. Autonomous learners are, therefore, defined as the ones who have "the ability to use a set of tactics for taking control of their learning" (Cotterall 1995, p. 195). Hence, learning autonomy is more closely related to learning strategies than is with any other concepts of language education (Benson, 2006). However, learner autonomy involves more than the mere use of learning strategies. Little (as cited in Benson 2006, p.28) argues that helping learners become independent involves a strategic control of language and use, which entails learning the language and being actively involved in the metacognitive processes of planning, monitoring and evaluating. This can be dealt with under the specialized approaches of strategy training, which aim to cultivate autonomous learning by giving learners more opportunities to select strategies on their own with no much reliance on the teacher (Cohen, 2000). In this respect, Wang (2016, p.277) summarizes the major goals of strategy training as follows: 1) to explicitly instruct learners why, when, and how learning strategies can be used to promote their foreign language learning; 2) to help learners explore methods that they can take to learn the target language more effectively, and at the same time to encourage learners to self-regulate their learning; and 3) to cultivate learner autonomy by offering learners opportunities to

select appropriate strategies without constant prompt from their teachers. Consequently, teacher's role in this approach, though limited, is very crucial as learners need to be provided with appropriate training of how to use learning strategies throughout the language learning process.

Among the approaches of strategy training, strategy-based instruction (SBI) is widely used. It is a systematic strategy approach which entails the training of strategic learning by incorporating the training of strategies into language curriculum (Cohen, 2000, p.13; Wang, 2016, p.277). This type of instruction helps learners to be active participants in the learning process by enabling them to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning. This, in turn, leads to learners gradually take responsibility for learning by enhancing autonomy (Srafiianou & Garviilidou, 2015, p.22). These claims about the effectiveness of SBI in promoting learning autonomy triggerS the need for further empirical investigation and contribute to bringing the current research into being.

3. Previous Studies on the Effect of Strategy-Based Instruction on Learning Autonomy

Empirical studies focusing on strategy-based instruction and learning autonomy are relatively large (Nakatani, 2005; Huang & Ma, 2007; Gu, 2007; Garvillidou & Papins, 2009; Mizumoto & Takeushi, 2009; Medina, 2012; Nguyen & Gu, 2013; Chan, 2014; Khademi, Mellati & Etela, 2014; Liu, 2015; Sarafianou & Garvillidou, 2015; Wang, 2016; Course, 2017). In what follows, a summary of the main findings of a number of these studies is provided.

Nakatani (2005) examines the extent to which SBI can lead to improvements in oral communication ability. The results indicate the positive effect of the training program due to the significant improvement of the intervention group's participants in terms of their oral proficiency test scores. The results confirm that the participants' improvements are due to the increased general awareness of use of oral communication strategies, which prove the effectiveness of the strategy-based instruction. Huang & Ma (2007) conduct a study to examine the relationship between strategy instruction, motivation and autonomy in L2 vocabulary learning. The findings indicate that the experimental group (EG) shows higher degrees of motivation. On the other hand, there is no significant difference between the EG and control (CG) in relation to learning autonomy. Gu (2007) conducts a quasi-experimental strategy intervention to investigate the effect of SBI on the writing skill. The findings reveal that learners in the EG

outperform their peers in the CG after receiving a writing strategy instruction. Gavriilidou & Papins (2009) investigate the effect of explicit and integrated strategy instruction on the use of learning strategies. The results show that the EG has significantly improved in terms of the use of metacognitive, cognitive, and socio-affective strategies.

Nguyen & Gu (2013) conduct a study to investigate the effects of SBI on promoting of learner autonomy. The results of the study entail the improvement of the ability of the EG to plan, monitor and evaluate a writing task in comparison to their peers in the CG. Interestingly, planning scores as the most frequently exercised skill, followed by evaluating and monitoring. Khademi, Mellati & Etela (2014) examine the effects of an explicit SBI on learners' achievement test scores in a higher education context. The findings of the research suggest that the intervention has significant effects on listening test performance. Liu (2015) conducts a study to explore the correlation between learner autonomy and strategy use. The findings suggest that strategy use had a high level of correlation with learner autonomy, with cognitive and metacognitive categories as having the strongest correlations with autonomy in language learning. Another finding indicates that strategy use had the highest correlation with the learner's frequency of engaging in learning activities and his decision making abilities. Wang (2016) conducts a study to explore the effect of strategy instruction on learners' autonomy. The findings indicate that strategy instruction can improve learners' strategy awareness and use effectively for better language performance. In other words, when strategies are integrated into learning tasks, learners' autonomous ability can be greatly promoted. After the experiment, learners' attitudes towards learning have changed to be more positive.

4. The Purpose and Rational of the Study

Although research in the area of SBI and learning autonomy has proven to be quantitatively and qualitatively impressive, it could be criticized for focusing on specific language skills, for example, oral communication (Nakatani, 2005), listening skill (Khademi, Melati & Etela, 2014), writing skill (Gu, 2007; Nguyen & Gu, 2013), or vocabulary acquisition (Huang & Ma, 2007). On the contrary, the current study investigates the design of an SBI intervention, which seeks to develop learners' autonomy taking into consideration metacognitive strategies as applicable to the four language skills:

reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Furthermore, in the Algerian EFL context, there exists no special strategy training course in higher education, which aims to equip learners with meta-cognitive strategies for autonomous learning. Moreover, the results of an informal discussion with English teachers at Setif-2 University reveal that first-year undergraduate learners lack learning autonomy. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to investigate the effect of a designed strategy-based instruction course on learners' autonomy in relation to metacognitive strategies, and to elicit learners' attitudes of introducing this SBI course to enhance their metacognitive strategy use.

5. Methodology

5.1 Research Questions

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

- a) To what extent would the introduction of a strategy-based instruction (SBI) course increase the metacognitive strategy use of learners?
- b) What are learners' attitudes towards strategy-based instruction (SBI) as a course to increase their metacognitive strategy use?

5.2. Design

Due to the challenge that randomization is not feasible because of the pre-existing classes designed administratively, the random assignment of the sample to CG and the EG, which is considered as a condition for a true experiment to occur, is not possible. Consequently, the researcher opts for a quasi-experimental pretest/posttest non-equivalent group design. It is similar to the pretest-posttest true experiment design except for the lack of randomization (Campbell & Stanley, 1963, p.47). However, the major outcome of the absence of randomization is the threat to the research's internal validity, which is defined as "the degree to which the design of an experiment controls extraneous variables" (Borg, Gall & Gall, 1993, p.1024). Therefore, in order to control the personal and extraneous variables, the researcher has undertaken a number of measures to neutralize the effects of these variables in both EG and CG to establish a certain degree of internal validity. Aiming at establishing the equivalence of the EG and CG, the researcher uses a purposive sampling technique and consults all the lists of first-year undergraduate learners and their timetables in order to study their personal information, then select two groups that are similar in terms of number, age and gender, timetable and teachers of modules. On the

other hand, a placement test is administered to learners and the results reveal that the EG and the CG are equivalent as far as language level is concerned. The design of this study requires the two groups, an EG and a CG, to undergo a pre-test and a post-test. The EG receives a treatment, and the CG receives no treatment and serves as a comparison scale for the results obtained from the EG.

5.3 Participants

This study is conducted with 51 first-year undergraduate EFL learners at Mohammed Lamine Debaghine University, Setif-2, Algeria. Twenty-five learners are assigned to the EG and twenty-six to the CG. Their ages ranged from 18 to 21 years old with predominance of females (N19) in each group. Both EG and CG learners' language level is pre-intermediate.

5.4 Materials and Instruments

5.4.1 Strategy-Based Instruction Course Design

In the current research, the interventional course falls under the wings of SBI and is developed according to the Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach (CALLA) introduced by Chamot et al. (1999) as follows:

Table1. Structure of the SBI Session

Procedures	Aim
Preparation	The teacher elicits learners prior knowledge of target strategies
Presentation	The teacher introduces the new strategy, explains and models it
Practice	Learners apply and practice the new strategies to the different language learning tasks and activities
Teachers' Assessment	The teacher assesses learners' use of strategies and its impact on their performance
Reflection	Learners think about the usefulness of the learning strategies
Learners' Evaluation	Learners self-evaluate the strategies practiced and their success in using the strategies
Expansion	Learners are asked to practice the strategy outside the classroom.

The purpose of the SBI course is to provide instruction that enables first-year undergraduate learners to acquire and use metacognitive strategies to enhance their autonomous learning in general. The target strategies are related to different skills and systems, including speaking, writing, listening, reading, vocabulary... etc. The themes, objectives, and activities of the course are all designed in relation to the metacognitive component of the dynamic model of learning autonomy (Tassinari, 2010, p.203). The content of the course includes, strategies for planning, strategies for choosing learning materials and techniques, strategies for completing a task, strategies for monitoring, strategies for evaluating and strategies for managing one's own learning. All of these areas contain

metacognitive learning strategies to be used by the learner to develop independent autonomous learning. Some of the activities provide during the treatment are designed and others are adapted from Oxford (1990) in order to meet the objectives of the course, bearing in mind learners' language level (pre-intermediate).

5.4.2. The Pre/post-tests

In relation to the nature of the quasi-experimental design, the pre- and post-tests are considered to be as crucial elements. The pre-test is meant to measure the dependent variable before starting the treatment and hence neutralizing any effect of pre-existing dissimilarity between the EG and CG on the outcomes of the experiment (Lodico, Spaulding & Voegtle, 2006). After the accomplishment of the experimental treatment, a post-test is administered to both groups in order to assess the efficacy of treatment through comparing the progress of the EG in comparison to the CG. The instrument used for data collection is an adapted questionnaire from Tassinari (2010) with some modifications according to the purpose of the study. The questionnaire consists of five major sections related to the metacognitive strategies of learning as follows: 1) Planning which tests learners' ability to structure their objectives into steps and create a learning plan; 2) Choosing Materials and Techniques, which tests learners' ability to work with suitable learning materials and techniques; 3) Completing Tasks, which tests learners' ability to complete tasks in relation to appropriate learning materials and techniques; 4) Monitoring, which tests learners' ability to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to structure or re-structure learning activities accordingly; 5) Evaluating, which tests learners' ability to review what how well they have learned and what progress has been made toward learning. The questionnaire consists of a number of statements that can be measured on a five point Likert-scale, structured as "strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, and strongly agree".

For internal consistency validity of the pre/post-test, Spearman correlation coefficient was performed. The validity index of the test and most of its sections are statistically significant, with .762 across the test and a range of .728 to .808 for the sections. The internal reliability of the questionnaire calculated by Cronbach's Alpha indexes $\alpha = 0.791$. These indexes contribute to the validity and reliability of the instrument.

5.4.3. Post-Reflection Survey

In order to know more about learners' attitudes towards the role of the SBI course in increasing their metacognitive strategy use and enhancing their autonomous learning, a post-reflection survey is administered to participants immediately after the completion of the course. Learners are handed papers and requested to report their attitudes about the experiment. The survey consists of one open-ended question and is not structured to minimize the researcher's influence on learners' responses.

6. Procedures

Prior to introducing the treatment, a pre-test is administered to both participants of EG and CG. After that, participants in the EG go through a treatment, which lasts for 11 sessions, an introductory session and 10 SBI sessions. Session One: Strategies for Planning teaches learners how to plan their learning to reach their learning objectives (2 sessions). Session Two: Strategies for Choosing Materials and Techniques allows learners to recognize and use a number of learning materials and techniques suitable to tasks (2 sessions). Session Three: Strategies for Completing a Task trains learners to use strategies for completing a learning task (2 sessions). Session Four: Strategies for Monitoring provides learners with strategies for monitoring learning, and recognizing strengths and weaknesses (2 sessions). Session Five: Strategies for Evaluating trains learners with strategies for self-evaluation learning (2 sessions). All along the sessions, opportunities to practice inside and outside the classroom are provided for learners. At the end of the treatment, the post-reflection survey documents are administered to participants of the EG.

7. Analysis

Quantitative data of the pre/post-tests are analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).²² The most commonly used statistical procedure for non-parametric ordinal data is the Mann Whitney U test, which is used when two compared groups or samples are independent and not related by shared participants. The mean ranks are used to calculate the Mann Whitney U test across the subjects before and after the quasi experiment to compare the results for any significant statistical difference between the subjects of the EG and CG on the pretest and posttest. Qualitative data gathered from the post-reflection survey are analyzed by viewing and reviewing patterns and themes following the principles of document analysis.

8. Results and Discussion

The findings of this study are analyzed under two sub-headings related to the two research questions: The effect of SBI on the use of metacognitive strategies and learners' attitudes towards the of SBI course to increase their metacognitive strategy use.

a) Strategy-Based Instruction Effect on Increasing Learners' Metacognitive Strategy Use

Data from participants' pretest and posttest are analyzed with SPSS version 22.0 using the Mann Whitney U test. Table 2 and Table 3 demonstrate the statistical results of the experiment.

Table 2. Mann-Whitney U Pre-Post Test across each Strategy and Overall

Metacognitive Strategies	Group	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	N	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Sig
Planning	Pre-EG	16.16	672	25	321	0.075	0.940
	CG	15.85	654	26			
	Total			51			
	Post-EG	39	975	25	0.000	6.138	0.000*
	CG	13.5	351	26			
	Total			51			
Choosing materials and techniques	Pre-EG	26.16	654	25	321	0.075	0.940
	CG	25.85	672	26			
	Total			51			
	Post-EG	36.38	759.50	25	31.5	4.979	0.000*
	CG	25.63	666.50	26			
	Total			51			
Completing tasks	Pre-EG	15.72	393	25	261	1.207	0.227
	CG	35.88	833	26			
	Total			51			
	Post-EG	23.44	586	25	68	4.845	0.000*
	CG	28.26	740	26			
	Total			51			
Monitoring	Pre-EG	15.40	385	25	256	1.302	0.193
	CG	26.19	941	26			
	Total			51			
	Post-EG	23.24	581	25	60	4.995	0.000*
	CG	25.65	745	26			
	Total			51			
Evaluating	Pre-EG	24.80	551.5	25	295	0.566	0.571
	CG	17.15	706	26			
	Total			51			
	Post-EG	37.62	940.5	25	34	5.477	0.000*
	CG	14.83	385.5	26			
	Total			51			
Overall	Pre-EG	19.64	522.5	25	311	0.087	0.467
	CG	24.18	568	26			
	Total			51			
	Post-EG	31.93	758.5	25	61	4.999	0.000*
	CG	21.57	597.5	26			
	Total			51			

*Significant at the $p = .05$ level

As illustrated in table 2, the results of the **Mann Whitney U test** show no significant differences between the EG and CG at the

overall pre-test ($p=.467>.05$) and for each metacognitive strategy group. These results indicate that at the pre-experimental phase, the EG and CG had a fair degree of homogeneity at the level of metacognitive strategy use. On the other hand, the results of **Mann Whitney U test** indicate that learners in the EG and CG show a statistically significant difference for the overall posttest and for each metacognitive strategy group at the level of $p<.05$ ($p=.000<.05$). This result indicates that the EG learners show improvements at the level of the metacognitive strategy use after the application of the treatment when compared to their peers in the CG.

Table3. The Effect of Strategy-Based Instruction Course on the Frequency of Strategy Use (mean ranks and gains in each group)

Metacognitive Strategies	EG (n = 25)			CG (n = 26)		
	Pretest	Posttest	Gain	Pretest	Posttest	Gain
Planning	16.16	39.00	22,84*	15.85	13.50	-2.35
Choosing materials & techniques	26.16	36.38	10,22*	25.85	25.63	-0,22
Completing tasks	15.72	23.44	7,72*	35.88	28.26	-7,42
Monitoring	15.40	23.24	7,84*	26.19	25.65	-0,54
Evaluating	24.80	37.62	12,82*	17.15	14.83	-2,32
Total (items)	19.64	31.93	12,28*	24.18	21.57	-2.6

Gain is the mean rank difference (posttest minus pretest); * $p < .05$ with the Bonferonni correction test.

Table 3 further demonstrates the gains from the intervention with statistically significant gains for learners of the EG at all levels of metacognitive strategy use. The biggest gains were demonstrated at the level of planning (22.84) followed by evaluating (12.82), choosing materials and techniques (10.22), monitoring (7.84) and completing tasks (7.72), respectively; with an overall gain of (12.28).

Accordingly, participants' significant gains in the use of the metacognitive strategies of planning, monitoring and evaluating, respectively, are identical to the results of Gu (2013) and similar to findings of Liu (2015), in which the SBI course affected the use of metacognitive strategies, which turned out to highly contribute to most of the prediction of learner autonomy. In this respect, Little (2007) claims that the development of learner autonomy necessitates learner critical reflection, which in turn requires the use metacognitive strategies for planning, monitoring, and evaluating learning. Additionally, Naktani (2005) argues that the degree of target language learning is highly affected by learners' awareness of their own learning. Besides, Turan et al (2009) argue that metacognitive skills and awareness of planning, monitoring and evaluating are among the most important skills to achieve learning autonomy. Similarly, participants in the current research demonstrate

enhancement in their metacognitive strategy use which is a good predictor of developing autonomous learning as a result of the strategy-based intervention. On the other hand, participants demonstrate a significant enhancement in the metacognitive action-oriented strategies (choosing materials and techniques and completing tasks). This finding agrees with Little's (2007) claim that in order for learners to develop autonomously, they need to take more initiatives when learning. Accordingly, Dörnyei (2003, p.16) states that autonomous learners are those who apply learning strategies with "their own free will" to learn more effectively. Therefore, learner involvement in learning activities and tasks is an essential predictor of developing autonomous learning, which justifies the development of participants metacognitive (action oriented) strategy use as a result of the SBI interventional course. Consequently, the significant difference between the metacognitive strategy use of the EG in comparison to the CG in favour of the former after introducing the SBI course is a direct indication of learning autonomy. The findings of this research are consistent with the majority of SBI research (Nakatani, 2005; Huang & Ma, 2007; Gu, 2007; Garvillidou & Papins, 2009; Mizumoto & Takeushi, 2009; Medina, 2012; Nguyen & Gu, 2013; Chan, 2014; Khademi, Mellati & Etela, 2014; Liu, 2015; Sarafianou & Garvillidou, 2015; Wang, 2016; Course, 2017) as they all resulted in positive effects on language learning autonomy.

b) Learners' Attitudes towards the Role of Strategy-Based Instruction Course in Increasing their Metacognitive Strategy Use

Following the principles of document analysis, the researcher analyzes the post-reflections of the EG participants after completing the treatment. Accordingly, two main recurring codes emerge, which are the development of participants' learner autonomy and the permanent effect of the SBI course on the participants' learning.

First, the development of learner autonomy, which is manifested in the theme of the development of the participants' metacognitive skills; to illustrate, participant 8 says: "I developed my level and realized a huge background and rich knowledge. First, I learned how to make clear vision about my goal and how to achieve it". Participant 27 adds: "this system [SBI course].... gave me information and vision about learning and how to control it". Participant 12 says: "I'm able now to make the right decisions [about learning]". Participant 1 states: "I learnt how I can make a good

plan to learn”, and participant 22 concludes: *“I can finally evaluate and monitor my learning process and correct my own mistakes”*. These findings cross validate the findings from the pre-posttest and contribute to the confirmation of the positive effect of the SBI course on increasing the metacognitive strategy use and learning autonomy.

Second, the permanent effect of the SBI course on the participants’ learning, which has two themes: developing successful language learning and developing life-long learning. To illustrate, the first theme is described by participant 5 who says: *“now I can deal with any task”*, and participant 3 who claims: *“my study became so easy [because] I organized it”*. The second theme is labelled by participant 1 who states: *“I learned a lot of things about learning not just in the domain of study, but in life in general”*; participant 12 adds: *“these tutorials changed me to a better person, to an independent learner”*; and by participant 8 who concludes: *“the benefits of this experience encouraged me to [deal] with any problem in my daily life and motivate me to carry on and complete any task or activity.... I feel that I have the power to face anything”*. In reference to these results, it is implied that the SBI course helps integrating lifelong learning strategies into learners’ repertoires, which is in accordance with the policies of the European Union introduced in the higher education system to foster learning autonomy.

All in all, findings of the post-experiment phase reveal participants’ positive attitudes of the SBI course, which are similar to findings of Khademi, Mellati & Etela (2014), and Wang (2016), in which learners perceive the SBI courses to be effective in enhancing their strategy use and learning autonomy and develop positive attitudes towards EFL learning in general.

Conclusion

In the current paper, the increased metacognitive strategy use in the post-experimental phase demonstrates valuable insights about the relationship between SBI and learning autonomy. A positive significant improvement in EG participants’ use of metacognitive strategies is detected after accomplishing the SBI course. In addition, the post-experimental phase, which serves as a cross-validation of the quantitative data, results in learners positive attitudes towards the SBI course, which is meant to develop their autonomy. On the basis of these findings, it is pedagogically implied that teachers, learners and policy makers should consider the importance of SBI in enhancing learners’ metacognitive strategy use, which in turn promotes their learning autonomy. Future research might investigate the effect of the

SBI course on increasing metacognitive strategy use and learning autonomy in relation to a specific skill of language (writing, listening, speaking... etc).

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