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Using Autobiographies to Find Evidence of Autonomous Learning among EFL Learners

Case Study: Third Year LMD Students of English at Bejaia University

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for a
Master's Degree in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching

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Dedication

I am honoured to dedicate this work:

To my sweet mother and my dear father who have always been there to encourage me to work hard in my studies.

To my lovely sisters and brothers: Karima, Rim, Amel, Walid and Amin.

To my sweet little nephew Ishak

To my grand-parents I wish they will live longer and the ones who died, their place in my heart is still kept

To my uncles and aunts

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Abstract

In this study autobiographies were used to find evidence of autonomous learning among EFL learners. It aimed at finding out whether learners have a sense of autonomy in their language learning. The sample of the study consists of five EFL of third year enrolled in the Department of English, University of Bejaia. For data collection, we opted for the use of English language learning autobiographies in which the learners narrated their learning experiences in English language learning. This makes our study descriptive since we reported some facts about their learning. The findings disclosed that the sense of autonomy is marked in the learners' stories. Although, the participants need to receive initiatives for their English learning activities, they are autonomous but more reactively autonomous.

Key words: Learner Autonomy, Autobiographies, EFL, Reactive Autonomy, Proactive Autonomy.

Key Abbreviations and Acronyms

EFL: English as a Foreign Language

LA: Learner Autonomy

LMD: Licence, Master, Doctorate

N°: Number

QDA: Qualitative Data Analysis

S: Student

SDL: Self-Directed Learning

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

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Glossary of Terms

Autobiography: *“autobiographies are considered a form of narrative in which the narrators describe their own life retrospectively from their first-person point of view”* (Loschingy (2005, as cited in Mercer, n.d. p, 162).

Autonomy: *“autonomy is a precondition for effective learning, when learners succeed in developing autonomy, they not only become better language learners but they also develop into more responsible and critical members of the communities which they live”* Benson, 2001, as cited in Usuki, 2001, p. 7-8).

Learner Autonomy: *“a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others as social responsible person”* (Dam et al, 1990, as cited in Smith, 2008, p. 396).

Narrative: Echoing (2009) *“is a story of events, placed in sequential order, which conveys meaning to a particular audience”*. Besides, Squire (2008) *“a way in which individuals make sense of themselves and the world”* (as cited in Wells, 2011, p. 5).

Narrative Inquiry: *“is the study of experience understood narratively. It is a way of thinking about, and studying experience”* (Clandinin & Huber, n. d. p. 1).

Proactive Autonomy: Murray et al (2011) *“proactive autonomy is the term of autonomy in which learners determine learning objectives, select learning methods and techniques, and evaluate what they have learned”* (p. 230).

Reactive Autonomy: Littlewood (1999) *“the kind of autonomy which does not create its own directions but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organize their resources autonomously in order to reach their goals”* (as cited in Murray et al).

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General Introduction

1. Introduction

In the past, learners used to believe that there is only one source of knowledge which is the teacher. This latter was believed to have the duty to provide them with the right answers and necessary information for their learning, and their duty as learners was to memorize it. Yet, recent studies revealed that there is a shift of focus from teachers to learners since they take more advantage and benefits by being independent in getting knowledge.

Therefore, researchers started to pay more attention to the concept of ‘learner autonomy’. Being autonomous improves learners and contributes to getting rid of the traditional model in which teachers are considered the only source of knowledge.

Teaching and learning are not matters that concern only teachers; learners are involved as well. The teacher has to determine which method he is required to apply the learners’ needs and preferences. On the other hand, the learners should also take into consideration such procedures and strategies: for instance learning autonomy which is needed to enhance responsibility in learning.

So, to check whether there is any evidence of learner autonomy of a given setting, autobiographies are sometimes analyzed to look for such matters.

Our research deals with “Using Autobiographies to Find Evidence of Autonomous Learning among EFL learners”, In what follows, we intend to deal with the aim of the research questions.

2. Statement of the Problem and Research Questions

With the implementation of the LMD system in the Algerian universities, many issues have emerged in higher education in our country, especially in the field of foreign language teaching and learning. Both teachers and learners have to be equipped with the necessary skills to fit with LMD reform and its set of changes.

This study sheds light on the one of the basic principles inherent to the LMD system which is the learner autonomy. Therefore, this study seeks whether our students’ learning behaviors fit the new reform principles. For that, we study the learners’ autobiographies to answer the following research questions:

Main question

- Is there any evidence of learner autonomy in the EFL learners' autobiographies?

Sub-questions

- Do learners set goals for their learning?
- Do learners take initiatives in their learning?

3. Aim of the Study

The purpose behind this study is to find evidence of autonomous learning after analyzing the autobiographies of EFL learners; it seeks to identify behaviors that relate to learner autonomy principles.

We believe that using autobiographies is a worthwhile tool to investigate the students' learning experiences. Moreover, analyzing the students' written language learning narratives would reveal their perspectives and permit to detect the themes related to learner autonomy.

Concisely, this study aims to find evidence of learner autonomy after analyzing learners' autobiographies. Besides, this study uses new techniques to collect data in the Department of English, University of Bejaia, which are the learners' English language learning autobiographies.

4. Data Collection Instruments

In order to collect the data needed for this research, EFL learners in the department of English of the University of Bejaia are asked to write their personal stories about their English language learning. So that the learners do the task, they are provided by some instructions to follow. Thus, the instrument used in this study is English language learning autobiographies.

5. Research Participants

The population studied in this research was 3rd year LMD students at the department of English, university of Bejaia. There are 10 groups; group 01 was chosen as a sample of the study, which consists of 29 students yet only 13 of them have submitted their autobiographies, then a decision was made to deal with 5 of them for the reason that these autobiographies consist of the required data that help us to answer to the research questions.

6. Significance of the Study

This study is a significance endeavor in analyzing English language learning autobiographies for the first time in the department of English, University of Bejaia. This research is also beneficial to teachers and learners to use this technique (writing English language learning autobiographies) as a reflective tool to revise and to be aware about learning behaviors. Besides, this study provides a clear image of learner autonomy by discussing various features that draw the learner's profile. Finally, this work will serve as a future reference for researchers in the department of English on the technique of English language learning autobiography of its multiple uses (data collection and strategy of learning reflection and enhancing writing skills).

7. Organization of the Work

This study consists of two chapters, the theoretical part and the practical one. The theoretical part is made up of two sections; the first one covers a discussion about the concept of learner autonomy and the characteristics of autonomous learner also it covers the two types of autonomy (proactive and reactive), whereas, the second section treats the narratives in general and the autobiographies specifically since it is the selected instrument to be used in this study, In addition the narrative inquiry as an approach to analyze the instruments.

The second chapter deals with the methodology of the study, describing the data. Then analyzing and interpreting the learners' stories and disclosed the findings then we discuss them. We conclude our work by a general conclusion which covers limitations of the study and recommendation for further research to address the future researchers.

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter One: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter aims to define the main key words of the research, and to discuss them in details by covering different views of the researchers of education in general and of the English language learning in particular. The chapter consists of two sections, the first one deals with learner autonomy (LA) and all what is related to it. The second section discusses all of narrative, narrative inquiry and autobiography.

Section one: Learner Autonomy

Introduction

When reading about autonomy in the field of language learning, we generally come across the concept of learning autonomy, yet our research focuses on learner autonomy instead. Since our study is based on the learner so, it is better to use learner instead of learning.

1. Defining Learner Autonomy

Before we define the complex concept of learner autonomy we attempt to provide an answer to the following question: what is autonomy in language learning?

“This is probably the single most difficult question to answer about autonomy in language learning and any answer to it is likely to be subjective” autonomy in learning is when learners are able to take charge of their learning not only in the classroom, but outside as well. However, in language learning autonomy is when learners are able to take charge of the purposes of which they learn languages and how they learn them (Benson, 2006, p. 1) i.e. autonomy is concerned with abilities and attitudes that learners have and can improve. Besides, Benson (2011) added another definition to the term *“autonomy as a systematic capacity for effective control over various aspects and levels of the learning process is capable of description”* (p. 119).

Above, the term ‘autonomy’ is defined, now we associate it with the learner. So, what learner autonomy is?

As Holec (1998) defines the concept as *“the ability to take charge of one’s learning”* (as cited in Nunan, 2003, p. 193). Moreover, according to Benson (1997), the term autonomy in language education is used in different ways: first, in contexts in which learners study independently on their own. Second, autonomy is used for a set of language learning skills

which can be learnt and applied in self-directed learning. Third, it is for in born capacity which is repressed by institutional education. Fourth, it is applied for the exercise of learner's responsibility for their own learning. Finally, autonomy is used for the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning. (as cited in Nunan, 2003, pp. 193, 194).

However, Holec (1998) does not agree with the third point cited above by Nunan (2003). Yet, the ability of being autonomous is not innate "*is not inborn but must be acquired either by 'natural' means (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e.in a systematic, deliberate way*" (as cited in Little, 2006). Hence, a learner is not born with the capacity for take charge of his own learning, he is asked to acquire some strategies that lead him to be so.

Learner autonomy is highly related to motivation, for the sake of fostering the learning process, accordingly, "*autonomous learning is known to not only allow learners to cater the learning content and speed to their own needs but also motivate learning, and thus lead to greater language learning*" (Dickinson, 1995; Dorneyei & Csizer, 1998, as cited in Iimuro & Berger, 2010, p.127). Furthermore, for the purpose of promoting the learner autonomy, the learner does not require only to be motivated. Yet Holec (1981) adds other factors, we have encourage students to make the objective clear; to be able to define the content and progressions to know how to make a selection for methods and techniques and the procedures of acquisition to evaluate what has been acquired.(as cited in Balçikanli, 2010,p. 90). Besides, according to Bharathi (2014), the most important percept of learner autonomy is that learners are not learning in the same way, they are dissimilar. For that, autonomy covers encouraging responsibilities among learners by providing them the right of choice and providing fundamental motivation, accepting the idea of learner differentiation, support action-oriented learners and by promoting reflective inquiry (p.3).

In short, Little (1996) has summarized the idea treated above in that quotation "*a person needs to have four subcomponents: knowledge, skills, motivation, and confidence*" he suggests that these components be honored in the development of learner autonomy (as cited in Than Nga, 2014, p. 17).

The basis of learner autonomy is that students are involved in decision making processes concerning their own competence, as Little John (1985) said "*they are likely to be more enthusiastic about learning*" (as cited in Balçikanli, 2010, p.90)in other words, learners are highly motivated.

To support the idea above concerning the decision making, we refer to Balçikanli (2010) who said that *“in order to contribute to the development of learner autonomy in language classroom, it is vital that students be involved in making decisions about their own learning”* (p.91).

However, when learners take decisions about their learning, it does not mean the total freedom of doing that. It is not possible to neglect the teacher’s role in the learning process *“the ability to behave autonomously for students is dependent upon their teacher creating a classroom culture where autonomy is accepted”* (Barfield et al, 2001, as cited in Balçikanli, 2010, p. 91).

Learner autonomy is also defined by Dam et al (1990) as *“a capacity and willingness to act independently and in cooperation with others as social, responsible person”* (as cited in Smith, 2008, p. 396). Dam relates the learner with his society, in this latter, the learner is willing to behave independently for all his actions and indeed after acting, he will assume the consequences since he is responsible.

Remaining always on the point of the relation between learner autonomy and society, Benson (2011) states that *“learner autonomy has an influence on the whole society; learner autonomy promotes active, critical participation in the community, which, in turn helps develop the community”* (as cited in Ikonen, 2003, p. 13), in other words, thanks to characteristics listed in the quotation about learner autonomy leads to the maturation of the society, hence the presence of the sense of autonomy becomes a need nowadays.

In addition, the status of learner autonomy from educational, political and sociological point of view is extremely important, for the reason that it is a basic feature of the learning process, besides, learner autonomy leads to personal and social growth (Ikonen, 2013, p.16).

Rousseau on teaching and learning provide teachers with that:

“Make your pupil attend to the phenomena of nature, and you will soon arouse his curiosity. But to nourish this curiosity, be in no hurry to satisfy it. Suggest problems but leave the solving of them to him. Whatever he knows, he should know not because you have told him, but because he has grasped it himself. Do no teach him science: let him discover it. If ever you substitute authority for reason in his mind, he will stop reasoning, and become the victim of other people’s opinions...” (Boyd, 1956, as cited in Benson, 2011, p. 28)

Rousseau describes the practices to the teachers on how they should behave toward their learners to create an autonomous class and why not for the growth society.

In conclusion, we have seen different definitions of learner autonomy; it differs from one researcher to another, from the context to another and from angle to another. Yet, Sinclair (2000) noticed the shared features between the definitions earlier mentioned which are:

The capacity of being autonomous is not innate; autonomy holds the learner's willingness to be responsible for his own learning; autonomy levels are not static, yet, are variable; autonomy works out not only in the classroom but outside of it as well; and the advocacy of autonomy needs conscious awareness of the learning process (as cited in Than Nga, 2014, p. 20).

2. The History of Learner Autonomy

In this part we look for the origin of the concept of learner autonomy

“Although learner autonomy is fairly recent concept, the etymology of autonomy goes further back to the sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe” (Benson 2001, as cited in Ikonen, 2013, p. 6),

Learner autonomy is not originally language learning concept. It was introduced in a variety domains and it has been influenced by many approaches:

2.1. The Educational Reform

The concepts like: self directed learning, independent leaning come to take place after the traditional view of learning. For Benson (2011) the idea of autonomy lies mainly in true areas: the relationship between education and social participation education as problem solving, and classroom organization. (as cited in Feidjel, 2013, p. 26).

Moreover, John Dewey (1859-1952) in his educational views, he stresses on the relationship between education and social life where learners have the ability to take part in their classroom organization in which they worked together in order to solve a shared problem.(Feidjel, 2013).

2.2. Psychology of Learning

Feidjel (2013) mentioned that *“constructivists believed in the idea that learners are actively involved in the process of learning since knowledge cannot be taught learners with learners who construct it. Lev Vygotsky is one example; his contribution to the emergence of autonomy lies in the notion of self- directed inner speech.”*(p. 27). Therefore, the field of psychology has an effect on the concept of learner autonomy.

2.3. Political Philosophy

The development of learner autonomy has also political and social effects. We take the Greek society, the conditions of cities in ancient Greece citizens were governed according to their own laws (Ikonen, 2013, p. 7). Hence, the sense of autonomy in that setting shows that citizens have the right and freedom to manage their lives.

At last, the concept of learner autonomy comes into the field of language teaching, as Feidjel (2013) has said “ *the concept of autonomy entered the field of language teaching through the council of Europe’s Modern Language Project and Chalon is considered as the corner stone of that theory*” (p. 27).

3. Learner Autonomy Related Terms

“There are a number of terms related to autonomy that can be distinguished from it in various ways. Most people now agree that autonomy and autonomous learning are not synonyms of ‘self-instruction’ , ‘self-access’ , ‘self-study’ , ‘self-education’ , ‘out-of-class learning’ and ‘distance learning’ . These terms basically describe various ways and degrees of learning by yourself, whereas autonomy refers to abilities and attitude” (Benson, 2006. p. 1).

It is rewarding to discuss some terms mentioned earlier, to distinguish them from learner autonomy.

3.1. Independent Learning

The term of independent learning is defined by many researchers, and sometimes its characteristics may be the same as ones of learner autonomy. Thus, confusion exists due to that features.

According to Broad (2006) “*the concept of independent learning is not new, but it is one on which there is a supervising lack of consensus as to what it means*” (as cited in O’Doherty, 2006, p.1). The researchers are not sharing the same view toward the concept. There was not an agreement about the only one meaning or definition of the concept of independent learning.

(Northedge, 2005; Cottrel 2003; Gow and Kember 1990), the concept is highly used especially at university, “*independent Learning is presented as something of value that is expected to take place*” (as cited in O’Doherty, 2006, p.1). The sense of independence in learning is fundamental factor that lead to successful results. So, its existence in some settings is needed such as at universities.

Now, let's define the term, according to Benson and Voller (1997), independent learning is the capacity to study alone with far guidance, and is the practice of learners responsibility for their own learning and that is considered as a right of learners to direct their own learning independently (as cited in Bernier, Djokic & Spelt, 2005).

Since, the concept has nearby synonyms; researcher fails to provide the exact definition of independent learning. Therefore, academic discourse teems with synonyms to clarify 'independent learning' it listed a set of them such as: autonomous learning, independent study, self-directed learning, student initiated learning, project orientation, discovery and inquiry, teaching for thinking, learning to learn, self-instruction and life-long learning.

All the terms listed above are used either to mean different things or are used to mean the same thing. In order to make a distinction between them, it is necessary to refer to the context (Candy, 1987, as cited in O'Doherty, 2006, p. 1).

3.2. Self-Access

Self-access is characterized by the following:

Self-access is very flexible, it can be managed in a classroom; it can be included into a language course and also it can be used by learners who are not taking courses; it authorizes individualization but also holds up groups. Its main advantages are 1) self-access can operate at all learning levels; 2) It is neither culture specific nor age specific, however it is for wider range (Gardner & Miller, 1999, p. 11).

Gardner and Miller (1999) point out that "*Sometimes self-access learning is integrated into the classroom, with the teacher working with students in the centre, and sometimes self-access is used outside classroom time, for remedial or practice purpose, either with a teacher or independently*" (as cited in Reinders, 2010, p. 44). In other words, self-access is not seen in the angle of being independent only, even when a teacher takes part it is considered a self-access in case a learner is an active learner and receives some help from his teacher.

3.3. Self-directed Learning

Lowry (1989) points out that "*self-directed learning can be defined as any increase in knowledge, skills, accomplishments or personal development that an individual selects and brings about his/her efforts using various methods throughout their lives. Self-directed learning occurs when learners control both learning objectives and the means of learning. That is, learners engage in self-directed learning by making their own decisions about what and how they are going to teach*" (as cited in Bharathi, 204, p. 3). Therefore, SDL intensifies

the importance of allowing learners to run after own choices and preferences to make the learning more meaningful.

According to Bharathi (2004) SDL comprises a set of principles which are:

- Learners are responsible for their own learning process
 - Learners self-management and self monitor
 - Learners work in collaboration with peers and teacher
 - Learners develop specific knowledge and the ability to transfer that knowledge to new situation
 - Motivation and volition are crucial in initiating and monitoring the learners' efforts
- (p. 3).

Tholin (2007) noticed that “*the learners are today given greater possibilities to make their own choices. The idea that language teaching should contain elements which make the learners prepared to assume, and to handle, an increasing personal responsibility is an idea that is considered self-evident by most people today*”. Tholin has mentioned the need for that concept in recent days. It is noticeable that the criteria earlier mentioned, they seem as once of learner autonomy, for Enkrast (2000, 2005) she did acute criticism of her understanding of learner autonomy. For her the latter has nothing to do with the following: the situations in which the students get to do what they want, when they want to and how they want to (as cited in Bharathi, 204, p. 3).

This distinguishes SLD from Learner autonomy.

Tholin traveled all over his country (Sweden), he came back with the following conclusion: the immense majority of Sweden's language teachers are very professional and that reject the idea of letting their learners go without aim or delve beneath the unknown way of learning process. The idea of total independence of learning is rejected, yet the role of the teacher should take part .Hence, it resembles to the learner autonomy by virtue of the view of Tholin (as cited in Bharathi, 204, p. 3).

3.4.Self-Instruction

Dickenson (1987) believes that “*Self-instruction is concerned with responsibility in learning. Individuals who are involved in self-instruction (as learners) have taken on some extra responsibility for their own learning which in other circumstances would be held on their behalf by a teacher*” (as cited in Tan & Chan, 197, p. 2). Dickenson describes learners in the context of self-instruction as “*complete autonomy*” (ibid). The learners are totally

responsible for all the decisions of their learning and the way how they apply them. Besides, they are provided with the freedom to choose the materials that suit them. Therefore, this kind of self-instruction is based on learner-centered (as cited in Tan & Chan, 197, p. 2).

Hence, self-instruction occurs where the learners assume all the instructional tasks in their learning process. They should not rely on their teachers. Yet, they have to be accountable for their own learning (ibid).

In conclusion, each of independent learning, self-access, SDL and self-instruction are terms which are not synonyms of the learner autonomy but sometimes are used interchangeably to mean one single thing, this is why the importance of determining the context of use is required.

4. Proactive and Reactive Autonomy

When we read about autonomy and look for its characteristics, we draw in our mind a specific image for its sense and its dimensions. However, when we come to seek for the two kind of autonomy (proactive and reactive), we understand that there is an ambivalence that may make the image not clear enough “*not only does Littlewood’s distinction, due to its focus on fostering learner independence step by step, illustrate the view of autonomisation as progression from heteronomy to autonomy; but it also demonstrates the ambivalence of autonomy*” (Schmenk, 2006, p. 83). Therefore, it is important to discuss the distinction between proactive and reactive autonomy.

The dissimilarity between them lays on the degree of independence and to what extent the learner is independent toward every aspect in his/her learning. Murray et al (2011) argue that “*proactive autonomy is the term of autonomy in which learners determine learning objectives, select learning methods and techniques, and evaluate what they have learned*” (p. 230). While, reactive autonomy as Littlewood (1999) said is “*the kind of autonomy which does not create its own directions but, once a direction has been initiated, enables learners to organize their resources autonomously in order to reach their goals*” (as cited in Murray et al). We deduce from that the second kind of autonomy which is reactive autonomy needs to be guided in somehow; for instance a teacher selects a given method and the learner works autonomously guided by that method.

Since we are in quest of what is the difference between proactive and reactive autonomy, it permits to take the opportunity to see which is most strong and valuable comparing to another. We deduce that proactive autonomy is most powerful if each kind of autonomy is related to the characteristics that we have already discussed since the proactive autonomy tick each feature of an autonomous learner whereas, the reactive autonomy lacks some of them namely: the level of independence, need external initiation...etc. Always on the same view that proactive is highly valuable than reactive we include Schmenk (2006) words in her chapter who argued that *“the concept of ‘reactive autonomy’ denotes a state prior to internalization of learning directions (outcomes, methods, techniques, contents etc). While the term ‘proactive autonomy’ seems to illustrate the state of learners who have successfully managed to internalize what was formerly initiated by their teachers or the curriculum”*. (p. 83.84)

According to Littlewood *“reactive autonomy encodes the form in which the concept of autonomy in learning has proved to be most unable from the perspective of the teacher in the classroom”* (as cited in Benson, 2008, p. 25). Yet, it depends on the teacher and the autonomy in this case is based on what the teacher provides (e.g. assignments) to the learner to be oriented. In contrast, *“proactive autonomy refers to an experience of autonomy in which the learner sets the direction of learning, regulates the activity and self-evaluates his/her progress independently of the teacher”* (Littlewood, 1999, as cited in Csizer & Magid, 2014, p. 135). The learners of this type of autonomy are more active compared to learners of reactive autonomy; Littlewood described the key words of proactive autonomy as action words (Schmenk, 2006: 83). Furthermore, wall (2003) believed that learners who are proactively autonomous have previously designed their own way through (ibid.). This shows the initiation at that learners and in which it is absent in reactive autonomy.

In order to make a clear distinction between the two types of autonomy, let's see the tables of Hamilton (2013) who summarized each type in one table relying on Littlewood (1999) distinction.

Table 01: Summary of Proactive Autonomy

Proactive Autonomy	
Proactive autonomy: Action	Impact and outcome
<p><i>'regulates the direction of the activity undertaken by the individual as well as the activity itself' (Littlewood 1999, 75)</i></p> <p><i>Direction initiated by learner so that he:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Take charge of own learning</i> 2) <i>Determines own objectives</i> 3) <i>Select methods and techniques for learning</i> 4) <i>Evaluates learning</i> 	<p><i>Process of learning is as important as the product as:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Learner establishes the direction of learning</i> 2) <i>Self-affirmation of individuals</i>

Adopted from (Hamilton, 2013, p. 32)

Table 02: Summary of Reactive Autonomy

Reactive Autonomy	
Reactive autonomy: Action	Impact and outcome
<p><i>'regulates the activity once the direction has been set'(ibid.)</i></p> <p><i>Direction initiated by others so that learner:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Can organize learning resources and reach goals</i> 2) <i>Can work with others to complete task</i> <p><i>'Expert' select learning methods and content for learners to work with</i></p>	<p><i>Complements rather than challenge traditional learning</i></p> <p><i>Either:</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) <i>Preliminary step towards proactive autonomy</i> <p><i>Or</i></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2) <i>A goal in its own right</i>

Adopted from (Hamilton, 2013, p. 32)

To sum up, when distinguishing proactive and reactive conceptions of autonomy, we understand that the process of autonomy is not static and it has various levels. Besides, the main area in which proactive differs from reactive autonomy is the scope of the independence.

5. Characteristics of an Autonomous Learner

From the definitions of learner autonomy seen earlier, we understand that an autonomous learner is a specific one comparing to others students, he is responsible for all decisions he makes in his own learning. Besides, he is self-directed learner in the sense that he acts autonomously.

Since, there are many sets of features or criteria in which the learner is characterized, it is worthwhile to discuss the different views by researchers to attempt draw a profile of an autonomous learner.

Candy (1991) dealt with the core components that constitute the learner autonomy, he listed competencies associated with autonomous learner, and he puts the profile of the latter. In Candy's right mind, autonomous learner is:

- Methodical /disciplined
- Logical/analytical
- Reflective/self aware
- Curious/open/ motivated
- Interdependent/ interpersonally competent
- Persistent/responsible
- Venturesome/creative
- Confident/have a positive self-concept
- Independent/self-sufficient
- Skilled in seeking/retrieving information
- Knowledgeable about/skilled in learning
- Able to develop/ use evaluation criteria

(as cited in Benson, 2011, p. 177).

That is to say, an autonomous learner in language education is organized, rational and scientific in the way analyzing things; thoughtful; self-conscious; inquisitive; pliable; communicative with his peers and with his surrounding; risk taker; self-assured; well pleased about himself; skillful in looking for sources of knowledge.

We will notice on the next characteristics given by other researchers that mainly all the components listed overhead will be shared out in their works.

However, Breen and Mann (1997) argue that the aspects of Candy come from beyond the field of language education. Yet, they will provide characteristics in the context of language education. For them autonomous learners relate themselves to the desired outcomes they will achieve through the learning process, to the way they will learn and to the resources available as one in which they are in control. Moreover, autonomous learners are in an authentic correlation to the target language they are learning and they have a strong will to learn that particular language. Furthermore, they are able to move back to the thing they did and then reflect upon it so that they could make decisions about the next desired experience that they would do. Besides, autonomous learners are vigilant to change and able to change in a flexible, resourceful and opportunistic way. Autonomous learners are not only able to make use of the environment they find themselves in strategically, but they are also able to

negotiate between the strategic meeting of their own needs and responding to the needs and desires of other group members (as cited in Benson, 2011, p. 177).

Accordingly, “*Autonomous learning is known to not only allow learners to cater the learning content and speed to their own needs but also motivate learning, and thus lead to the greater language learning*” (Dickinson, 1995; Dorneyei & Csizer, 1998, as cited in Iimuro & Berger, 2010, p. 127). In other words, for promoting language learning, learners are provided by chances to deal with the content that fits their needs are also motivated that facilitate the speed of the success of the learning.

From the principle stated by Smith (2008) “*learners have the power right to learn for themselves*” (as cited in Balçikanli, 2010, p. 90). We deduce that learners possess the sense of freedom in somehow and they are expected to play an active and important role in the learning process.

For that Holec (1981) related his perspective toward an autonomous learner to the previous base, he pointed out that an autonomous learner is able: “*to have, and to hold the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning, i.e. determining the objectives; defining the contents and progressions; selecting methods and techniques to be used; monitoring the procedures of acquisition properly speaking (rhythm, time, place, etc); evaluating what is has been acquired*” (as cited in Than Nga, 2014, p. 15).

Moreover, Scharle and Szabo (2000) answer to the question what makes an autonomous learner. For them, the sense of responsibility and the active role of taking decision are needed. They provided some examples of being autonomous in practice, such as “*interrupting the teacher’s explanation to ask about a certain point in the explanation*”. It is noticeable that action the non autonomous learner is not able to do such action maybe because of timidity, maybe he is not inquisitive. A second example “*looking up a word at home that the teacher used in the lesson but did not teach*”, the last example shows an active learner hence, he is an autonomous learner.

By the same token, the basic of learner autonomy is that students are involved in a decision making process concerning their own competence, as Little (1985) said “*they are likely to be more enthusiastic about learning*” it means that learners are highly motivated (as cited in Balçikanli, 2010, p. 90), indeed without neglecting the role of the teacher, this point is dealt by Betts and Knapp (1981) who define an autonomous learner as “*one who solves problems or develops new ideas through a combination of divergent and convergent thinking*

and functions with minimal external guidance in selected areas of endeavor” (as cited in Owen & Erichsen, 2013) this quotation shows that, although, the capacities and the willingness of the learner, he needs a help from either his teacher or any external assistance.

Also Gardner and Miller (1999) in their book establishing Self-Access. They defined autonomous learners as those who set their personal programs and know how they will implement them. However or Nunan (1997), debated the definition mentioned earlier, for him the degree of autonomy on the learners depend on many aspects such as learners’ goals, personality, institutional philosophy and cultural context (p.6-7).

Always on the principle cited up and in summary of what is said about it, we can say that someone qualifies as an autonomous learner when he independently chooses aims and purposes and sets goals; chooses materials, methods, and tasks; exercises choice and purpose in organizing and carrying out the chosen tasks; and chooses criteria for evaluation.

Chan (2001) did an interview with 20 language major students in Hong Kong University, She got these results that describe an autonomous learner as follow *“highly motivated, goal-oriented, having an inquisitive mind, well-organized, hard working, curious about language, interested and enthusiastic about what is learnt, active, having initiative, making use of every opportunity to improve one’s standard and flexible”* (as cited in Gokgoz, 2008, p.10).

In addition to Chan (2001) description of the learner autonomy, many other researchers made an attempt to come up with other characteristics, in order to specify the profile of the autonomous learner. One of those researchers is Wenden (1991) who has brought a list of seven characteristics that she conducted from the interviews she did, for her these are the successful language learners:

- a) Have insight into their own language learning styles and preference as well as the nature of the task itself.
- b) Take an active approach to learning task. They select learning objectives for themselves and deliberately involve themselves in the language they are learning.
- c) Are willing to take risks. These students accept their status as ‘linguistic toddlers’. They are willing to appear foolish sometimes in order to communicate, using any means at their disposal to convey meaning.
- d) Are good guessers. They use clues effectively and make legitimate inferences.
- e) Are prepared to attend to form as well as to content.

- f) Actively attempt to develop the target language into a separate reference system and try to think in the target language as soon as possible.
- g) Have a tolerant and outgoing approach to the target language.

(as cited in Gokgoz, 2008, p . 9)

In addition, Camilleri (1999) sees an autonomous learner is the one who:

“ -refuses spoon-feeding, is capable of undertaking personal research and is able to assess his progress while being aware of his difficulties. In other words, an autonomous learner does not like when his teacher provides him knowledge in an over simplified way, yet, he wants to look for knowledge by himself.

-Takes his own initiatives, does his own research and does not depend totally on his teacher who serves only as a guide.

-Has a right to decide what and how to learn. He should be informed and have a say in decision-making i.e. an autonomous learner chooses the content of the lesson and the materials that will be used in it.

-Is trained to carry out a totally active role in class.

-Is thirsty for knowledge and is willing to acquire the necessary skills to achieve this on his own. In other words, an autonomous learner is highly curious; he seeks for answers to his unlimited number of questions. In order to reach that, he uses different techniques that he sees are relevant to the given situation.”

(Camilleri, 1999, p. 38).

Cobb (2013), has listed some ways of a successful learner which are considered useful for lifetime as Knowles (1975) has said “*that suddenly become a prerequisite for this new world*”.

So the successful lifelong learner is some who takes initiative, he does not wait for someone else to say ‘you must to learn this’. This learner is comfortable with independence that is to say he does not always act independently or autonomously. Indeed, increasingly they must cultivate their networks to learn effectively. Moreover, the autonomous learner is persistent, although, learning takes time, it takes repetitions, and it takes much practice too, he is able to stick to it and face all the learning constraints.

The successful learner accepts responsibility; he adopts the latter for doing the work or the task and does it well. Furthermore, he is not like other students, the autonomous learner views problems as challenges rather than obstacles, he tries to find solutions to them. Besides, he has a high degree of curiosity, the successful learner propensity for asking ‘why’ and lots of other questions. Moreover, he has a strong desire to learn or change i.e. he is intrinsically motivated, he has a will to learn and sees learning as a positive path forward. He is not only self confident but he is able to use basic study skills. In other words, that learner has a solid of self-efficacy which means that the belief that he is capable of performing in a certain manner to attain certain goals. Concerning the language skills we name for instance note taking which is useful for lifetime in different setting in the learner’s life.

Finally, an autonomous learner sets an appropriate pace for his learning, it means that the learner recognizes that learning is as much about the process that the outcome(the product).hence the focus is on the way and the steps that the learner go through. Thus, an autonomous learner is the one who is successful in finding the best strategy to learn to be successful.

Researchers like Dam et al (1990) have reached the point of the autonomous learner in the both classroom and social contexts. For him, that learner is “*an active participant in the social processes of classroom learning ...an active interpreter of new information in terms of what she/he already and uniquely knows... [somehow] knows how to learn and can use this knowledge in any learning situation she/he may encounter at any stage in her/his life*” (as cited in Gardner & Miller, 1999, p. 6).

To sum up, autonomous learner is the one who is successful in finding strategies that fit them to learn. He has the capacity to take control of his own learning. He has specific way of learning which makes him different from other students. Although the different characteristics of an autonomous learner in language learning discussed by each researcher, we summarize them in the following table which lists 25 main features of autonomous learner. Besides, the table shows the learners’ behaviors inside and outside the classroom.

Table 03: Summary of the characteristics of an autonomous learner

Characteristics	Autonomous learner:
Goal-oriented	Relates himself to the desired outcomes he will achieve; he sets the aims in his mind.
Controllable	Controls his learning
Is willing	Has a strong will to learn and discover a language
Decision-making	Feels free to choose, has the ability to make selections...
Reflective	Moves back to the thing he did to analyze thing then help him to take decision in his learning.
Attentive	Listens and concentrates to any source of knowledge (teacher, environment, media...etc)
Inquisitive	Is curious about language
Motivated	Is motivated to reach goals
Researchable	Does not rely only to what a teacher provides him, he investigate to more explanations or for new discovery.
Problem-solving	Uses strategies to face learning constraints and work out on them
Planned	Sets programs and how he implements them
Self-evaluated	Is able to evaluate and assess his learning
Well-organized	Controls his tasks and does them in order
Active	Is practice, help his peers, communicates, discusses...etc
Initiative	Has initiatives in his learning, he looks for originality
Enthusiastic	Has a high intense to know a language
Risk-taker	Has " <i>willingness to be risky in certain circumstances</i> " (Cervantes, 2013. p. 423) for the purpose to solve a problem in learning process
Creative	Strives for innovated in his language learning
Persistent	Tries to find solutions to the learning constraints though the difficulties he faces, he never gives up.
Responsible	Has a control over his learning and assumes the consequences of his choices
Challengeable	Loves contests and sees problems as pleasure
Positive	Is always optimist he sees things in a positive way
Self-confident	Trusts on his learning abilities
Skillful	Has the enough baggage to acquire the language and the abilities to solve problems
Strategic	Has a set of strategies in which he uses to learn a language such as note taking

Although the various features that draw the profile of an autonomous learner, they are interrelated, each quality influences another. Hence the points listed above are the major characteristics that summarize the different views of the researchers.

Conclusion

To conclude the section, we would say that the aspects of learner autonomy differs from one student to another, and by setting the once they possess, it makes clear to determine which type of autonomy they are.

Section Two: Narrative Inquiry

Introduction

Since our tools of data collection are autobiographies, and we need to analyze them, it is essential to know what autobiographies are, and we need to define what narrative inquiry for our analysis is. This section deals with making clear all these concepts.

1. Narratives

1.1 Defining Narratives

For Abbott (2008) “*narrative is the representation of an event or series of events*” (p. 13). Besides, according to De Fina (2003) “*narratives are texts that recount events in sequential order*” (p.11). Narrative has a role of making interpretations of different experiences (Polansky et al., 2010). Narratives are also defined by Culver (2012), as personal stories that result in the shift from the experienced lived to written text as a form of a story. They are considered as opportunities to grasp both of self and others-connectors to the past, present and future (p.6). Besides, Tyler (1986) believes that narrative is considered as “*a meditative vehicle by which the complexity and taken-for grantedness of ordinary events may be explored*” i.e. reading through lines is a journey of a discovery of different factors in itself (as cited in Polansky, p.319). Generally the narrative are not constructed randomly, yet it has its specific characteristics and follow a certain order as Echoing (2009) claimed “*a narrative is a story of events, placed in sequential order, which conveys meaning to a particular audience*” (as cited in Wells, 2011, p. 5). Shortly, we can say that “*narratives are a way in which individuals make sense of themselves and the world*” (Squire, 2008, as cited in *ibid*).

Narratives are used for different purposes and their users confirm that narratives have many advantages, especially in our field of interest EFL. Hence, learners, teachers, the curriculum, and the learning process in general gain from them. Khenoune (2010) has mentioned the importance of using narratives in the field of learning, she used in her study the analysis of learners' diaries and she deduced the latter are very worthy materials that provide the learners with opportunities to express themselves hence, their autonomy becomes more fostered. To support Khenoune's view, Mercer (n.d.) adds, learners "*are capable of expressing themselves well and comprehensibly in English*" (p.168). Moreover, (Polansky et al., 2010) argue that "*narratives not only provide a vehicle for structured reflection upon their contributions to the language learning process and classroom setting, but also develop their insight into broader personal, institutional, and social issues that impact education systems*" (p.304). This quotation shows how the narratives are important especially the role that they play as a reflective tool in the field of language learning. However, in other disciplines also "*narrative as a tool for reflection and analysis has been explored across many disciplines*" (ibid, p 305).

As earlier mentioned narratives are touched by many hands, for teachers for instance they see narrative very useful and valuable, Polansky et al (2010) "*the tutors embraced narratives as the vehicle to produce vivid and focused expressions of their experiences. In their portrayal of real life and level of sensitivity brought to the situations described, the writings are eye-opening*" (p.319). In other words, thanks to narratives the tutors become reflective toward different criteria that surrounded them. They seek to make their experiences comprehensible. According to Gready (2008) the narratives let tutors "*to relive, control, transform, (re-) imagine events, to reclaim and construct chosen identities, social interactions and communities*" (as cited in Polansky et al, 2010).i.e. narrative is considered as an opportunity in which the tutors revise their experiences then detect for instance the non successful behaviors in their methods and why not to rectify them. It is a favorable occasion to expose maybe the constraints, for example in the story telling of the tutors of their language learning experience, the reader of that stories (researcher) deduced that "*several of the stories focus on the teacher's difficulty appreciating the problems of a particular students either because of the classroom setting or an inability to change expectations of student possibilities*" (ibid). This is an example, so it could be solved after reading it from the authorities why not.

1.2. Advantages of Integrating Narratives in Language Learning

According to Polansky et al (2010), the use of narratives in language learning provides positive objectives for the course, among them:

- Gain appreciation of different education system and approaches to world language learning and teaching.
- Reflect on strategies for promoting successful language learning.
- Draw connection between the field of education and other professional fields and disciplines.
- Reflect on topics related to education in an urban setting and teaching as profession.

(pp.319-320).edited

For more advantages let's quote some teachers' perspectives towards the narratives:

Teacher 1 "*The activity of reflection has allowed me to consider the nature of my influence and the efficacy of my teaching methods and to then refine and mobilize these reflection for an educational cause*" (ibid, p. 320).

Teacher 2 "*...helped all of us not only to do the best we can in our respective classroom but also to get the most personal understanding out of what we have all done and witnessed*"

These witnesses show the efficiency and the importance of narratives.

To conclude, Narratives is a useful approach to look for ways to enhance students learning and engagement.

2. Narrative Inquiry

2.1. Defining Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is related to different branches of study; it covers activities that create and analyze stories of life experiences. Namely: life histories; narrative interviews, journals; diaries, memoires; autobiographies; biographies...etc (Hongland & Wiebe, 2009).

Narrative inquiry is a research methodology that is applied in different disciplines as medicine; nursing; law...etc. Narrative inquiry seeks for deep understanding of life experiences. Narrative researchers construct their inquiries on different theoretical and philosophical views on how people perceive narratively (Hoongland & Wiebe, 2009).

Riessman and Speedy (2007) state that "*narrative inquiry as a field of study has pollinated numerous disciplines. Beginning in the early twentieth century, narratology found application*

in literary analysis. Later, in the 1960s, it is extended to psychology, sociology, cognitive science, qualitative research, the humanities and education.” (as cited in Culver, 2012, p. 6). Narrative inquiry is defined as “*a relatively new qualitative methodology, is the study of experience understood narratively. It is a way of thinking about, and studying experience*” (Clandinin & Huber, n. d. p. 1). Since, narrative inquiry is concerned with qualitative type of study; it deals with descriptive and exploratory studies. Besides, Connelly and Clandinin (2006) point out that “*to use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study*” (ibid, p. 3).

To support the idea of ‘study’ in the concept of narrative inquiry we refer to Pinnegar and Rosiet (2007) who state that “*narrative inquiry is a term that refers, in part to narrative analysis*”. It plays a part of examining experiences. It serves also as a meditative instrument for promoting level of consciousness and leads to focused meaning (Culver, 2012, p. 6).

In short, narrative inquiry is the study of activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experience and it is qualitative type of study.

2.2. Narrative Inquiry in Education

Now we deal with narrative inquiry in the field of education and of language learning in particular.

Connelly & Clandinin (1990) argue that “*narrative inquiry is increasingly used in studies of educational experiences. It has a long intellectual history...*” (p. 2). Like other disciplines, education relies on narrative inquiry to study different issues. Since we are interested in the specialty of language learning, narrative inquiry in the field of language acquisition is considered as core element in learner-centered. It is against the behaviouristic view. Narrative inquiry was stimulated by many language educators and researchers like Madeline Ehrmann and Earl Stevick who recommended that “*a classroom is not just for conveying ‘content information’ or pursuing strictly ‘language goals’, but also for attaining ‘deeper aims’ and exploring ‘life goal’ where language acquisition becomes a plat form for educating learners to live more satisfying lives*” (Arnold & Brown, 1999, as cited in Culver, 2012, p. 7).

Narrative inquiry lends a hand to many teachers and researchers to reach their professional goals, for instance Samah (2013) who claimed that “*I had always been skeptical about qualitative research, but as soon as I was introduced to narrative inquiry, I was*

convinced that this approach would guide me to embrace my dual roles as a practitioner-researcher” (p.89).

Narrative inquiry is the activity that enables teachers to read their learners’ minds. Supposedly, a teacher asks the learners to write about how well the lesson is presented and to add any comment if any at the end of the session. The learners will produce their personal diaries, then, the teacher will read them, hence the educators will analyze the learners’ answers to look for any oversight in the method maybe or in any other factor in the classroom. Not only that, but to make the learners be autonomous, as the case of Jimeinez Raya, who taught English from 1990 to 1992 in Granada University. There he started to apply a learner-centered program so that learners will be able to learn autonomously. The tool used to reach the main aim is the use of ‘learner diary’. The method of Raya is based on four main questions that learners should answer routinely which are:

- ✓ What have you learned today? (about the content)
- ✓ Who have you learned it from? (about the source of the content)
- ✓ How have you learned it? (about the method)
- ✓ How did you feel?

Since these were open-ended questions, it was thought that they can assist and develop learners to look at different aspects of the process and the content of learning (Raya, 1997, p. 84). All in all, as Raya argued that “it had been agreed with learners that diaries should be read by the teacher for different reasons: a) the feedback they would provide on methodology used in the classroom; b) they would help the teacher identify individual difficulties; c)they would also give the teacher the opportunity to help the learner improve the entries of the diary, suggest new areas of reflection; d)the teacher could also make suggestions as to what actions the learner should undertake to improve language learning, and recommend which areas to concentrate on, for example” (Raya, 1997, p. 84).

2.3. Characteristics of Narrative Inquiry

According to Hoongland & Wiebe (2009) narrative inquiry has some features which are:

- Flexibly: both of the aim of the study and the research questions are depend on the finding that a researcher find while analyzing the stories i.e. it is not static it is variable.

- Experience of an individual: narrative inquiry is restricted to analyze only a small amount of participants, it is not concerned with a large group. Generally it reveals the experiences that were not exposed.
- Life story: the texts that a researcher analyzes are in form of stories. It is a qualitative research, and it carries out philosophical view of the researcher by reading and interpreting the stories.
- Coding: usually qualitative research has its own form, narrative inquiry implies coding fields texts, to categorize themes, participants...etc
- Narrative researchers are tending to learn from participants' productions (stories) rather than from the conventional literature review or theory.(adopted from Hoongland & Wiebe, 2009).

In addition, narrative inquiry seeks to understand and speak on behalf of the experienced lived or told by the participants, and then to seek to explore the meaning behind the stories.

3. Autobiographies

We dealt earlier with narratives and then with narrative inquiry since our study attempts to apply that type of approach. Now, we deal especially with autobiographies as instruments for our research.

Powell (1985) “*researcher have been rather slow to see the potential of autobiographical material ... on learning*” (as cited in Raya, 1997, p. 83). However, Berk (1980) argued against “*autobiography was one of the first methodologies for the study of education*” (as cited in Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 3). Although the different views about the emergence of the use of autobiographies either early or late, the latter is still useful in the discipline of education. So let's define it and light on its importance in language learning.

3.1. Defining Autobiographies

Loschiny (2005) argued that “*autobiographies are considered a form of narrative in which the narrators describe their own life retrospectively from their first-person point of view*” (as cited in Mercer, n.d. p, 162). Autobiographies are writings that enable narrators to express themselves. Besides, Bell (2012) considered them as “*a window into people's beliefs and experiences*” (as cited in Mercer, n.d. p. 162).Hence, autobiographies are activities that interpret events into written texts in form of stories.

3.2. Autobiography as an Approach

Autobiography is not just texts to write and then to be read. Yet, it is more complex, it is done for many purposes. For instance, we conduct autobiographies for research in this case autobiography is considered as a tool for collecting data. Autobiographies have been increasingly used as a source of data in education; especially in the field of SLA there has been a progress of recognition of the narrative, in particular autobiographies as a functional reflective tool for collecting data (as cited in Mercer, n.d. p. 162). Many researchers rely on autobiographies as an approach to analyze a specific phenomenon in individuals, this fact is asserted by Benson (2005) “*a broad approach to research that focuses on the analysis and description of social phenomenon as they are experienced within the context of individual lives*” (ibid.)

Therefore, the instrument of autobiography has been increasingly used as a source of data in education especially in language learning, Coffey (2011) claimed that “*the various applications of language-learning autobiographies have been well documented*” (p.53).

3.3. Importance of the Autobiographies in Language Learning

Autobiographies are used for the purpose of collecting data as mentioned earlier; likewise their presence in the context of language learning leave many advantages after them. They are essential in that context to foster the level of language learning, so let's discuss its importance. Autobiographies are used to encourage the growth of language skills; they are reflective tools of many factors such as learning process, learning styles, one's motivation, and one's personal skills, knowing that the procedure of reflection happens while writing (Raya, 1997, p. 83).

Culver (2012) “*autobiographies are powerful literary forms. They not only reveal historically significant moments of a person's life, but also bring the narrator closer to the world of motivation, reasoning and emotions*” (p. 29). Autobiographies are tools used to expose the lived events; they lead the narrators to describe their cases, and become critical thinkers about the circumstances that surround them. Culver added that autobiographies lead to “*creating awareness, building identity, related activities can strengthen learners' relationships with their members, and assist in positioning participants for the future by analyzing their past*” (ibid, p. 30). Moreover, Long (2009) argued that “*the more we reflect on our path and our past, the reflections that we go through tend to consolidate, validate, and/or strengthen our qualitative judgment or values that then become norms. They then help to shape cognitive bias that we carry forward into evaluating the present with respect of choosing a path in the future*” (as cited in ibid). Therefore, autobiographies are a way of

analyzing previous events to detect the issues that should be either to be kept or excluded in the future life.

Autobiography is an essential tool in empowering learners for autonomy as we quoted before concerning the latter by Khenoune (2010). It allows learning become more reachable to examination and reflection and more accessible for decision and change (Raya, 1997, p. 99). Then, “*students who are encouraged to undertake reflection of this kind may not become more ‘organized’ students but they are likely to become students who are aware of the demands on their time and aware of the way in which study fits into their personal lifestyle. To that extent they will become more confident students at the end of the day. Confidence probably relates as much to success as does effective study method*” (Main, 1985, as cited in *ibid*). Hence, autobiographies give rise to all the characteristics of an autonomous learner listed above.

The autobiographies play an important role for learners, teachers and researchers; we discuss what they bring about for them.

3.3.1. For Learners

Writing autobiographies by learners as Mercer (n.d.) said “*can help foster their metacognitive awareness both of language learning per se and of themselves as learners*” (p.164). Furthermore, as Cotterall (2000) & Kohonen (2000) assert that “*such awareness can be empowering for learners as a vital ingredient in autonomy-inspired approaches to teaching and learning*” (as cited in *ibid*). So, autobiographies are not just tools for collecting data for research purpose. Yet, they play a main role in fostering the learning. They can foster learners’ motivation and willingness to engage in self-regulated behavior (Mercer, n.d. Besides, “*...can serve a vital role in helping learners to envision their futures and set goals based on their current perceptions of themselves and their pasts*” (*ibid*). They involve comparison between their current and past behaviors, they may ameliorate different circumstances detecting while writing.

3.3.1. For Teachers

Mercer (n.d.) sees that material as “*a form of writing which can reveal valuable insight about our learners’ needs, motivation, beliefs, goals and strategies, thereby helping us to respect learner individual differences in our planning and lesson design*” (p.164). Hence, teachers believe that the autobiography are functional and is a door to expose clearly the conditions that are related to their methods, learners’ needs, curriculum ...etc.

Thanks to the lines that the teachers read in the writings, they will spot the constraints then understand them to solve them after. In short, those materials “*have considered as practical value as a pedagogical tool and as a vital component in lesson planning*” (ibid).

3.3.2. For Researchers

The autobiography is a channel between the researchers and their participants (writers of that autobiography) and it is up to the researchers to seek for the target theme (ibid, p. 165).

Manuel Jimenez Raya one among researchers of autobiographies and that is what she said about her experience “*in my experience with learning autobiographies. I have become increasingly aware that diary studies can help gain access to prior learning experiences in order to derive insights from them. These insights will assist us in coming to terms with our approaches to learning and, more generally, in developing our grasp of the enormously complex and dynamic relationship between complex and dynamic relationship between learning and teaching*” (Raya, 1997, p. 84). Hence, it helps teachers to be closer to their learners to promote the learning process.

Conclusion

To sum up, Narrative or the autobiography in particular plays an important role, since it is used for many purposes namely: as a tool to collect data for research, as a material for promoting different aspects in individuals.

Conclusion

We discussed the features of an autonomous learner, and we defined what are narratives and autobiographies, also narrative inquiry. Hence, we are ready now to collect our data and analyze them then to show the results by relating our findings to discussion we did in the whole of the first section of our study.

CHAPTER TWO

Chapter Two: Research Methodology, Results and Interpretation of Results

Introduction

As previously mentioned, the aim of a study is to analyze EFL learners' autobiographies to look for evidence of autonomous learning within them. Hence, this chapter is devoted to the research methodology adopted in this study. It deals with the practical side of the study, it covers: research methodology; data collection instruments; participants; then analysis of the data and the results.

Section one: Research Design and Data Collection Procedures

Introduction

The present study is mainly descriptive. This investigation is an attempt to analyze the learners' English language learning autobiographies in order to see whether or no the evidence of learner autonomy is present .The following elements describe the sampling, method and instruments for data collection.

1. Research Design

The research aim is to look for evidence of autonomous learning among EFL learners that is expected to be found in their narratives. Therefore, the method which is appropriate for this type of research is the interpretive, qualitative design.

The attempt is to understand phenomena especially 'autonomous learning' through accessing the meaning participants assign to them.

Since we attempt to analyzing things (learners and their thoughts) in their natural setting, trying to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings learners bring to them, qualitative research seems to be the most appropriate design to reach the aim of the study.

2. Population and Sample

The target population included 3rd year LMD students at the Department of English, University of Bejaia during the academic year 2015/2016. They were chosen out of 10 groups

and they were twenty nine in number. Yet, only thirteen of them participated in the data collection in which only five have been selected to answer our research questions. They are mixed gender and they share the same mother tongue (Kabyle) and they use different languages (Arabic, French, and English).

3. Tools and Procedures for Data Collection

As we mentioned earlier, our study is descriptive in nature, we attempted to shed light on learners' experiences in this research. We relied on narrative inquiry methodology in order to analyze learners' experiences, since it is the adequate method for such type of research and it is helpful to seek for answers to our research questions. Connelly & Clandinin (2006) pointed out that *“to use narrative inquiry methodology is to adopt a particular view of experience as phenomenon under study”* (as cited in Clandinin & Huber, n.d. p. 3)

As means for data collection, we have selected the language learning autobiography (learners' stories about their English language learning particularly English language). During the first semester EFL students were invited to write their English language learning autobiographies. The participants of this research belong to group 1, 3rd year LMD students. The access to target group's classroom and collection of data was gently facilitated by the teachers. The participant teacher asked her learners to do the task and she provided them with some instructions to follow to write their English language learning stories from first contact until present time. At the end of the first semester, 13 out of the 29 students had submitted the work. The latter is considered as our source of data for this research.

A two page handout containing the instructions for the task was distributed to the participants, in which we described the nature of the activity and the steps to do it. The sheet is entitled *“introducing English language learning autobiographies”*; the latter was defined for the learners, then they were informed about the objective and benefits of that tool that it makes both teachers and learners understand of different factors related to language learning. Next, allocated a part in the sheet was allocated for the methodology, in few lines each learner is informed to write his or her English language learning autobiography and her or his work will be collected at the end of the first semester (March, 2016) then to be read and analyzed by their teachers for research purposes. So that learners could be well oriented on how and what to write in their autobiographies, some factors were supplied to take into consideration, they were asked to write a rich description of their experiences in learning English from the first contact onwards including contexts where the language is being learned and how that

helped or influenced negatively on their learning (teachers, programs, friends, family, inside or outside of the classroom...), attitudes and feelings towards learning English, events that encouraged or detracted their English language learning. To make this task more challengeable, we asked them to be selective and to look for appropriate linguistic means when narrating.

4. Autobiography Analysis Framework

In the sections below, the framework for the data analysis is described.

a) Empathy

We have collected the learners' autobiographies. The first thing that we did is reading them and trying to understand and share the feeling of the learners. We attempted to recognize what learners think. Of course, we have our personal interpretation after reading the learners' productions, (Wilson, et al. 1999) defined empathy as "*an emotional reaction in a particular situation*" (as cited in Felt, 2011, p. 1).

b) Thematic Analysis

Since we need to analyze qualitative data, thematic analysis is the most suitable approach to do that "*it offers an accessible and theoretically-flexible approach to analyze qualitative data*" (Braun, 2006, p. 2). When we worked with themes from the first contact with the data, many themes have emerged which helped us to relate our data to our research questions Braun states that "*a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question*" (p. 10). So, in our study, we relied on narrative inquiry as a methodology to investigate the evidence of autonomous learning in the learners' autobiographies, and thematic analysis as an approach to answer our research questions following a set of steps.

5. Describing the Data (Autobiographies)

On the whole, 13 autobiographies were collected; a decision was made to analyze only 5 of them. After reading all the participants' stories and keeping in mind the research questions, we found that the selected 5 ones have enough information that allow us to collect the necessary data and then answer the research questions. The writers of these data are of mixed gender (females and males), some works were typed and some others were submitted

handwritten. The autobiographies have about 800 and 3549 words. All the five students produced their stories as we asked them; they managed to follow the instruction provided by their teacher.

Section Two: Data Analysis and Interpretation of Results

Introduction

In this section, we come to analyse the learners' autobiographies and to interpret the findings after drawing them. The analysis is based on both the empathy and the thematic analysis; the process of the examination goes through 6 steps as follows:

Step 01: Empathy

After having selected the 5 autobiographies that contain enough information to answer our research questions, we read them and we tried to be closer to the learners' feelings and way of thinking. In order to do a good analysis, we have first to understand the learners and we share with them the same perspectives. At that stage, we used empathy as a technique to interpret our data.

Step 02: Familiarizing with the data

When we come to analyze the learners' autobiographies we have some prior knowledge of the data and even some ideas about initial analysis, since we depend on our research questions and the type of our data (qualitative). That prior knowledge allows us to focus on specific key words that converge with the characteristics of an autonomous learner, we highlight each item we meet while reading. To look for meanings and different patterns that may help us to answer our research questions, we read and re-read the data many times; repeated reading allows us to familiarize with the stories. In this phase we start to take note about the themes and we think about how to code them. Thanks to the process of repeated reading, many themes have emerged:

Emerging Themes

In the table below, a list of the emerging themes is provided.

S = Student

Table 04: The Emerging Themes

S	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -teacher's encouragement -teacher's challenge -teacher's motivation -being a researcher -awareness -personal method/strategy -teacher's help Extra activities -The need for change -collaboration+ share knowledge -facing the difficulties -having dreams -Goal-orientedness -discovery -planning -friends' support - being dynamic -being interactive -being attentive -feeling comfortable -noticeable -personal challenges -non-sufficiency of teacher's output -Problem-solving -Curiosity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -having dream -a will to learn -motivation (internal/external) -relying on teacher's output -being critical -praise the teacher -teacher's encouragement -being creative -learning by love -own choices -teacher's help -being positive -curiosity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -being creative -parents' motivation -being challengeable - a will to discover -learning with love -teacher's encouragement -personal strategies -own choices -peers' motivation -goal-orientedness -teacher's help -self-confidence -self-esteem -facing the difficulties -the need for change -problem-solving -curiosity -attentive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -having dreams -being attentive -self-esteem -non-sufficiency of teacher's output -being a researcher -extra activities -personal method/strategies -curiosity -originality -self-confidence -own choices -teacher's motivation -self-educated -positive fear -responsibility -looking for help -family 's help -challengeable -facing difficulties -interactive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -responsibility -curiosity -being selective -extra activities -personal strategy -being motivated -decision making -awareness -organization -productivity -creativity -goal-orientedness -being a researcher -being ambitious -being interactive -teacher's help

From the aforementioned table, it seems that the learners' autobiographies are so rich of various themes. The latter arise while reading, and then they are written down. From the table we notice that there are themes are sub-themes, to organize our data well we need pass by the next step of thematic analysis.

Step 03: Generating Codes

After familiarizing with the data and identifying the themes, it is necessary to organize them by producing codes, as Miles & Heberman (1994) pointed out that “*a process of coding is part of analysis*” (as cited in Braun, 2006, p. 18) codes help our analysis to be well organized. Although we are not coding through software program, we managed to identify the repeated patterns (themes) by virtue of the notes we highlight on the texts (English language learning autobiographies) and the table N°01. So, the table below shows the identified themes.

Classifying Themes

According to the previous step and after identifying the themes that have emerged in the learners’ autobiographies, it seems necessary to be classified and organized. Thus, we divided the themes into 8 macro ones (teacher’s role, learning strategies, psychological and emotional side of the learners, cognitive themes, responsibility, curiosity, curiosity outcomes and active learners inside and outside the classroom) and each macro theme has a set of micro themes or sub-themes are shown in the following tables:

1) Teacher’s Role

Table 05: Teacher’s Role

Student Role	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Teacher’s Encouragement	X	X	X		
Teacher’s Challenge	X				
Teacher’s Motivation	X		X	X	
Learner(s) rely on teacher’s output		X			
Learner (s) praise(s) the teacher		X			
Teacher’s Help		X	X		X

The table above collects 6 sub-themes into one theme which is teacher's role. From this table we notice that the teacher is indispensable. The learners consider their teacher either as a support for their learning, as S5 mentioned in his autobiography "*he helped us to discover new methods to reach another, a higher level*" or as a source of motivation as S4 narrated "*She was so proud of me. When I remember all these things now, I realize that I finally found what really motivated me to learn English*".

According to the learners the teacher has an important role. S2 relies on the teacher's output as a source of knowledge "*I tried my best to learn anything the teacher taught us*". In addition he praises the teachers, "*they are lovely, ambitious and respectful. They taught us to write by ourselves. Besides, they encouraged us to read another book in English.*" This shows the essential role that the teacher has, he may draw the way of success or fail for the learners' learning process i.e. thanks to teacher the learner could be successful or due to the teacher the learner could fail in his learning. From that we deduce that the learners are depending on their teacher. According to the students, the status of the latter is sacred and they see their achievement (being students at the university) is based on the design planned by their teacher.

2) Learning Strategies

In the table N°01 we mentioned only the macro theme which is strategy, this table deals with its sub-themes that are cited in the learners' stories.

Table 06: Learning Strategies

Student strategies	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Doing extra activities		X		X	X
Note taking					X
Planning	X				
organization					X
Working in collaboration	X			X	
Translation			X		X

This table reveals that the students use different strategies in their learning. We found in the autobiographies the strategies cited in the table N°03. S2, S4 and S5 are not satisfied by the activities given by their teacher. Therefore, they do additional activities on their own, we quote from S4 story “*what I did that each afternoon I search on the internet for more precise details and do online activities*”. S5 uses note taking as strategy to enrich his vocabulary “*I had my own way to memorize these words and keep them in mind: I write the new word in little note book, then I try to use it in my everyday’s speech*”.

S1 does plans for his learning “*so, I asked the question what I have to do?*” this question allows him to design his way of teaching and plan for next tasks in his learning. Furthermore, for S2 and S4 they rely on collaboration strategy to learn better, they share ideas with their peers to develop their thinking we extract from S1 biography, “*but we end to find keys with collaborating with other pupils*”.

Besides, S3 and S5 use translation as a strategy to learn English as a foreign language. Hence, all the strategies listed above are applied by the learners to foster their English language.

3) Psychological and Emotional side of the learners

The table that follows gathers all the psychological and emotional factors that influence the students’ English language learning.

Table 07: Psychological and Emotional side of the students

Student Sub-theme	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Self-esteem			X	X	
Self-confidence			X	X	
Challenge			X	X	
Motivation	X		X		X
Feeling comfortable	X				
Positivity		X			
Willingness		X	X		
Ambition					X
Learning through love		X	X		
Positive fear				X	
Goal-orientedness	X		X		X
Having dreams	X	X			

The above table shows that, we may say that the emotional and the psychological sides of the learners may play an important role in their learning, willingness to learn; motivation; ambition to do that...etc all these appeared in the learners' autobiographies, the students have included their emotions and in which way they influence their process of learning. We noticed that all the learners' emotions are totally positive. S3 and S4 have confidence in their own of abilities; S3 gets this feeling of self-esteem since his parents are proud of her "*my parents were very proud of me...it was the first time that I saw my parents proud of their daughter*"

On the other side, thanks to the self-confidence of S4, he experienced many attitudes and positions without difficulties and hesitations "*I choose without any doubt to study Letters and Languages as a common core in high school*".

The factor that pushes S3 and S4 to go further in learning English as a foreign language is a challenge; they feel like they can do it as S4 said "*I gain challenged myself*" this feeling may go only with strong people and never with whose personality is weak. In addition, learners like S2 and S5 have narrated about their personal motivation, which allow them to be active learners who, seek for success in the English language "*I was excited to have English class for the first time in my life*".

The case of this student, he was motivated to discover a language before his contact with it. The fact that the S1 feels comfortable in his setting; this creates a good atmosphere for learning and gain a good results. Moreover, being positive is something that S2 feels when facing different experiences in his learning. To be positive, means that a learner is able to solve problems and never give up. We observed on the texts we read that students have the desire to learn English; this feeling is a will to discover and acquire the language, as the case of S2 and S3 the former wrote in his autobiography "*he had a strong desire to learn English and become bilingual*". That is to say that S2 is ready to travel the English speaking countries. Not only having a will that makes a student successful in his learning, being ambitious also leads a student to have a will and move to application. For S2 and S3, they learn English language through love, for them it is a pleasure to know it and acquire it, this feeling leads them to learning it easily. From S3 story: "*when I began learning English at the first contact, the first meeting with beautiful language, I directly loved it*".

The last sub-theme of the macro theme emotions is the positive fear, S4 have experienced the fear in his learning, but it is positive, because thanks to this feeling, S4 took some precautions and made efforts to avoid failure. Furthermore, according to the learners the

factor of goal-orientedness influences their motivation. When the students draw a plan for their learning, the desire to construct what they designed, gives birth to motivation. Thus, the latter drags the learners to do effort and be active in order to reach the aims planned in mind.

Finally, it was noticed that the most of the students have dreams concerning their learning, they see a dream as an aim, and they believe that they are able to chase it one day. S3, for example spoke about his dream concerning the English language “*my dream is that one day I could be a good teacher, because teaching English has always been my dream and my goal, English language is very active and alive language, the most beautiful language ever*”.

It has been deduced that his love for the English language gives birth to dreams then lead the learner to draw a goal in mind, consequently, the factor of motivation appears to push him pursue the dream.

4) Cognitive Themes

Table 08: Cognitive Themes

Student	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Awareness	X				X
Criticism		X			
Noticing	X				
Decision making					X
Attention	X		X	X	

From this table, it is noticeable that learners (S1 and S5) have the ability to determine things of their own; this may allow them to see clearly what is happening in the surrounding and aim at further results in their learning. All the sub-themes cited above are connected, the learner who is aware, he notices things since he is attentive, when perceiving and noticing, he can be critical, then to avoid the things which are criticized and this helped him to take decisions for his learning. We quote from S4 English language experience “*I pay attention even to the shape of her mouth when pronouncing all those words*”.

In addition S3 is aware of the development of English learning, S3 can determine which level he reached and what is the next. S3 stated that “*I started to discover the English language...*” This is considered as a first step toward knowing the language. Besides he may assess his learning alone. These cognitive activities permit learners to gain metacognitive awareness which is required to become autonomous, then to keep what is useful and delete the bad behaviors that influence their development of the English language learning.

5) Responsibility

Before dealing with the next table which shows the learners’ responsibility in different activities, we have to refer to table N°03 which lists a number of strategies used by the students, as a way to learn. Since learners select their personal strategies to learn the English language, they are responsible for their choices of the strategies they see are suitable for them.

Table 09: Responsibility

Student	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Sub-themes					
Self-educated				X	
Selective					X
Own choices		X	X	X	
Decision making					X
Research	X			X	X
Problem-solving	X		X	X	

The quality of being responsible towards learning appears in the students’ autobiographies, they assume every decision they take, and they rely on themselves to face different obstacles that they encounter in their learning of English as a foreign language or their personal problems. For instance, S1 lived a hard situation managed to overcome the situation “*asking questions to the teacher it was hard but with the bases that I have got I succeed ...*” S1 succeeded to fight his shyness; he is responsible about his emotions and behaviors. S1, S4 and S5 do not only rely on what their teachers provide them as knowledge or activities. However, they do their personal researches for further understanding and to

acquire more English words. S5 for example stated “*I loged in a site to receive English courses and to send me new dictionaries*”.

In addition, these EFL learners are responsible of choices they take, as S3 cited in his autobiography “*I made the important choice of all my life...*”. Hence, all the learners seem to have control over their learning English.

6) Curiosity

From the emerging themes, we noticed some characteristics of the learners namely: creativity, originality, discovery, before dealing with them, we shall first see the source of these qualities in the following table:

Table 10: Curiosity

student	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Curiosity	X	X	X	X	X

This table reveals that all the learners are curious about the foreign language English learning. Thanks to this factor, these students managed to be creative and productive, for instance producing essays, stories...etc that allow them increase their knowledge in the English language. The case of the S5 is a good example: “*sometimes I hear some strange words, but my curiosity pushes me to search for the meaning of the word*”. Being curious is the quality of a successful learner.

7) Curiosity Outcomes

Table 11: Curiosity’s Outcomes

Student outcome	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Discovery	X		X		
Originality				X	
Creativity		X	X		X

Table 08 shows that the students are creative and have the curiosity to discover, and do tasks on their own to produce an original work. S4 preferred to create a poem in English, for S4 learning the English language is an art. (See appendix n° 1)

8) Active learners inside and outside the classroom

Table 12: Active Learners inside and outside the classroom

Student	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
characteristics					
interactive	X			X	X
practice	X			X	

From the aforementioned table we notice that there are some students who are active both inside and outside the classroom. They are interactive, they share different ideas in cooperation with their peers, and they interact with their teachers to receive feedback and to get knowledge. S1 interacts with his peers, he works in collaboration. Therefore being an active student facilitates acquiring a language since interaction is a kind of communication, and the latter is the good way to learn a foreign language. Learning a foreign language requires much practice, doing extra activities, navigate, search...etc. S1 told us his experience in which he reported that he often listens to English songs so as to become used to the English language.

Step 04: Searching for Repeated Themes

We notice from the previous steps that some themes are repeated (themes most mentioned by the learners in their autobiographies).

Table 13: Repeated Themes

N° table	Classification	Repeated Themes
N°02	Teacher's role	-Teacher's encouragement -Teacher's motivation -Teacher's help
N°03	Learners' strategies	-Doing extra activities - Working in collaboration

N°04	Psychological and emotional side of the learners	-Motivation -Goal-oriented
N°05	Cognitive themes	-Attention
N°06	Responsibility	-Own choices -Problem solving -Research
N°07	Curiosity	-Curiosity
N°08	Curiosity's outcomes	-Creativity
N°09	Active learners inside and outside the classroom	-Interaction

We notice by classifying and coding our themes which emerged in the texts that the participants share some characteristics; we listed them in the table overhead. So, we can answer our research questions focusing on these points since they are mentioned in every autobiography of the students. Thanks to this step (looking for the repeated themes) we narrowed down the list of themes.

According to this table, the teacher's role is very essential; they consider the teacher as a core element in their learning. The teacher encourages, motivates, orients and helps the learners; he shows them the way to learn English as a foreign language. In this process, they rely on strategies that they find most practical and beneficial for them (doing extra activities and working in collaboration). The inner factors that push the participants to succeed are motivation and goal-orientedness. Besides, we deduce that learners are skillful, they are attentive, that lead them to be always ready to see, observe, make conclusions...etc. Likewise, the learners are responsible for their learning, they do their own researches, they do not wait for their teacher to ask them; they make their own choices concerning their learning and they assume what their choices leave after them, also when they face constraints in their path of English learning, they feel responsible to solve problems on their own. They do not only have a strong desire to know things about the English language, but they are creative as well. The last characteristic in common between the students is interaction, the learners are so active, and they interact and participate to share their knowledge with their peers and their teacher.

Step 05: Reviewing some repeated themes

There are some themes that should be reviewed to seek for the different factors that influence the students' English language learning.

❖ Different Sources of Help

Table14: Different sources of help

Student	S1	S1	S3	S4	S5
From:					
Teacher	X	X	X		X
Peers	X				
Family				X	

The learners seek for help from different sources, and it is noticeable that the teacher's support is the most mentioned by the learners. As already discussed, the participants need the teacher in their learning, his help is the key for the students' success. Otherwise, peers and family are the source of help for some students. For example S1 has many friends who helped him in his English learning they practice together the language to foster their pronunciation *"it's great to have new friends I have three friends here, who helped me I love them very much ... sometimes we try to speak English between us it's funny we kidding also with English we narrate our daily life"*

Therefore, peers also play an important role in the learning process. S1 feels at ease with that atmosphere, he feels familiar with his friends; it leads him to express himself freely and to be an active learner.

❖ Different Types of Interaction

In the learners' autobiographies we noticed that the students practice two kind of interaction that shown in the following table.

Table15: Different types of interaction

Student Type	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5
Learner- learner interaction	X			X	
Learner- teacher interaction	X			X	X

From this table, we notice that the learners are interactive; they cooperate between them and with their teacher. They are communicative and this quality is highly needed in learning a foreign language. Thanks to this characteristic, the students receive and produce knowledge, and they receive feedback as well.

Step 06: Selective Coding

At this stage, we look for the overall themes, from the previous analysis we manage to set a specific list which shows the learners' characteristic in their learning English as a foreign language. Through the whole analysis already discussed, we select the themes which determine the learners' profile.

Figure 01: The profile of the Learners



This form shows the learners' characteristics, through the whole analysis we select at the end the features that construct the profile of the learners. So, they are active learners, attentive, collaborative, they has a high degree of curiosity which leads them to be researchable and creative, they are interactive, responsible for their own decisions and they are able to face any constraints in their language learning and they are hopeful to reach their goals already planned in their minds.

Major Findings and Discussion

From our results, it is noticeable that many signs of autonomy have appeared in the experiences of the learners, and this is our aim of conducting this research, is looking for evidence of autonomous features in the learners' autobiographies.

In the first chapter we have discussed the characteristics of an autonomous learner, and by comparing them with our results, we arrive to the conclusion that these learners hold some of them, the following table shows that:

Table 16: The degree of autonomy in the EFL learners

Characteristics of an autonomous learner	YES	NO
Goal-oriented	X	
Controllable		X
willingness		X
Decision-making	X	
Reflective		X
Attentive	X	
Inquisitive	X	
Motivated	X	
Researchable	X	
Problem-solving	X	
Planned		X
Self-evaluated		X
Well-organized		X
Active	X	

Initiative		X
Enthusiastic		X
Risk-taker		X
Creative	X	
Persistent		X
Responsible	X	
Challengeable		
Positive		X
Self-confident		X
Skillful		X
Strategic	X	
Interactive	X	
Self-directed		X

These results concern the most repeated themes which emerged in the learners autobiographies, there are some characteristics we may mark 'YES' instead of 'No', but since they are only mentioned by only one or two student(s), our research tends to make a conclusion according to the selective coding, our deductions depend on the overall themes of the whole analysis.

According to the students' characteristics we deduce that the participants are autonomous. However, table 16 reveals that there are some features that they do not possess. The question is: can we consider them as autonomous learners though the lacks?

To answer to this question, we need first to go back to an important element in the analysis which is the role of the teacher, for the learners the latter is indispensable hence, even if they are active, motivated, strategic and so on but they cannot direct their learning without being already set by their teacher. According to this idea, and the results of the table that show that the learners do not have initiative in their learning, their autonomy is limited in somehow by the teacher. The teacher directs, shows them the way and provides them with assignments to do their tasks autonomously. Therefore, the good answer to the question asked is that the learners are reactively autonomous.

The current research is an attempt to look for evidence of autonomous learning in the learners' English language learning autobiographies. The results indicate that many signs of autonomy are present in the texts we treated. The evidence is that the learners are qualified by a set of characteristics of an autonomous learner mentioned in the last table.

Through analyzing the learners' English language learning autobiographies, we detect the evidence of the autonomy in their experiences. Along the analysis and the results found we realize that the learners are autonomous since their profile consists of the features of an autonomous learner such as creativity, goal-oriented, inquisitive, problem-solving...etc. However their reliance to the teacher shows that they depend on him, hence the learners tasks need to be initiated by the teacher so that they could work autonomously for instance to organize, to search...etc. Therefore, this type of autonomy is not proactive one, yet it is a reactive autonomy since the learners are not able to control their learning before directed and oriented by their teacher.

The results revealed that the learners have hopes, and are motivated. These emotions lead them to set objectives in their mind, and then they become very thoughtful to put precautions on their path of English learning.

Conclusion

After having analyzed the autobiographies, and revealed the results and discussed them, we end this chapter by answering the research question. First, there is evidence of autonomous learning among EFL learners' learning experiences. Second, the EFL learners set goals for their learning; a quality that keeps them positive and motivated. However, the participants do not have initiatives in their learning, they ask for orientations so that they could then do their tasks autonomously.

General Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, we talk about the constraints faced during the research, implications for our results and suggestions that may provide the future researchers with hints which open doors to new issues to be researched.

1. Limitations of the Study

There are some occurrences that arise in the current study which are out of our control. First, some of the submitted autobiographies are written by hand, hence it was difficult to decipher some words. Second, the choice of words while composing, since this research is expected to be an academic work, it is needed to look into the relevant vocabulary. Finally, the current study is based on qualitative data analysis; the autobiographies were analyzed manually instead of using NVivo software which is not used in our situation. Hence, much time was devoted to analyze the autobiographies.

2. Implications

The findings from the analysis of the autobiographies revealed some unexpected conclusions. It has not been thought that the autobiographies include signs of autonomous learning. Regardless of the limited level of autonomy of the participants, they can be qualified as successful in acquiring English language thanks to their capacities, way of perceiving issues and the strategies they apply in their learning.

From the repeated reading of the autobiographies, it has been understood that, the students expressed themselves freely by telling their experiences narratively. They shared with the readers their emotions. Therefore, using this instrument in the current research has led the students to define themselves and to evaluate their learning behaviors. Besides, it worked as a means to let the students think about many aspects that influence their path of education. The learners become aware and able to determine who they are by reflecting to factors that surround them. Thus, they will be able to keep what make of their learning fostered and get rid of each behavior that may influence negatively to their learning. In short, they aim to future achievements.

3. Recommendations for Further Research

Many studies regarding learner autonomy has come to light in recent years. The findings and conclusions raised by the current work indicate various possible ways for future research and applications in learning.

The first and most priority is to use writing English language learning autobiographies by students as a strategy to foster both English language and raising awareness. That is to say, by writing autobiographies in English help learners to develop their writing and become skillful. In addition, narrating their experiences allow them to review their behaviors and activities, hence they become reflective and aware.

Another worthwhile tendency for future research would be to use NVivo software to analyze qualitative data as an efficient way to reach accuracy results. Thanks to this qualitative data analysis (QDA) future researchers will be able to work with very rich text-based where deep level of analysis is required.

4. Conclusion

This study is an attempt to see whether there are any signs of autonomous learning in the EFL learners. To study this phenomenon, we collected data from the learners. Therefore, they were asked to write English language learning autobiography in which they narrate their experiences about English learning from the first contact with the language until present time.

In order to know how to use these kinds of instruments in our research, we defined them in the first chapter and their use in the domain of language learning research. We collected the autobiographies from the learners and then we analyzed them following thematic analysis.

As a consequence, the findings of the current research shows that the profile of the learners is rich of learner autonomy characteristics, thus, we deduced that these results demonstrate the sense of autonomy among the EFL learners.

Regardless of the constraints we faced during conducting the current research, we managed answer to the research questions by relying on the autobiographies written by the EFL learners. We attempted to take into account their experiences in this research and we tried to interpret them and understood what we present them in the form of tables and conclusions.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

S4's Poem

"Nature"

Nature doesn't belong to us
We belong to nature
Human doesn't recognize this muss
And this is the cause of his failure
She has to kick his lazy ass
She has to take this measure
She is not our means
We are part of her
Sun is shining with a fresh breeze
Why don't we just take care of her
Warn begins to be felt by all the bodies
We have to thank her
He speaks about god's existence
Doesn't know that she's our concrete one
Doesn't care about that abstract distance
His fear for the unknown won
It disabled him from reaching deliverance
Tries to convince himself; this is what I want!
Unluckily circled by ignorance
Doesn't know how to get out
Jailed by this evel silence
Still disabled from figuring out
That peace, love and freedom have their significance
Wake up you human, learn to see out loud...

-Extracts from the students' autobiographies

P.S. Some extracts have been included, to illustrate some students' experiences. For ethical considerations, the errors were not corrected; in addition, the narrators' names were removed to guarantee anonymity.

Appendix 2

Extract from autobiography 1

I remember the first time it 's my best memories in the secondary school where my first experience with English began, it's funny it was something new for me notably for this language I find it like pleasur to learn it cause I have a chance. We have a good teacher. Mrs (...), he has a heart of gold he hate to waste our time, ha makes always the classroom fanny with his jokes, and he loves us and he encourage us to speak English in his classroom I started the English Alphabet by this teacher. He have a particular way when he works or studying us he push us to be hard every day and he do all his to improve our English prounonciation for each one of us and in addition he plan to each one the spirit of challenge in positive way just to get good marks and he add points to whom thus work hard, in the end of the year he select the best student to give him congratulation for the best he do.

Let's say it's seems to me good starting with this language however I can't see it similar next to other language.

English give more strange feeling, huge sensation it's language of men and biger civilization on the world, it's so strong and it is an overflow of knowledge, this what give me more opportunities to learn it more and more and look for all what is English (Books, documents, songs, news, short stories) all this data helped me catch a great step on my learning in my secondary school and my inner world and it helped me to determine my way of looking at things.

And I can't forget my second teacher (...) he also helped us in final exam in the secondary school he has different way, he tells us to concentrate on what he say not on that he writte in the bord he have a good pronnounciation and I remember he bring to us CD-Rom to listen and interprate; we listen to speches: How to meet some one? How we speak correctly? How to speak in the restaurant...? And some times we listen at songs this what I love sure! He suggest us to listen English songs and CNN chanal he said to us it will helpful to improve your mind knowledge and develop your experience and keeping your mind always with English for whom want to learn this language later in the next future.

Appendix 3

Extract from autobiography 2

As all the parents, my parents tried to effect on my choices a little bit, because they want the best for me, so they told me to choose Computer science, but I insisted to apply for English to be my major. I believed that dreams could be true and finally I will learn English deeply. The basic classes for the four years of collage were novel, drama, poetry, translation, essay, grammar, phonics, and linguistic.. In the first year I failed in drama three times, it was so difficult because the professor ask as to memorize and copy from the book. Nobody gave me a chance to be creative except one lecturer who gave us translation class. She offered me the chance to be myself and use my own words in the assignments and tests. Translation class was once a week, so each week she gave us theme to translate and each theme must relate to different fields of our lives. For example, first week we would translate break news from newspaper from Arabic to English and vice versa, second week from the cook book, third week from novel...etc. Thanks for her to build my vocabularies in most of lives' field. Second and third years at college, I had all the classes too but that time I was lucky to have an excellent professor of writing essay. For the first time in my life, I realized that I love to write, especially if the essay relate to emotional topics of my own. My first essay was about compare and contrast between my two lovely cats; she loved it and encouraged me to write more and more. At that time my writing was the strongest skill. Honestly, I made a huge mistake that I still pay back a huge price to correct that mistake. At my Drama and novel classes, I never read the book in English; I looked for the Arabic version to read and then analyzed the characters in English. I was not proud of this mistake, but I had to do it to understand everything. At my forth year, my professor of oral expression was amazing. She believed in our ability and tried her best to prepare us for the next level. She thought that it is not enough for all of us as her students to stop our education after the bachelor degree. One of her basic assignments was that each week we must analyze character or theme of the play and discussed that at the lecture. She divided us to groups and each group had a chance to speak. At this stage of my English learning autobiography, my writing skill was the best among other skills.

Appendix 4

Extract from autobiography 3

I had always got best marks in English, whereas in other matters I was very weak, because I didn't interested on it mainly mathematics, my teachers had constantly encouraged me to follow my studied in English language speciality. At the beginning of my learning process, English was a secondary module and I studied as a secondary one for over four years, in which my teacher taught us English letters, words and how to make simple sentences like: Jenna is a girl, and in every sentence he did a translation in French or Arabic.

Learning English in middle school was like an introduction to this beautiful and interested language, when I got my BEM certificate, I made the important choice of all my life which is the fact of choosing my spinneret that is "letter and foreign language" which I'm going to study it in High school. High school was the best period of my life, because I had met my best friends their and we spent a magical moments, that's not all, but it was also the period of my life where I really started to improve myself to my parents. Although in middle school I got best marks in languages, but infortunatly I always found difficulties in getting good marks in mathematics, because when you don't like something you would never make several efforts on it , but when I started to study what I had continuously wanted, I studied very hard and I was always the best in English language, our teachers of high school introduced to us a very rich and interested curriculum of English learning process, we had dealt with advanced grammar, phonetics, and texts analyzing, at this level, I were able to understand and write and speak English language well, so it was abvious that I would choose English language speciality, and it was the case, in the third year of high school, a final exam were waiting for us which is the baccalaureate, I passed it and I got my bachelor Diplomas, my parents were very proud of me when I got my bachelor with 13 degree. I was very happy because it was the first time that I saw my parents proud of their daughter. My relationship with my mother had been changed for better.

Appendix 5

Extract from autobiography 4

Here comes my first year at university, a new world with new lifestyle. I had to take my responsibilities into hand. Things started to get complicated, but I was not afraid. It was my choice so I had to do all my best to succeed. All the modules were interesting because they allowed me to study English deeply in practically all the domains. It was no more matter of general English; it was no more than that. Grammar, phonetics, oral, writing, linguistics and the most influential ones are literature and civilization. They all had a great importance for me, but these two are the most interesting ones.

All the things that allowed me to travel in time and discover how they influenced the human role by being conscious, things become susceptible to be more acceptable. I remember Mr (...) jokes. His method was to push as to the extreme by saying that we are losers and we do not pronounce well. In fact his right. His method push as to react by showing him that we do pronounce well. I decided to speak English more frequently and do extra activities with my classmate Milinda in order to show him what we got. It was an effective method because I got a very good mark. My way of learning is that I am always ready to meet the challenge. I remember the first time I got methodology course with (...). She really scared me. She came and said:” Ok! We are not going to speak about gonna and wanna, we are here to learn academic language, so you have to practice your language.” At that moment, I realized that I had a huge lack of vocabulary.

She gave us an activity, a free question. It was the first time that I really tried to honest and use only the words that I had in mind, but unfortunately, she was the teacher of other session so I did not get the answer about that work. This meeting with her was a kind of a realization which pushed me to read in English and more than I did before. I started reading from my last middle school year but in French I would like to have at that moment someone to elecit me to read in English! My family never meddle with my studies and always get good marks so they do not even know what I follow as courses.

Appendix 6

Extract from autobiography 5

When I arrived to high school, I realize that every thing was different from primary school, I found that learning a language is very difficult, it is hard more than I had imagined before, I knew that english language is not just free words, not even a dozen of expressions, it is more than that and in order to mastter it we should use different skills without forgoting a person's style of learning. When I started to take my first year english lessons, I found that it as not easy to understand, so I had to classify my priorities. I started to perceive the new way of learning english because the story of TV cartoons was not enough to master it, I recognized that there was a shift in my way of learning english, I was focusing on hearing rather than observing or writing. I can never deny that I was lucky with my english teachers, they loved me a lot because all of them saw the ambition in my eyes to master this foreign language and they also recognized that I do all my best in order to learn it. My way of learning english has envolved, I focused more on producing rather than receiving because I figured out that I learn by writing. I started to write my one paragraphs and I tried to changed the language of writing my diaries from Arabic to english, this helped me a lot; whenever I faced a problems I directly use my dictionaries and in case I didn't find what I was searching for, I just ask my teachers. This had also helped me to gain a large knowledge about english vocabulary and to correct my grammatical mistakes.

Abstract

In this study autobiographies were used to find evidence of autonomous learning among EFL learners. It aimed at finding out whether learners have a sense of autonomy in their language learning. The sample of the study consists of five EFL of third year enrolled at Department of English, University of Bejaia. For data collection, we opted for the use of English language learning autobiographies in which the learners narrated their learning experiences in English language learning. This makes our study descriptive since we reported some facts about their learning. The findings disclosed that the sense of autonomy is marked in the learners' stories. Although, the participants need to receive initiatives for their English learning activities, they are autonomous but more reactively autonomous.

Key words: Learner Autonomy, Autobiographies, EFL, Reactive Autonomy, Proactive Autonomy.

Résumé

Dans cette étude autobiographies ont été utilisés pour trouver des preuves de l'apprentissage autonome chez les apprenants EFL. Elle visait à découvrir si les apprenants ont un sentiment d'autonomie dans leur apprentissage de la langue. L'échantillon de l'étude se compose de cinq EFL de troisième année inscrite au Département d'anglais, Université de Bejaia. Pour la collecte des données, nous avons opté pour l'utilisation des autobiographies d'apprentissages de la langue anglaise dans lesquelles les apprenants narrent leurs expériences. Cela rend notre étude descriptive depuis notre rapport quelques faits sur leur apprentissage. Les résultats ont révélé que le sens de l'autonomie est marqué dans les histoires des apprenants. Bien que, les participants ont besoin de recevoir des initiatives pour leurs activités d'apprentissage de l'anglais, ils sont autonomes, mais plus réactive autonome.

Mots clés: autonomie de l'apprenant, autobiographies, EFL, Réactive Autonomie, proactive Autonomie.