Language Learner Autonomy: Both Sides of the Coin

A study of EFL teachers' and students' perceptions of autonomy in Spain

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS</td>
<td>v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>CHAPTER</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Background</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Why Autonomy?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Research Aims &amp; Questions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Scope of the Study</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.5 Thesis Structure</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. DEFINING LEARNING THEORY</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.1 Autonomy as Capacity</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.2 Three Perspectives on Learning Autonomy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.3 The Interdependent Nature of Learner Autonomy</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4 Changing Role of the Educator</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 Limitations to Autonomous Learning Theory</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Understanding for the Purpose of this Research</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. REVIEW OF EXISTING STUDIES</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Teacher-Centred Studies</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Teachers’ Understandings of Autonomy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Learners’ Understandings of Autonomy</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Teacher/Learner Comparative Analysis</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.5 Gap in Research</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. RESEARCH DESIGN &amp; METHODS</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Rationale Behind a Mixed-Methods Approach</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Sampling</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 The Questionnaire</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The Interviews</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Respondent Profiles</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# 5. FINDINGS

5.1 Perceptions of Autonomy
   5.1.1 Autonomy has a positive impact on L2 learning – a difference of opinion? ................................................. 29
   5.1.2 Age & proficiency ................................................................................................................................. 31
   5.1.3 Learner empowerment & independence ................................................................................................. 32
   5.1.4 Co-operation & collective learning ........................................................................................................ 34
   5.1.5 The role of the teacher ........................................................................................................................... 35
   5.1.6 Limitations to autonomy ....................................................................................................................... 36
5.2 Desirability vs. Feasibility of Student Decisions
   5.2.1 Student decisions on materials ............................................................................................................... 39
   5.2.2 Student decisions on course objectives .................................................................................................... 39
5.3 Desirability vs. Feasibility of Student Abilities
   5.3.1 Student ability for evaluating one’s learning ............................................................................................ 41
   5.3.2 Student ability for independent learning ............................................................................................... 43
   5.3.3 Student ability for collaborative learning ............................................................................................... 45

# 6. CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Summary of Results ................................................................................................................................. 47
6.2 Discussion of Results
   6.2.1 Autonomous learning has positive effects on learners ............................................................................. 48
   6.2.2 Interpretations of autonomy .................................................................................................................... 49
   6.2.3 Interdependent nature of autonomy ....................................................................................................... 49
   6.2.4 The gaps .................................................................................................................................................. 50
   6.2.5 Limitations to autonomy ....................................................................................................................... 51
6.3 Significance of Results ............................................................................................................................ 52
6.4 Limitations of Results ............................................................................................................................... 53
6.5 Recommendations ....................................................................................................................................... 54
6.6 Further Research ........................................................................................................................................ 55

## APPENDICES

A. COPY OF SURVEY QUESTIONS (INCLUDING INFORMATION PAGE & CONSENT) ................................................. 56

B. INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM .................................................................................................................... 81

REFERENCES ......................................................................................................................................................... 82
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LIST OF TABLES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Overview of survey sections and content</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Interviewee profiles</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIGURE</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Autonomous learning</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers' general views of autonomy</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Students' general views of autonomy</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers' views of autonomy and age / L2 proficiency</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Teachers' views on learner independence and decision-making</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teachers' views of student collaboration</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers' views on the need for a teacher in autonomous learning</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Desirability &amp; feasibility of student involvements in class decision-making</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Desirability &amp; feasibility of student decisions on materials</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Desirability &amp; feasibility of student decisions on course objectives</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Desirability &amp; feasibility of student abilities</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Desirability &amp; feasibility of student abilities to evaluate</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Desirability &amp; feasibility of independent learning</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Desirability &amp; feasibility of co-operative learning</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as a Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1</td>
<td>First Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L2</td>
<td>Second Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TEFL</td>
<td>Teaching English as a Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ABSTRACT

Learner autonomy has become the latest buzzword in the world of EFL pedagogy and practice, but what do contemporary practitioners and learners of EFL understand by learner autonomy, what do they believe it is, and do they consider it to be valuable? The purpose of this mixed-methods study in Spain is to garner teacher and student perceptions of this popular notion – to identify and compare their beliefs and understandings of autonomous learning and learners within the Spanish EFL context. Specifically, we are focused upon a comparative interpretation of the desirability and feasibility of autonomous learning habits, decisions and abilities. Research findings extracted through both an online questionnaire and six follow-up interviews demonstrate that teachers and students share predominantly positive views of autonomy, however students are more enthusiastic about extending their decision-making in the classroom than their learning abilities and capacities. Several gaps between teacher/student perceptions, and desirability/feasibility are identified, with teachers' data also serving to suggest several possible restrictions upon autonomy that may stunt its progression in the EFL classroom.

Keywords: autonomy, autonomous learners, pedagogy, EFL, language learning, interdependent learning, comparative, mixed-methods
Chapter 1 – Introduction

It is everywhere. Some 380m people speak it as their first language and perhaps two-thirds as many again as their second. A billion are learning it, about a third of the world’s population are in some sense exposed to it and by 2050, it is predicted, half the world will be more or less proficient in it.

1.1 Background

In 2001 The Economist printed these above words in an article titled 'The triumph of English: A world empire by other means'. Truly, English is a global language; it is the most widely taught foreign language in over 100 countries (Crystal, 2003, p. 5). The rise of globalisation, greater demand and desire for mobility, the commoditisation of language skills and the recent economic slump has given rise to a huge demand for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning (Block & Cameron, 2001, pp. 1-11; Johnson, 2009). Increased demand has resulted in increased interest in the examination and development of EFL pedagogies and practices – pedagogues and educational theorists strive to understand how individuals learn most effectively, and how EFL practitioners ought to develop and nurture the required skills and knowledge.

Learner autonomy has been thrown about in critical discussion and classroom practices since the 1980s as a possible answer to some of these questions, with its influence felt in a great variety of second language (L2) classrooms across many parts of the world (Palfreyman, 2001, p. 1). Reflecting a pedagogical shift away from teacher-centred classrooms, towards a more learner-centred approach, autonomous learning sees knowledge creation no longer as the sole responsibility of the teacher. Rather, it is increasingly acknowledged that the learner too, has a pivotal part to play in their foreign language learning development (Little, 1996, p. 82; Cotterall, 2000, p. 109).

1.2 Why Autonomy?

My interest in language learner autonomy stems from my personal observations of adult EFL students who demonstrated markedly different experiences while learning. While it is to be expected that different students of different intellectual abilities and educational experiences should perform differently within an L2 context, I was most affected by two growing trends I was observing:

1. the students who demonstrated more autonomous learner traits and habits were achieving
better results in terms of English language content acquisition, and exam results

2. a number of highly-educated individuals were challenged by the degree of critical thinking and problem-solving involved in L2 acquisition

My classroom observations were not unique. Advocates of learner autonomy claim that autonomous learners do indeed make more effective learners. It is suggested that they learn and acquire grammar and lexical content with greater ease, and demonstrate a greater capacity for using their linguistic knowledge successfully. This suggestion has really caught the attention of many pedagogues and L2 theorists. Benson (2011) highlights the relationship between learner autonomy and foreign language proficiency as a key motive for developing classroom practices which foster language learner autonomy (p. 209), with other critics in agreement that autonomous learners are more effective learners (Boud, 1988, p. 21; Littlewood, 1999, pp. 71-73; Oxford, 2008, p. 42). Additionally, Boud (1988) claims that individuals who have developed autonomous strategies and habits in learning contexts are likely to be more effective learners and subsequently, more effective employees (p. 21).

The OECD’s 'Skilled for Life?' report (2013) ratified my second observation by empirically demonstrating that formal qualifications do not necessary promote the development of skills such as literacy and problem-solving, key skills in language learning. If formal education does not always provide the skills required for successful L2 learning, then it would be individuals like myself, working within the private foreign-language market, who would need to learn about and develop these attributes. Students may well need help with learning how to learn (Little, 1996, p. 86).

Learner autonomy can be located within the broader notion of education known as ‘lifelong learning’, through which independent thought and critical thinking, as well as other generic skills such as self-confidence, organisation, communication and self-reflection are encouraged and cultivated (Knapper, 1988, p. 92; OECD, 2007, p. 4; Selvadurai, 2012, p. 297). Autonomous learning skills may offer a foundational platform from which to engage in further lifelong learning opportunities, as well as in EFL. As Littlewood (1999) writes:

...if we define autonomy in educational terms as involving students’ capacity to use their learning independently of teachers, then autonomy would appear to be an incontrovertible goal for learners everywhere, since it is obvious that no students, anywhere, will have their teachers to accompany them throughout life (p. 73).

Arguably, one’s ability to learn throughout one’s life has never before been so important (Knapper, 1988, p. 92) with the “development of the individual” a prime concern in many post-industrialised societies around the world (Benson, 2011, p. 20). According to Littlewood (1999), learner
autonomy therefore not only assists learners with their L2 learning, but their abilities to continue learning afterwards (p. 71). Equipping EFL learners with linguistic knowledge is valuable, but to empower them to learn more effectively and to continue doing so in their future, may well prove even more-so.

1.3 Research Aims and Questions

The purpose of this research study is to explore what learner autonomy means to EFL teachers and learners. I wish to understand what these individuals believe and understand learner autonomy to be, as well as garnering an impression of their feelings towards behaviours and practices which are identified as promoting language learner autonomy. My aim is to illuminate and interpret individuals' perceptions and ideas of what learner autonomy is, how they believe it is realised in their classes, and navigate some interpretations and perceptions of autonomy within the Spanish EFL context. In so doing, I wish to explore similarities and/or differences in the students' and teachers' perceptions, as well as considering autonomous as a theoretical and practical notion.

I'm going to employ a comparative research design (Bryman, 2012, pp. 72-75), considering both EFL teachers' and students' points of views in order to better understand contemporary perceptions of language learner autonomy from both sides of the coin.

I wish to answer the following questions:

- What do EFL learners and teachers understand of the notion 'learner autonomy'? To what extent are these understandings aligned with contemporary EFL pedagogy?
- To what extent do EFL learners and teachers view autonomous learning methods as desirable?
- To what extent do EFL learners and teachers view autonomous learning methods as feasible?
- How sizeable is the gap (if any) between what learners and teachers consider desirable in theory, and feasible in practice?
- In what ways to EFL learners and teachers have differing views upon autonomy?

The comparative research model employed will enable me to identify any areas of notable divergence between the student and teacher populations regarding these questions.
1.4 Scope of Study

In this study I have collated primary research from both EFL students and EFL teachers in Spain. The EFL students are all over 18 years old and currently engaged in non-compulsory/formal EFL education – participants are currently enrolled in English courses with private academies, or have 1-to-1 classes with EFL teachers. The EFL students are all Spanish nationals who speak Spanish castellano as their first language. Respondents did not have to be of any given age or gender. I have not, however, included participants who receive EFL education through a formal institution, nor those currently engaged in English classes.

The EFL teachers are all currently providing EFL classes to adult students in Spain in either private language academies or 1-to-1 classes. These classes do not however, need to be their primary or sole source of income. The EFL teachers included in this study did not have to be of any given nationality, age, or gender, nor have formal Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) qualifications. The EFL teachers do not all speak English as their first language. I have not, however, included participants who only teach children and/or adolescents, and those who are not currently practising in Spain.

1.5 Thesis Structure

After this introduction, I will begin by exploring contemporary descriptions, perceptions and challenges of language learner autonomy used in order to develop a framework of understanding to be used during this research process. In Chapter 3 I will review several pertinent existing research papers in order to demonstrate certain strengths and weaknesses, as well as highlighting a need for further comparative studies that I hope this paper may help close. Following this, I will elaborate on the data collection methods utilised and the mixed-methods research design. In Chapter 5 I will present my research findings, and finally in Chapter 6 I will conclude my research and make recommendations for EFL practitioners and future researchers.
Chapter 2 – Defining Autonomous Learning

The concept of autonomous learning has amassed increased critical and professional interest in the last 30 years (Benson, 2006, p. 21; Littlewood, 1999, p. 71; Palfreyman, 2003, p. 1). Despite this interest, it is challenging for researchers, critics and teachers alike, to identify what exactly autonomous learning is, made all the more problematic due to the great variety of concepts, names and interpretations found under the autonomous 'umbrella' – learner autonomy, learner independence, self-directed learning and independent learning – are all said to have root and relevance to the notion of autonomous learning.

This chapter will explore the modern understanding of autonomous language learning and popular interpretations of autonomy. I will look at how the role of the educator changes correspondingly, as well as examining potential limitations to autonomous learning. I hope to demonstrate that despite the complex and multi-faceted nature of autonomous learning (Benson, 2013a, p. 840; Little, 1996, p. 7), an inclusive and thorough understanding of this concept will offer a platform from which to conduct this research. Indeed, as Benson (2011) writes, while challenging to describe, in order to conduct autonomous learning research one must first identify and define the phenomena itself (p. 58).

2.1 Autonomy as Capacity

Scholars in the field of language learner autonomy offer a great wealth of theoretical interpretations and understandings, with little consensus on a single definition. One area in which all seem to agree however, is that the oft-cited Henri Holec appears responsible for the introduction of learner autonomy to contemporary language teaching and learning rhetoric. In a paper first published in the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project in 1979, Holec (1981) defined learner autonomy as: “the ability to take charge of one's own learning” (p. 3). This definition is referred to, cited and acknowledged by every autonomous learning researcher I've come across, and serves as the origin of our contemporary theoretical framework. Holec identified autonomous learning as the capacity to act with autonomy within certain contexts. He suggests that in the language learning context, an autonomous learner is able to take responsibility for their learning, take an active role in selecting learning content and methods, and evaluate their progress (p. 3).
This capacity for autonomy is seen as an ongoing process and goal, not an innate skill but something that can be nurtured and improved (Holec, 1981; Littlewood, 1999). Most learners, Holec says, “will... not yet [be] autonomous but are involved in the process of acquiring the ability to assume responsibility for their learning” (Holec, 1981, pp. 25-26). This clearly identifies autonomy as a relative, rather than complete notion; a capacity which, as Holec suggests, may be limited, especially at the early stages of a learner's foray into autonomy (Higgs, 1988, p. 41). By acknowledging that learner autonomy is not, as Little (2003) writes, a “steady state” (p. 7), but rather, a capacity which fluctuates and develops, we acknowledge that autonomous learning can be developed, nurtured and encouraged. Autonomous learning is not an 'all-or-nothing' phenomenon, there are degrees of autonomy and autonomous learning success (Oxford, 2008, p. 47).

It is from these beginnings that learner autonomy is seen to be an ability and/or capacity, something that can grow, develop and without practise and nurture, may potentially be (temporarily) lost (Benson, 2011, p. 73; Benson, 2013b, p. 23).

2.2 Three Perspectives on Learning Autonomy

In the last decade Phil Benson has researched and written extensively on language learner autonomy, and has sought to organise autonomous learning theory into three different perspectives: the technical perspective, psychological perspective, and the sociocultural perspective (Benson, 2013b). While he identifies that in practice, autonomy is a combination of all three perspectives (p. 19), they can offer us clear lenses through which to further examine learner autonomy theory.

**The technical perspective** emphasises the technical methods and processes designed to improve learning through meta-cognitive, cognitive and social strategies, commonly referred to as 'learning training' (see: Dickinson, 1996). It is said that if indeed, autonomous education serves to give learners control over their own learning, then they ought to be suitably equipped to consider, understate and evaluate their learning – they have to learn how to become cognitively aware (Reinders, n.d., p. 43). Cotterall (1995) goes as far to say that autonomy is defined by the very extent to which learners can demonstrate such tactics and strategies, an interpretation of autonomous learning which firmly points towards technical skills and processes, and the self-management thereof, as indicative of a fully-realised autonomous capacity.

**The psychological perspective**, with its roots firmly located in Holec's (1981) notion of a capacity to be fostered and nurtured, emphasises the broader cognitive skills necessary in the development of
one's ability to interpret and construct knowledge (Benson, 2011; Little, 2007). Holec argued that through autonomous learning, the notion of universal, 'right' knowledge is replaced with individual, subjective, deeply personal knowledge which is constructed and dominated by the learner (1981, p. 21). This interpretation of learning and autonomy adopts a constructivist approach to knowledge construction (Benson, 2011; Benson, 2013a; Little, 2007; Reinder, n.d.). Within the constructivist paradigm, effective learning occurs through internal understandings, transformations and developments, with external aid (Benson, 2011; Benson, 2013b; Little, 2007). Constructivism values and respects the broader attitudes, interpretations and cognitive skills which permit a learner to take greater responsibility for his/her learning through their individual “negotiation of meaning” (Benson, 2013b, p. 21). Indeed, this internal construction of knowledge is, as Reinders (n.d.) writes: “something that cannot be directly taught, because it is a unique experience for every individual... The same applies to language learning where learners thus actively construct their own target language through unique experiences” (p. 40).

**The political perspective** emphasises learner empowerment or even emancipation from the pressures of traditional education institutions, by giving them control over learning content and processes (Benson, 2003, pp. 3-4; Benson, 2011, p. 112; Benson, 2013b, p. 24; Little, 2009, p. 223; Littlewood, 1999, p. 71). In *Education for Critical Consciousness* (1974), the late Paulo Freire argued that responsibility, in any form, is a fundamental human need, and that “[f]or this need to be satisfied it is necessary that a man should often have to take decisions” (p. 16). Benson and Little locate Freire's testimony within the language learning context, claiming that not only does learner responsibility answer a basic human need (Little, 2009, p. 223) but serves to improve student motivation since learner's are striving to realise self-determined goals, rather than those imposed upon them (Benson, 2011, p. 116). Littlewood (1999) argues that this is very important to language learning, as well as learning in the wider sense, since independence, self-fulfilment and freedom from external pressures are necessary to continue learning throughout life (p. 71). This freedom of the individual and subsequent democratisation of education was also a pertinent aspect to autonomous learning for Holec, who suggested it is a powerful aspect to both learning and the ability to “act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which he lives” (Holec, 1981, p. 1). The rise of autonomous individuals operating within society is a powerful force: “[a]dult education should become an instrument for arousing an increasing sense of awareness and liberation in man, in some cases, an instrument for changing the environment itself. From the idea of man 'product of his society', one moves to the idea of man as 'producer of his society'” (Janne, 1977, as cited by Holec 1981). Autonomous language learners may therefore, positively impact not only their current and future learning, but the very society in which they live.
2.3 The Interdependent Nature of Learner Autonomy

If we accept the afore-discussed interpretations of learner autonomy, we accept that it is a capacity to take charge of one's learning. However, it is said to be a fallacy that autonomy occurs in isolation from the ideas and experience of others; in other words, autonomous learning does not occur in a vacuum (Boud, 1988, p. 29). Indeed, as Freire (1974) writes: “[t]o be human is to engage in relationships with others and the world” (p. 3), and this holds true for learner autonomy. It is argued that without the interaction with other students and teachers, the capacity for learner autonomy may not even develop due to the inherently social aspect to autonomous learning (Benson, 2011; Little, 1996, p. 81; Little, 2009, p. 223). Indeed, both constructivist and psychological perspectives of autonomous learning value interaction. It is suggested that the oft-perceived image of an autonomous learner working in isolation in order to take charge of his/her own learning does not accurately represent either the nature of learner autonomy, nor life itself: “[a]s social beings our independence is always balanced by dependence, our essential condition is one of interdependence; total detachment is a principal determining feature not of autonomy but of autism” (Little, 1996, p. 81). This essential condition of humanity helps to explain why learner autonomy may in fact depend upon social interaction, in a state of interdependence, rather than a state of solitude (Brookfield, 1986; Boud, 1988).

This demands that we examine the sociocultural context of autonomous learning, since it is argued that collaboration and interaction with others are central to a successful capacity for autonomy, and indeed, our lives (Palfreyman, 2003, p. 2). Drawing upon Vygotskian sociocultural learning theory, Feryok (2013) argues that all higher-level human development, including constructivist approaches to learning, are mediated through social interaction (p. 214). Indeed, Lev Vygotsky's seminal Mind in Society: the Development of Higher Psychological Processes (1978) entrenches effective knowledge development within a social context. Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) characterises higher-level development as “independent problem solving” and “the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). Vygotsky appears to point to what will later become known as learner autonomy, and identifies it as something with potential, a capacity to be developed, with facilitators/educators and peers – the social aspect to autonomous learning is recognised.

Higgs (1988) argues that it is this successful interaction between the learner, the teacher, the environment and the task itself which result in autonomous learner; without these social influences autonomous outcomes may very well not prove fruitful (see Figure 1). Little (2005) builds upon
this, stating that it is through collaboration and interdependence with others that learners can effectively interpret and produce language, which then in turn become part of “the individual learner's internalised mental resources” (p. 25). It would appear therefore, that while autonomous learning may well involve one's individual capacity, this capacity is not engaged or effectively realised in isolation, but rather through social interactions and interdependence (Boud, 1988; Feryok, 2013; Higgs, 1988; Little, 2007), a dynamic process in which teachers and learners collaborate to achieve autonomy (Reinders, n.d., p. 48).

![Figure 1: Autonomous Learning.](source: Higgs (1988), p. 42)

### 2.4 Changing Role of the Educator

While the interdependent interpretation of autonomous learning theory would confirm the need for an educator, the role of this individual is required to shift from one of teacher to facilitator of the learning programme and resource person (Higgs, 1988, p. 41; Reinders, n.d., p. 40). As Benson (2003) argues, it is the responsibility of the teacher to help create a suitable atmosphere and conditions in which students will feel encouraged to develop the autonomous capacities they
possess (p. 305), and as the interdependent understanding of autonomous learning has demonstrated, this does not mean leaving students to their own devices (Benson, 2011, p. 91). Critics agree that the teacher's role in an autonomous learning model is to guide and encourage learners, to facilitate their learning and assist them in the development of learner autonomy (Benson, 2011; Feryok, 2013; Higgs, 1988; Little, 2007; Reinders, n.d.). As Little (2007) writes: “[f]ew learners will arrive at their first class ready to take complete charge of their own learning; for the most, self-management in learning will be something they have to learn, to begin with by taking very small steps” (p. 23). This reinforces Holec's interpretation of autonomy as a capacity which can grow and develop, and implicates the teacher/facilitator within this 'learning to learn' model. Indeed, as Feryok argues, it is the teacher's responsibility to develop learner autonomy (2013). Little (2007) concurs, claiming that aside from a teacher's responsibilities to achieve linguistic and communicative objectives, assisting learners to become more autonomous is a prime goal (p. 16). Later, he goes on to identify three primary roles for a teacher's involvement in the learning processes; to aid learner involvement, in terms of planning, selecting and evaluating learning experiences; to aid learner reflection; and to assist with target language use (Little, 2009, p. 224).

Benson, making reference to Voller, also identified the diverse roles for teachers in autonomous learning models, including the facilitating of learning, a counsellor offering “psycho-social” support, and as a resource of knowledge (Voller, 1997, as cited by Benson 2011).

It seems clear that autonomous learning researchers and practitioners agree that the role of an educator is increasingly diverse and supportive, with a key objective being to create a supportive and suitably stimulating environment within which learners can develop their autonomy and target language use (Higgs, 1988, p. 41). Higgs (1988) concurs with Little and Benson's interpretation of the teacher's role, emphasising the importance in nurturing and developing conditions to help learners achieve their potential. The result is an educator who breaks free from the more traditional teacher-centred educational model, instead opting for the role of facilitator, counsellor and resource person, aiding the development of learning environments and strategies which empower and encourage learners to have a greater understanding of the learning processes and their progress (Little, 1996, Higgs, 1988). The art of counselling students may be found in or outside of the classroom, and is, according to Little (1996), an integral part of a teacher's repertoire if they seek to foster learner autonomy. Little argues that is through a combination of learning resources and counselling that learner's are able to develop far greater capacities to understand why, what, and how they are learning (p. 84).
2.5 Limitations to Autonomous Learning Theory

While learner autonomy, in theory, seems to hold the possibility for great potential learning, theorists have identified two key areas of resistance – learner resistance and teacher resistance. In the case of the learners, it appears clear that the development of a capacity for autonomous learning has to be made through choice, as Holec identified: “self-direction in learning must remain a possibility offered to and not forced upon learners” (Holec, 1981, p. 34). Clearly, one cannot force a learner to assist with course content selections, to participate in learning training or engage in counselling. The fact that not all learners may have autonomy as their goal, especially in post-compulsory education, is a clear obstacle. As Oxford (2008) writes: “[i]ndependent L2 learning can open the doors to control or responsibility by learners, but learners must actually want that control for responsibility and actively take it” (p. 48). Arguably, students with little prior experience with autonomous learning may well exhibit resistance and reluctance to methods and models which seek to place more responsibility into their own hands (Boud, 1988, p. 39). Little (2007) agrees with this stance, suggesting that when students are accustomed to a traditional pedagogy with passive learning, they can be very distrustful of a learning model which asks them to set targets, select materials and evaluate their own learning (p. 17). The result of this is that learner and educator desires may often clash. As Brookfield (1995) claims: “[t]he most hallowed rule of business – that the customer is always right – is often pedagogically wrong. Equating good teaching with how many students feel you have done what they wanted ignores the dynamics of teaching and prevents significant learning” (pp. 15-16). Accepting responsibility for their learning may be the last things learners desire. Often the learner's primary interest is to pass exams, and it may be challenging for them to “shake their belief” that the teacher's role is solely to prepare them for these goals (Little, 1996, p. 85). Despite resistance and reluctance, educators ought to persevere and develop opportunities for their learners to develop their autonomy, whether they realise the immediate and long-term benefits, or not.

Perhaps more bizarrely, given the aforementioned beliefs in the value of learner autonomy, it appears that teachers as well as learners, can offer resistance. Benson (2011) argues that while many language teachers would prescribe to learner autonomy in theory, in practice they find it to be “somewhat idealistic” (p. 119). This may well be due to the dramatic change in their role, and teacher identity, from that of “purveyor of information” to “counsellor and manager of learning resources” (Little, 1996, p. 85). Little (1996) highlights the challenge this shift in responsibilities may bear upon teachers, in addition to the fear that a facilitative, more supportive teacher may not 'get the job done' so quickly in terms of target language and course content. He writes:
It is not easy for teachers to stop talking: after all, if they stop talking they stop teaching, and if they stop teaching, their learners may stop learning. And it is not easy for teachers to let learners solve problems for themselves; for that takes time, and there is always so much ground to cover.

Committing oneself to learner autonomy requires a lot of nerve. (p. 85).

Indeed, developing learner autonomy may well require “a lot of nerve”, but may also be interpreted as a threat to the role of teachers in general. Powell (1988) identifies an interesting teacher paradox, in which teachers may well complain about their long teaching schedules and frustrating students, but are ultimately very reluctant to reduce their working hours or provide students with greater opportunities for learning outside of the classroom. Teachers, he argues, are entirely dependent upon students, insomuch as, they interpret their job to be showing and telling things to other people. If this target audience becomes more autonomous and starts to develop greater control over their own learning, the role of the teacher diminishes (Powell, 1988, p. 109).

2.6 Understanding for the Purpose of this Research

With the wealth of theoretical discussion on the definition of learner autonomy (and more specifically, learner autonomy within the field of language learning), it appears that one must adopt an inclusive understanding of learner autonomy when engaging in research (Benson, 2011, p. 64). I will base my understandings of learning autonomy upon common features, but am unwilling to disregard or marginalise less common interpretations.

For the purposes of this research, the terms learner autonomy and autonomous learning will refer to: a capacity which can develop and grow; something which can develop through a range of perspectives and strategies, including, but not limited to, technical, psychological and political perspectives as identified by Benson; a capacity which demands willingness on part of both the learner and the teacher; and finally, an act which requires interdependency, rather than independence and isolation. It is with these common features of learner autonomy in mind that I conduct this research project.
Chapter 3 – Review of Existing Studies

Not surprisingly given the popularity of autonomous learning in the last 30 years, there is a wealth of literature available for both the practitioner and researcher keen to develop their knowledge in this field. However, only a limited portion of this has been awarded to empirical study of what autonomous learning means to the learners and teachers involved in its practice, how they identify it, and which aspects of autonomous learning they perceive as more important (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Reinders & Lázaro, 2011; Shahsavari, 2014). While I have been unable to find prior studies within this autonomous learning frame specific to the Spanish EFL context, I have reviewed several studies which will assist the development of my research. In order to better inform my own research direction, methodology and minimise potential limitations, it is essential to carry out such a review of previous studies into learner autonomy. This critical overview of different approaches, contexts and results will serve to provide context for the development of my research interest.

3.1 Teacher-Centred Studies

The first relevant, large-scale study into learner autonomy, conducted by Camilleri (1997), focused upon the viewpoint and perceptions of 328 teachers from 6 European contexts (Malta, the Netherlands, Belorussia, Poland, Estonia and Slovenia). Camilleri (1997) utilised a quantitative questionnaire as the mode of data collection (an instrument which has since been reused and reproduced in several additional studies, including Balçıkanlı (2010)), with questions centred very closely upon the perceived level of learner involvement in autonomous learning decisions. This very narrow exploration of learner autonomy allowed Camilleri (1997) to retrieve a great wealth of information from a large number of participants. Camilleri's (1997) results highlighted teachers’ positive views of involving learners in decisions regarding activities, course objectives and self-assessment, but his analysis also demonstrated a need for practitioners and researchers to be mindful of the potential gap between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices. This introduces a common critique of such research methodology, whereby the findings represent what teachers believe they do/would do in situations, rather than analysing their actual practices through alternative/additional modes of study (such as classroom observation, student input, etc).

As Camilleri (1997), Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) in a more contemporary study chose to focus upon the teacher as a key agent in the development of learner autonomy. They write:

...teachers' beliefs can powerfully shape both what teachers do and, consequently, the learning
opportunities learners receive. Therefore the extent and manner in which learner autonomy is promoted in language learning classrooms will be influenced by teachers' beliefs about what autonomy actually is, its desirability and feasibility (2012, p. 6).

In this study specific to the field of English L2 learning, they sought in part to explore and examine the mismatch between theoretical discussions of learner autonomy, and teaching practitioners' understandings of the concept; in essence, the difference between theory and practice. In their study, they gathered their research findings through questionnaires and voluntary follow-up interviews with 61 participating language teachers working at a university in Oman. Compared with Camilleri's (1997) study, Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) sought to research a far broader definition of autonomy with a sophisticated questionnaire (which may well serve to influence the development of my own). However, both studies share a common flaw since they depend upon teachers' understandings of their actions, and not an analysis of pedagogical practices. It is important to appreciate therefore, that Borg & Al-Busaidi's (2012) study, titled 'Learner Autonomy: English Language Teachers' Beliefs and Practices' does indeed represent teachers' beliefs, however the research methods utilised cannot accurately reflect their practices.

Despite the discussed limitations to the Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) study, I find their mixed method approach to offer great benefits, as they are able to compare data and corroborate conclusions from two different perspectives. The follow-up interviews allow them to probe more meaningfully into areas of interest and intrigue from their questionnaire results, with findings therefore presenting a more 'complete' picture. They teased out several main research findings, including:

- teachers overwhelmingly identified learner autonomy as beneficial for L2 learning
- teachers identified a noticeable gap between the desired level of student autonomy, and the feasible level of student autonomy
- teachers felt they were, on the whole, promoting learner autonomy in their classrooms, but results demonstrated teachers were unsure whether their students were successfully autonomous as a result

The use of interviews enabled Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) to develop these participants' perceptions and insights, with the result that their research findings offer more tangible examples and experiences. Despite these strengths, one has to be weary of drawing parallels between this study and the context in which I work – while both are interested in learner autonomy within the field of EFL, the similarities between university EFL with highly-qualified teaching staff, and private sector EFL teachers in Spain, as well as the vast cultural differences, ought to warn against broad
generalisations. Further study in different professional and cultural contexts would appear valuable.

3.2 Teachers' Understandings of Autonomy

Offering a broader geographical study, in 2011 Reinders & Lázaro published the results of their 3 year research studying teachers from 46 self-access study centres across 5 countries. They sought to identify the teacher's role, identity and beliefs of learner autonomy, in order to close what they identified as a gap in existing research. Their study sought to better identify and illuminate the role of the teacher, motivated by desire to understand the teacher as an active individual operating in autonomous contexts. Their ethnographic study identified several limitations to fostering learner autonomy, including the conflicted role of the teacher, and “considerable mismatches” between teachers’ and learners' beliefs about what autonomous learning should be.

Similarly, in Balックanlı's (2010) analysis of Turkish student teachers' beliefs, the importance of understanding a teacher's personal context and perceptions of learner autonomy was central. More specifically, Balックanlı (2010) expressed interest in the training his study participants had received regarding autonomous learning theory and how this would subsequently influence their professional practices. Despite the limitations a study with student teachers (rather than practising educators) poses, this study has made a significant contribution to the field of study concerned with teacher understandings of autonomous learning. This is an aspect I would like to see extended and further developed in my own research, paralleled with learner perceptions and beliefs. As previously mentioned, one area of weakness Camilleri (1997) identified with his study is the gap between teachers' perceptions and real actions. The consideration of learner participations would appear to validate some teachers' beliefs regarding their practices, and offer an alternative insight into autonomous learning.

3.3 Learners' Understandings of Autonomy

There are indeed, however, studies concerned with learners' perceptions of autonomy. Chan's (2001) study of undergraduate students at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University, and Yıldırım's (2012) paper involving four Indian ESL students studying in the USA, demonstrate two relevant examples of such research. Both Chan (2001) and Yıldırım (2012) expressed an intention parallel to that aforementioned of Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012), Reinders & Lázaro (2011), and Balックanlı (2010) – to research attitudes towards, and perceptions of learner autonomy, and the subsequent teacher/learner
roles. However Chan (2001) and Yıldırım (2012) are interested in the learners' understandings rather than the teachers'. In consensus with Chan (2001), Yıldırım (2012) argues that the investigation and study of student perceptions towards learner autonomy is essential before trying to promote it in the classroom, demonstrating a keen interest in the cultural influence upon autonomous learning and its realisation(s).

Chan (2001) conducted a study of 20 adults between 19-24 years old, all with significant experience studying English as a foreign language (between 14-18 years experience each), with findings gathered using a questionnaire and 5 follow-up interviews. In contrast, Yıldırım (2012) opted for a qualitative research perspective, choosing to conduct a series of interviews with four male ESL students (aged 20-22 years old, all of whom were university graduates). Yıldırım's (2012) qualitative approach enables a more in-depth understanding of the students' perceptions and understandings, however the study is lacking the secondary support and corroboration that Chan's (2001) mixed method study brings. Both studies suffer similar limitations – both involve participants from a very narrow age-range, both use participants with extensive learning experiences (both with EFL and education in general, since the studies involve university undergraduates and graduates respectfully), Yıldırım (2012) deals solely with male participants, and both Yıldırım and Chan (2001) research participants from Asian countries, who may well offer different cultural understandings of autonomy and indeed, education in general, to individuals in a European context.

Despite their different instruments and methodologies, both Chan (2001) and Yıldırım (2012) discovered conflicting results regarding the role of the teacher in an autonomous learning frame. In Chan's (2001) study, students overwhelmingly valued a teacher's presence in the learning process in order to explicitly state what and how they were learning, reflecting the “traditional authoritarian view of the teacher's role” (Chan, 2001, p. 510) within a Hong Kong learning context. Yet, students also expressed a wish for the ability to make decisions over the learning process, including decisions concerning class activities and the selection of course content. Similarly, Yıldırım's (2012) study identified mixed results – students felt strongly that the teacher held greater responsibility in certain areas of learning such as course content, activities and correction, while aspects such as learning outside-the-class and the evaluation of learning were deemed to be areas in which students had more responsibility. As Yıldırım (2012) highlights, it's clear that learner autonomy is not an “all-or-nothing kind of concept” (p. 27), and that further quantitative and qualitative studies are required to better understand learners' shifting interpretations of autonomy in a variety of contexts.
3.4 Teacher/Learner Comparative Analysis

Thus far, my analysis of existing research has been divided into those studying teachers’ and learners’ perceptions of learner autonomy in isolation from one another. Shahsavari’s (2014) study, while conducted in a very different cultural and professional context to my own, is highly pertinent to my research since it includes both teacher and student perspectives on autonomous language learning. As in the earlier case of Reinders & Lázaro (2011), Shahsavari (2014) argues that teachers' perceptions and knowledge of autonomous learning will directly affect the development of autonomy within their classrooms. With similar intentions to my own, Shahsavari (2014) sought to research both teachers and learners in order to reveal any comparable findings. Her research was conducted with 150 EFL experienced teachers (all of whom were male, with a minimum of 5 years teaching experience, and all from and working in the city of Isfahan, Iran), and 150 learners of advanced level English (all of whom were male, between the ages of 25-40, living and studying in Isfahan).

Like Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012), Balçıkanlı (2010) and Chan (2001); Shahsavari (2014) utilised mixed method instruments to collate her research, with a questionnaire (an adapted version of the Borg & Al-Busaidi model was used) and follow-up interviews with volunteer participants. Shahsavari's (2014) results confirm the gap between the desirability and feasibility of learner autonomy in the EFL classroom, previously identified by Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012), but is able to expand upon their earlier research by noting this gap in both teachers' and learners' beliefs. Interestingly however, there are subtle differences between the value placed upon autonomy by both teachers and learners, with teachers seeing autonomous learning as more desirable than feasible, with learners taking the opposite view. Both groups however, firmly share the belief that autonomous learning has a positive effect on being a successful language learner. Meanwhile, there is a notable divergence of opinion regarding the question of whether autonomous learning allowing language learners to learn more effectively than they would otherwise, with teachers overwhelmingly agreeing with this statement, and learners expressing uncertainty and even strong disagreement. It is clear that there is room in autonomous research for further studies which may further prove, disprove and/or develop these areas of agreement and conflict.

Although Shahsavari’s (2014) study is important in my analysis, the relevance of this study outside of an Iranian context must be seriously considered – generalisations made, despite corroboration through her use of mixed methods, may well not prove to be true in contexts with different cultural and educational contexts, EFL practitioners of more varied experience (both experienced and inexperienced, formally qualified and not), and those with mixed gender research participants.
Additionally, by excluding adults under the age of 25 years old, Shahsavari’s study completely ignores the young-adult EFL market, a market currently booming in my local context. Furthermore, Shahsavari’s teacher participants are all native to the city where they teach, whereas a large percentage of private sector EFL practitioners in Spain are not native to the cities (or indeed, the country) where they work. One must consider the influence migration and immigration may have upon teachers’ identities, beliefs and experiences with concepts such as autonomy (Borg, 2006, cited in Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012, p. 6), and we can speculate that research involving such individuals may well prove different.

3.5 Gap in Research

While my analysis of existing research has identified many valuable and pertinent examples of quantitative and qualitative studies into the notion of autonomous learning, it would seem that there is not only space for further research, but indeed, a need for additional study into language learning autonomy from both teacher and learner perspectives. There appears to be a common belief throughout these studies which suggests that research into learner autonomy greatly benefits our understanding of autonomy, and consequently develops an awareness and appreciation of the roles learners and teachers have, or ought to adopt, in order to further its development. This is something I wish to benefit from as both a researcher and practitioner of EFL.
Chapter 4 – Research Design & Methods

The selection of a suitable research design and subsequent methods and instruments by which to ascertain data in this research project, has been a challenging process. As my understanding of social research methodologies and methods has grown, I have changed the design of this research methodology multiple times. Finally, it has become apparent that a mixed-methods approach to my research aims will enable me to best carry out, analyse and share the findings and research acquired in this paper.

In this chapter I will explain the rationale behind this mixed-methods stance and the benefits this brings to the data collected. I will outline the sampling methods employed in the questionnaire and interviews, and provide information on these two modes of data collection. I shall then offer an overview of the respondents in the study, and identify the modes of data analysis employed. Finally, I demonstrate the ethical considerations made during the course of this research.

4.1 Rationale Behind a Mixed-Methods Approach

Social researchers are increasingly acknowledging the compatibility between quantitative and qualitative research methods (Cohen et al, 2011, p. 21) with mixed-methods research gaining increasing popularity in the last 20 years. However my decision to employ a mixed-methods paradigm is not in order to follow research trends, but rather, because it best suits the mixed nature of my research questions and objectives. As Cohen et al (2011) so aptly write; “[m]ixed methods research recognizes, and works with, the fact that the world is not exclusively quantitative or qualitative, it is not an either/or world, but a mixed world...” (p. 22). They argue that the pragmatist paradigm, in which mixed-methods research is situated, is very “matter-of-fact”, striving to integrate both quantitative and qualitative aspects of research, adopting a methodically pluralistic approach towards research (p. 23). Indeed, in this study the first stage of data collection – the survey – serves as a platform from which to more fully and completely analyse and enquire into perceptions of learning autonomy in the second stage of research – the interviews.

By not committing myself to specific (often conflicting) research methodologies, I am able to focus upon the research questions themselves, utilising all suitable approaches to framing, understanding and researching these objectives (Cohen et al, 2011, pp. 21-23; Creswell, 2003, pp. 10-11). It is my desire to undertake research which successfully strives to answer my research questions, rather than a desire to follow any specific research methodology.
4.2 Sampling

Given the comparative nature of this research project, two sample groups were required – one of EFL teachers who teach adult learners in the private sector, who practise in Spain, and another of adult learners who are currently studying EFL in the private sector, also in Spain. As Miles & Huberman (1994) argue, identifying an appropriate sample group is paramount to social research since “you cannot study everyone, everywhere doing everything” (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 27, cited in Punch, 2001, p. 105). I have utilised a combination of convenience and snowball sampling methods to locate sample participants. The benefits of doing so, as Bryman (2012) argues, is that convenience sampling typically demonstrates a good response rate, since participants are generally known to the researcher, while snowball sampling allows that initial group of individuals to establish contact with other members of the research population (pp. 201-202).

One issue encountered with engaging these sampling methods is that the awareness of the engaged population's response rate is sacrificed in order to reach a larger number of people than a survey solely using convenience sampling may. The result is that I am uncertain how many potential respondents from the two population groups were sent information about this research and declined to respond. From those I contacted directly through convenience sampling achieved a 69% response rate. Those contacted directly by myself accounts for 64% of the total respondent sample, with the remaining 36% involved in the study as a result of the snowball sampling. However I have no means through which to track and gauge the response rate of individuals subsequently contacted. In total, 24 EFL teachers responded, however 9 of these did not fit the sample population group, while 20 EFL students responded, with 2 of these also being out-width this study's sample population.

Due to the small number of questionnaire respondents, it would be problematic for one to make generalisations about the results from the survey portion of this study. I employ individuals, therefore, to consider the survey findings as the primary stage of data collection, a platform if you will, to garner a sense of teacher and student responses to autonomy in a more controlled manner, before engaging in interviews to develop and expand upon survey answers. Additionally, my questionnaire serves as the second stage of sampling for the interview process. As Denscombe (2008) and Punch (2001) highlight, the use of a survey not only influences the questions asked in the interview stage, but also the choice of subjects based upon their questionnaire answers and willingness to participate in the face-to-face stage of the study (Denscombe, 2008, p. 272, cited in Cohen et al, 2011, p. 22; Punch, 2001, p. 243). While the questionnaire serves as a source of data in its own right, it also allows me to contact individuals for follow-up interviews (Bryman, 2012, p. 644).
### Table 1: Overview of survey sections and content

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Teacher survey:</th>
<th>Student survey:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
<td><em>Purpose of study is outlined</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Participant scope explained – respondents out-width population are redirected and eliminated from study</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Researcher's contact details provided</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Informed consent before continuing</em></td>
<td><em>Purpose of study is outlined</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Participant scope explained – respondents out-width population are redirected and eliminated from study</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Researcher's contact details provided</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Informed consent before continuing</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Defining learner autonomy</strong></td>
<td><em>Teachers are asked to demonstrate agreement to statements concerning activities and behaviours associate with the demonstration/promotion of autonomous learning (or not)</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Utilises a Likert scale: Strongly disagree, disagree, unsure, agree, strongly agree</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Statements are worded in positive and negative forms, and are organised randomly so as to avoid bias as much as possible</em></td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Desirability and feasibility of learner decisions</strong></td>
<td><em>Respondents are asked to indicate the desirability and feasibility of decisions learners might be involved in</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Utilises a Likert scale: Undesirable, slightly undesirable, quite desirable, very desirable; and Unfeasible, slightly feasible, quite feasible, very feasible</em></td>
<td><em>Respondents are asked to indicate the desirability and feasibility of decisions students might be involved in</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Utilises a Likert scale: Undesirable – I don't want it, a little undesirable, quite desirable, desirable – I want to make decisions about this; and Not viable – not practical, a little unviable, quite viable, viable – I think we could do this easily</em></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Desirability and feasibility of learner abilities</strong></td>
<td><em>Respondents are asked to indicate the desirability and feasibility of abilities learners might have</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Utilises a Likert scale: Undesirable, slightly undesirable, quite desirable, very desirable; and Unfeasible, slightly feasible, quite feasible, very feasible</em></td>
<td><em>Respondents are asked to indicate the desirability and feasibility of abilities learners might have</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Utilises a Likert scale: Undesirable – I don't want it, a little undesirable, quite desirable, desirable – I want to make decisions about this; and Not viable – not practical, a little unviable, quite viable, viable – I think we could do this easily</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>About respondent</strong></td>
<td><em>Respondents are asked to consider: a) the extent to which they consider their EFL students to be autonomous, and b) the extent to which they believe that they give autonomous learning opportunities to their students</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Information concerning teacher experience (both generally and in Spain), highest qualification, EFL qualifications, nationality and gender</em></td>
<td><em>Respondents are asked to consider: a) the extent to which they consider themselves autonomous students, b) the extent to which they agree/disagree that autonomous students will learn English better, and c) the extent to which they believe their EFL teacher helps them to become more autonomous</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Information concerning learners’ experience with EFL, current level of English studies, reasons for studying English, national and gender</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Closing</strong></td>
<td><em>Request for further participation in the interview stage and opportunity to leave contact details</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Confirmation of submission and thanks</em></td>
<td><em>Request for further participation in the interview stage and opportunity to leave contact details</em>&lt;br&gt;<em>Confirmation of submission and thanks</em></td>
</tr>
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</table>
4.3 The Questionnaire

As previously mentioned, this study adopts two data collection methods – a questionnaire and interviews. The questionnaire is the initial mode of data collection, and is completed by a larger sample than those in the interview stage. Individuals who responded to the self-completion questionnaire have been given the option to participate in the next stage of the study – the face-to-face interviews.

The self-completion questionnaire (Bryman, 2012, p. 232) is conducted as the first stage of data collection via an online survey tool. I have elected to adopt and adapt an existing instrument to carry out this stage of research, and my reasons for doing so are twofold. Firstly, as Punch (2001) points out, there is considerable work involved in developing an instrument which will provide suitable data, therefore “we would need good reason for passing over an already existing instrument” (p. 97), especially given the time restraints this Master's research project is bound by. Secondly, the usefulness and potential comparability of my research findings outside a Spanish context will be greatly improved if the comparability of the results are better facilitated – using an existing instrument will assist with this (Punch, 2001, p. 97). While direct comparability with existing studies is not my primary objectives, I feel the opportunity to allow such additional analysis may prove valuable for others. The instrument I have chosen to adopt was created by Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) in their study of English language teachers' beliefs and practices of learner autonomy. This instrument and paper has proved to be highly influential in the consideration of my own research methods, given the considerable work they carried out drafting, reviewing, redrafting and piloting, before finalising their questionnaire (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012, pp. 9-11).

I have made several changes to their questionnaire for my teacher sample group – eliminating some questions I deemed irrelevant for the population's cultural context and adjusting the wording on a small number of questions. For example, I have removed questions concerning the specific institution from which Borg & Al-Busaidi based their study, as well as questions concerning facilities not common to private language academies (unlike the university location of Borg & Al-Busaidi) – such as a library. Furthermore, I eliminated questions pertaining to language learner autonomy and (different) cultural backgrounds, since my research objective is not to study the relation between autonomy and culture. In order to adapt this instrument for my learners' sample group, I have removed the lengthy first section in which respondents are asked to mark on a Likert scale (Bryman, 2012, p. 166) their level of agreement with statements about autonomy. This section has been eliminated because the often technical and complex language used in the phrasing of these
statements would prohibit the involvement of English learners lacking an advanced level of language proficiency, and the time and cost of translation was deemed impossible in this instance. Table 1 demonstrates the key content and question themes in each section of the survey utilised for both teachers and students.

The teachers' section 2, and learners' section 1 are comparable – with individuals asked to indicate desirability and feasibility/viability regarding a number of possible situations which affect autonomy. My hope is that the additional section included in the teachers' instrument will demonstrate the level of understanding around the notion of autonomy amongst EFL practitioners, while the similar sections in the teacher and learner questionnaires will allow for direct comparisons.

An online instrument has been selected given the speed with which it can be administered without geographical constraints (an 'unrestricted compass'), and it's low cost (Bryman, 2012, p. 233; Cohen et al, 2011, p. 230). In addition, as Bryman (2012) and Cohen et al (2011) point out, there are fewer unanswered responses on internet-based questionnaires compared with paper-based questionnaires. I've selected an online survey tool (Google Forms) which allows me to mark specific questions as 'required' – effectively prohibiting the respondent's continuation with the questionnaire until the question is answered. A further formatting advantage of the survey tool selected, is the ability to filter participants based on their response to specific questions ('skip logic'), so that the same single instrument can be provided to both teacher and learner sample groups, in an effort to improve the reach of the snowball sampling method employed (Bryman, 2012, p. 671).

4.4 The Interviews

By utilising both a questionnaire and interviews which are more qualitative in style, I am able to capitalise on the strengths of both research methods (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006, para. 1). While the online survey allows me to identify areas which merit further interest – results which are unexpected, anomalous, corroborate or challenge critical understandings of learner autonomy, or conflicting results from one individual – and explore them more dutifully and completely. The interviews are more sensitive to the “lived experience[s]” of the research participants (Punch, 2001, p. 242) and allow me to help overcome one weakness of the questionnaire, in which you cannot probe respondents to elaborate, nor ask additional questions as they occur to the researcher (Bryman, 2012, pp. 234-235). The interview process also serves to reflect my interest in the interviewees' points of view – going off topic is encouraged and new questions and follow-ups that
emerge during the research process have been permitted as natural conversation developments (Bryman, 2012, p. 470).

The interviews themselves were semi-structured, with interviewees' responses to the questionnaire serving as the basis for question direction and discussions. The interviews lasted approximately 20 – 30 minutes, so as not to inconvenience participants too greatly and were conducted in cafes – a neutral, non-academic environment convenient to the interviewees – in English, and were digitally recorded.

All teachers were asked to define their understanding of autonomy in the first instance, allowing me to compare the interview response to those of the teacher's questionnaire (part 1) concerning their perceptions and interpretations of autonomy. What is more, in so doing teachers were allowed to explore their perceptions and definitions in their own words, rather than the statements provided in the survey. Students were similarly asked to define their understanding of autonomy both generally, and concerning language learning. The theme of the interviews then broadly followed the theme of the various questionnaire parts – striving to define and understand autonomy as a concept, discuss the desirability and feasibility of student decisions and abilities, and garner a sense of the interviewees' experiences and engagement with autonomy at present. Specific follow up questions to survey responses were possible, for example: “In the questionnaire you identified yourself as not being an autonomous student. ... Why do you think this is? ... What habits and study practices do you think make some autonomous? ... Is an autonomous student going to learn the same as, better than, or worse than a non-autonomous learner, do you think?”

Several social research theorists have noted significant advantages to utilising a mixed-methods study. Bryman (2012) and Cohen et al (2011) both refer to the 'completeness' a mixed-methods study offers, since the researcher is able to provide a more comprehensive account of any given phenomenon if both quantitative and qualitative methods are used. Since the use of multiple research methods may offer a more complete understanding of the research phenomenon, it is my contention that (as Bryman, (2012) suggests) that by comparing and viewing my data results in two stages I am better able to 'fill' any gaps and explore the contradictory results, as has occurred in this study. I have been able to minimise misunderstandings and potentially conflicting results by engaging a number of survey participants in follow-up interviews, reviewing and expanding upon their answers. As Punch (2001) argues: “[w]e cannot find out everything we might want to know using only one approach” (p. 243). Indeed, it is my belief that the semi-structured interviews develop and 'complete' answers given in the preceding questionnaire.
4.5 Respondent Profiles

4.5.1 Teacher profile

A total of 24 EFL teachers responded to the online survey, however 9 of these were redirected and their data removed from the survey as they do not fit the scope of this study – they either did not teach EFL in Spain, or did not teach adult students. Of the 15 remaining teachers, their level of teaching experience varied from 0-4 years (26.7%) to 20-24 years (6.7%), with the most common (thus, the modal average) being 5-9 years EFL teaching experience (46.7%). The numbers of years teaching experience they have accrued in Spain varied, with most having 0-4 years (53.3%), but others as many as 20-24 years (6.7%) experience within a Spanish context. The variety of formal EFL qualifications was evenly distributed, with 33% of the sample population having no formal EFL training, another 33% with one completed EFL qualification (CELTA/Trinity Cert., DELTA/Trinity Dip., MA in TEFL/TESOL or Linguistics), and an additional 33% had completed at least two of these qualifications. British, American and Polish nationalities were represented, and over 66% of the respondents were female.

4.5.2 Student profile

A total of 20 EFL students participated in the online survey, although only 18 matched the target sample population – the other 2 were redirected and eliminated from the study results. The level of English proficiency represented ranges from beginner/basic (A1-A2) (5.6%) to advanced (C1) (33.3%), with the majority of respondents at an upper-intermediate (B2) level of English study (55.6%). Their experience studying English after primary education ranged from 0-4 years (38.9%) to 10-14 years (22.2%), and their reasons for studying English were dominated by job-related demands, with 22.2% studying for their jobs, and another 22.2% studying in order to improve their job prospects. All of the respondents were Spanish, with a fairly even gender distribution (44.4% male, 55.6% female).

4.5.3 Interviewees

The three teacher participants selected for the follow-up interviews brought professional and educational variety, and demonstrated a willingness to participate further in this study. The three student participants selected for follow-up interviews were chosen at random, based on individuals who had expressed a desire for further participation in this project. Table 2 highlights some pertinent data about these participants.
Table 2: Interviewee profiles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher 1</th>
<th>Teacher 2</th>
<th>Teacher 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Years working as an EFL teacher in Spain:</td>
<td>Years working as an EFL teacher in Spain:</td>
<td>Years working as an EFL teacher in Spain:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-14 years</td>
<td>5-9 years</td>
<td>0-4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EFL qualifications:</td>
<td>EFL qualifications:</td>
<td>EFL qualifications:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>CELTA/Trinity Cert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, in teaching English I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy:</td>
<td>In general, in teaching English I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy:</td>
<td>In general, in teaching English I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unsure</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student 1</th>
<th>Student 2</th>
<th>Student 3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level of English:</td>
<td>Level of English:</td>
<td>Level of English:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upper-Intermediate (B2)</td>
<td>Upper-Intermediate (B2)</td>
<td>Upper-Intermediate (B2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason for studying English:</td>
<td>Reason for studying English:</td>
<td>Reason for studying English:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To pass an English exam</td>
<td>To find a job</td>
<td>To pass an English exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think I am an autonomous student:</td>
<td>I think I am an autonomous student:</td>
<td>I think I am an autonomous student:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Data Analysis

The questionnaire’s data has been organised into three groups – general perceptions of autonomy, the desirability and feasibility of student decision-making, and the desirability and feasibility of student autonomous abilities. Descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages were calculated for all survey questions, as well as grouping together questions concerning student decision-making and student autonomous abilities, so as to form mean average percentages. Frequency counts and percentages enable me to present the quantitative data in a more accessible and readily-understandable manner, while also providing an opportunity to explore how interviewee responses may have differed to the mean trend. In the case of desirability and feasibility of student decisions and abilities, I have utilised all questionnaire responses to provide mean averages of the two populations responses. This helps to overcome the fact that despite a very large questionnaire, only a limited portion of the survey findings are discussed in more detail in the next chapter. All results from these respective parts were statistically calculated into mean trends and therefore, utilised in the data presentation.

The interviews have been recorded and transcribed, and subsequently demanded careful reading and organisation into broad groups, thematically. For example, a student's comment about a preference to study in some moments individually, and in others with her classmates, but always under the
control and scrutiny of her teacher could be grouped into *interdependent nature of autonomous learning*, or more specifically, *learning independently, learning with others, role of the teacher*. These thematical groups can then be related to questions from the survey connected to independent learning, collaborative learning, the role of the teacher, or even more general perceptions of autonomous learning. It is an acute and sensitive understanding of the interview context which allows me to place interview data into an appropriate thematical group.

Thanks to the mixed-methods nature of this study, this comparison of, and connection between, questionnaire and interview data allows me to identify areas of differing opinions and to illuminate quantitative data with qualitative examples and explanations provided by the interviewees, in order to corroborate and more completely understand the teacher and student survey responses.

### 4.7 Quality Considerations

#### 4.7.1 The role of the researcher

Given my great personal and professional interest in learner autonomy, there is a risk that this interest may result in research generalisations which Scheurich (1997) argues “represent the mindset of the researcher” (Scheurich, 1997, p. 64, cited in Larsson, 2005, p. 1). However, I also believe my research will help to fill a gap in language learner autonomy literature, while contributing to the research field in general. These are strong motives for carrying out this study. Indeed, as Larsson (2005) writes, in order for research to be considered relevant and useful there must “be reasons to believe that there is at least a potential usefulness outside the specific studies” (p. 6). As much as possible, I strive to be conscious of my influence upon the research methods and try to minimise unnecessary influence. For example, the use of an online-based questionnaire, as opposed to a paper-based questionnaire or structured interview, means that my influence as researcher is reduced as much as possible (Bryman, 2012, p. 233).

#### 4.7.2 Language limitations

As previously discussed, due to time restraints and an absence of funding, one key limitation to my study is the inability to translate the questionnaire employed. This may result in sampling bias (Bryman, 2012, p. 187) since students with lower levels of English comprehension may find they do not understand all of the questions, and are effectively (although unintentionally) excluded from the study. To try and overcome this, I have provided an information page at the beginning of the online survey using language I believe will be familiar to elementary learners of English, as well as
providing contact details for individuals who do not understand items. In addition, in areas of the learners' questionnaire I have used simpler vocabulary to that used in the comparable section of the teachers' questionnaire, as well as English-Spanish cognates in place of more unfamiliar terminology (for example, instead of 'feasible' as in the teachers' questionnaire, the learners' questionnaire uses the word 'viable' which in Spanish translates as viable – it is a perfect cognate).

4.7.3 Ethical considerations

My research is conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of the Swedish Research Council, in order to ensure that participants are informed, consent is received, confidentiality and anonymity (in the collection and storing of data acquired through both questionnaire and interview processes) are maintained and privacy is not violated (Bryman, 2014, pp. 130-153; Cohen et al, 2007, pp. 51-77; Punch, 2001, p. 281). As the researcher, I am responsible for ensuring these aspects to the study are maintained and safeguarded. All study participants are voluntary, willing participants able to comprehend the research objectives and intentions (Cohen et al, 2007, p. 53). I have included an information and consent page on all questionnaires, as well as informed consent forms for all interview participants. The interview consent forms advise interviewees that they will be audio recorded, but that these recordings will not be copied or shared. Individuals' names and any specific identifying information are omitted in my findings in order to protect participants' anonymity. Finally, as the researcher and interviewer, I strive to demonstrate complete respect and gratitude to all participants and members of the study population for their interest and assistance in this project.
Chapter 5 – Findings

5.1 Perceptions of Autonomy

5.1.1 Autonomy has a positive impact on L2 learning – a difference of opinion?

According to the teacher respondents, the notion of learner autonomy has an overwhelmingly positive influence upon L2 studies (see Figure 2). 93.3% of teachers agreed (to some degree) that learner autonomy has a positive effect on language learning, and 80% agreed (again, to some degree) that learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they would otherwise.

Figure 2: Teachers’ general views of autonomy

All of the three teacher interviewees supported the questionnaire’s findings – that learner autonomy has an unquestionably positive impact upon the student's learning and the effectiveness of this learning in an L2 context. They all mentioned the perceived relationship between greater autonomy and increased motivation, and felt that the more autonomous students also enjoyed their classes and the development of their English more than their less-autonomous classmates. Teacher 3 highlighted that the more motivated and more autonomous students were willing to explore English learning outside the class and the coursebook, and this in turn helped improve their proficiency:

*I've found that what sets apart the strong students is that they have more of an investment in their learning, rather than just in the classroom. It's noticeable, because they have an enthusiasm to learn and it goes beyond the book – they want to know things that interest them in their lives, and want to know how to communicate that in the language they're learning.*
Teacher 1 agreed that the stronger, more autonomous learners benefited from what she dubbed the “enjoyment factor” - they were able to move past ‘going through the motions’ of learning, and make the lessons, content and activities relevant and real for them. All three teachers could cite numerous examples of autonomous behaviour, despite being predominantly self-taught, learning about autonomy and effective teaching practices through trial-and-error, and informal communities of practice.

Despite the fact that 83.4% of the students self-identified as being autonomous learners, they expressed less clear ideas regarding the possibility of learner autonomy improving students' learning (see Figure 3). Students were equally split between those who agreed that autonomous students will learn better, and those who disagreed, with many being unsure. In the follow-up interviews however, it became apparent that this divergence from the teachers' perceptions may in fact be due to a difference of understanding concerning the word 'autonomy', rather than a difference of opinion regarding autonomous behaviours and ideas themselves. In the interview stage, Students 1 and 3 expressed strong ideas that the ways of internalising information, working with greater degrees of independence from the teacher and developing critical thinking skills were highly-desirable, and would benefit their L2 learning. Student 1 explained that:

...if a student only repeats what he does in his class, I think he or she is not learning. For example, if his teacher gives him some references about what they have to do, and they do it in their homes, it's totally different. It's not the same if you have to complete the exercises or you have to do more than only complete gaps, for example. You look for information, or read a lot. If you have to look for information, or something like that, you can learn a lot more than if you only complete some gaps.

He was not alone in his positive expression towards more autonomous learning styles. Student 2 agreed that more successful learning needs to be a collaborative effort between learner, teacher, environment and materials, describing instances of autonomous learning which she felt were more important and significant than learning in a more traditional, teacher-centred environment:

...first, you can choose what you want to do. And in the second way, because in languages it's very important to practise, and to do activities, and to use English.
In general, I find that while the survey results offer contrasting views towards the benefits of autonomy upon successful L2 learning, that in the interviews both the teachers and students were resoundingly positive.

5.1.2 Age & proficiency

Teachers expressed a belief that autonomy can be developed at any point in one's life or L2 acquisition, as demonstrated by Figure 4. This would confirm Holec's (1981) notion of autonomy as a capacity which can be nurtured and developed, rather than an innate quality.

![Teachers' views of autonomy and age / L2 proficiency](image)

However, the ease with which this ability can be developed by teachers was questioned by the teacher interviewees, who felt that for individuals more accustomed to learning in a more traditional manner (typically the older adults), learning autonomously may prove challenging or unwanted. As Teacher 2 succinctly says:

...yeah, everyone's capable, whether or not they're actually willing or not...

Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 both said that while autonomy could be developed in students of any age, that it is easier to encourage and find pre-existing autonomous tendencies, in the younger adults and teenagers. Teacher 2 explains:

...generally speaking, the older they are, the more 'set in their ways' they are, and they're less open to new ideas, and it's difficult, as they say, to teach an old dog new tricks. But usually, I find that if they're a little bit younger they're more open to it [autonomy].
Both these teachers felt that the younger adults'/teenagers' greater experience with autonomous learning was not due to a greater desire to learn in these ways than their older counterparts, but perhaps instead due to their lifestyles and means through which they acquire and 'digest' information on a day-to-day basis. Teacher 1 commented that an older adult student's resistance to learner autonomy is almost certainly not premeditated, but because the very nature of autonomous learning is so alien to them:

*I think for most of them, it's just something they've never done. I don't think it crosses their minds. For most of them, they expect to be told everything, they expect to be told what things mean, when to use this word with a rule, they expect to be able to write it down, and they expect to be able to study that rule.*

All three teachers agreed that for students and teachers alike, this can result in frustrating situations and potentially combative students and ultimately, ineffective learning. Teacher 1's analysis of adult learners with limited experience with autonomy is especially revealing:

*...if they haven't been told specifically when to use some expression or what a word means, I think they feel frustrated, because I don't think they feel they can learn in another way.*

The interviewed students however, expressed mixed opinions regarding the development of learner autonomy at any point in one's studies or age. Student 2 felt strongly that autonomy was not an ability, but a fixed state, yet agreed a teacher can help develop and possibly teach these capacities:

*I think a person is autonomous, or not. Maybe a teacher can develop their autonomy, but if a person doesn't like to be autonomous...*

In general, the student interviewees found it very difficult to decide if autonomous learning was an innate quality or an ability to be developed, and the results are decidedly unclear, in contrast to those of the teachers.

**5.1.3 Learner empowerment & independence**

Teacher participants in both the questionnaire and interview stages of this study overwhelmingly expressed positive views towards student involvement in class/course decision-making, developing learner independence and taking more greater responsibility for their learning (see Figure 5). All of the teacher interviewees felt that developing a greater capacity for independence and independent study was something that their students were lacking, and they saw it as important for both their L2 studies and future life in general. The words 'independence' and 'autonomy' were used almost interchangeably in the teacher interviews, with Teacher 2 providing her definition of autonomy as:
Probably I see it as a little bit of a synonym of 'independence', I would say. Maybe 'freedom'. I think there's usually a certain degree of control, too. You have some guidelines(ish) to follow, but then... you're given the tools to do something let's say, and then you're able to do it as you wish, either in your own free time or by various methods.

Figure 5: Teacher's views on learner independence and decision-making

The student interviewees agreed that greater independence and self-reliance were central to learner autonomy. As Student 3 says:

*It's to do the things without the help of other people.*

Student 1 agreed, explaining that in his opinion, autonomous learners were able to be more self-reliable and responsible, trying to help themselves and their own studies as much as possible, without being 'spoon-fed' by the teacher.

All of the student interviewees highlighted examples of their current learning habits which conform to autonomous learning frames, and responded to such examples of autonomy positively. Student 2
felt that in her EFL studies, she had progressed more noticeably when she was engaged in making
decisions and choices about what she was learning, or how she was learning it. In addition, she felt
that opportunities to learn independently both in- and out-of-class were valuable, as it allowed her
to internalise the L2 content. She says:

*I think that when I study I prefer studying alone, but when I study everything that I want, I
prefer practise with other people... I like to acquire the knowledge, and put my ideas in order
first.*

In general, teacher and student interviewees felt that qualities such as independent work,
making decisions and having an input on class decisions were ways in which autonomy could
be promoted, and they were received positively by both study groups.

**5.1.4 Co-operation & collective learning**

While independence was heralded by teachers and students alike as a central tenet to autonomous
learning, both teachers and students agreed group work, and working with others were also
important. Teachers agreed that providing opportunities for learners to learn together, and from one
another, nurtured learner autonomy, as well as co-operative and collaborative group work (see
Figure 6). They felt they had a responsibility to ensure that their students came away not only with
an improved level of English, but the ability to work with others, to communicate politely and to be
more sympathetic listeners.

![Figure 6: Teacher's views on student collaboration](image)

The student interviews revealed similar beliefs, with students expressing an interest and desire to
share ideas, learn from one another and help clarify areas of uncertainty with their classmates. As
Student 2 said:

*I think that learning a language is a very difficult thing, in my opinion. I think that the best way is to work with other people, and practise practise practise!*

All three student interviewees however, felt there were moments and types of activities for which group work and collaboration were less suited, but in general felt they were more deeply learning when they were talking and exchanging ideas with their peers than if they were engaging with rules and definitions solely with their coursebook.

### 5.1.5 The role of the teacher

Teachers and students also agreed that the teacher was a key player in developing autonomous learning in the L2 classroom, with a rejection of the teacher resulting in less-effective learning. Both teacher and student interviewees felt that while there may be opportunities for independent and collaborative learning, the teacher was responsible for controlling and monitoring these classroom practices and autonomous learning opportunities. It was resoundingly agreed by both groups that without a teacher's presence, the success of the learner's L2 acquisition may well be stunted. In the online survey, teacher participants disagreed that learner autonomy implied learner isolation from the teacher (see Figure 7). Interviewees expanded on this, clarifying a perceived difference between student independence in order to learn more effectively and personally, and learning without a teacher which they felt may result in poor learning outcomes. Student 1 also felt that a teacher was necessary so as to help with clarifications and corrections, and felt his learning was easier with a teacher presence. He explains:

*I think that if you have to work alone without a teacher and without partners, it's very difficult. You need a teacher to tell you what you are not doing correctly, so I think a teacher is needed.*

Student 3 agreed, and also felt that a teacher could be seen as a valuable tool and knowledge expert from which to learn not only content, but different ways of learning and methods you may not have seen previously. She says:

*I think the teacher is very important to encourage you to do other things.*

Teachers 1 and 2 mirrored this sentiment, expressing what they deemed as a professional responsibility to engage the students in issues, learning activities and behaviours which may be previously unknown to them – to help expand their horizons. Teacher 1 says:

*I think that part of a teacher's role is to try and open the students' minds, perhaps because they expect to come to class and pay and just be told, but I think we can as teachers, help them to*
move away from that, and show them a different way of doing things... then that's something that they take away, that's more than just English, that perhaps they would never have thought of about before.

It would seem that while teachers and students alike value independence and student collaboration, both sample groups felt that the role of the teacher is one which does not merely accept autonomy, but may well significantly promote it.

5.1.6 Limitations to autonomy

While teachers overwhelmingly expressed positive understandings and opinions towards learner autonomy in both the questionnaire and interviews, the three teacher interviewees were also quick to mention several limitations they feel they face when trying to implement such practices in their classrooms. All three teachers commented that the course objectives and pressures to obtain a measurable level of English created teaching pressures, and restricted their freedom to try out different styles and activities which might better improve autonomy. Teacher 3 commented:

...the focus and emphasis is on equipping them with certain skills that they need to know.
...There isn't always much time for you to bring in something more naturally to the classroom, or something more personally meaningful to them. So, it's pretty limited.

Teachers 2 and 3 also mentioned institutional limitations, with the pressures of the business world and making money serving as forces which hinder teacher freedom and the promotion of skills which might benefit students, but which are not necessarily their primary objective, such as autonomous skills. Teacher 2 was especially critical, saying:
Unfortunately, our motto would probably be that the student goes away happy, rather than the teacher goes away knowing they’ve done everything in their power to make that student learn something. ...If it's good for business then they can do what they want really, and you just have to shut up and take it.

Because of factors such as a lack of institutional support, a sense of apathy from students, strict coursebook competition deadlines and lack of expert knowledge, the teachers felt their efforts to foster autonomy were impeded, resulting in what Teacher 3 referred to as “controlled autonomy”, rather than true learner autonomy. Despite these limitations, the teachers also expressed great willingness to continue to develop autonomous learning opportunities and experiences in- and out-of-classroom.

5.2 Desirability vs. Feasibility of Student Decisions

One of the core intentions of this study was to collect data from both EFL teachers and students, so as to compare their perceptions of learner autonomy. This is most clearly realised in the quantitative survey questions regarding potential learner decisions and abilities, and their degree of desirability and feasibility for both sample groups. What is immediately apparent when collating the answers provided in response to a number of possible situations, decisions and abilities, is that both teachers and students want students to have greater responsibility and control over their English classes; to make more decisions and develop abilities which in turn, assist them in becoming more autonomous learners.

![Figure 8: Desirability & feasibility of student involvement in class decision-making](image)

In Figure 8, we can see that both teachers and students express a desire for students to make decisions in their English class, or regarding the course itself. In the case of feasibility – how viable
it would be to allow students to make these decisions – students felt these decisions would be more easily implemented than the teachers, however the teacher's general trend is primarily positive. In terms of both the desirability and feasibility of student decisions, the online survey results are predominantly positive. However, it would appear that opinions are divided between what would be, and what is – the theory and reality, since in both the student and teacher interviews there was the consensus that in most cases, the teacher ought to make decisions concerning the English classes. Student interviewees placed a great deal of emphasis upon trusting their teacher and their expert knowledge as the teacher and giver of specialist knowledge. As Student 3 explained:

*I think that if I'm here, it's because I trust in this academy and the professionals that are here.*

None of the students discussed a desire to make more decisions without the topic being prompted, nor expressed any interest in taking greater control over their learning experience. The interviewees predominantly felt that their attendance and thus, business custom at any given English language academy, represented their confidence in the quality of teaching there, and therefore, they did not need to make as many decisions.

Teachers meanwhile, have interpreted this deferral of judgement as student disinterest. Both Teachers 1 and 2 felt that a growing majority of their EFL students showed signs that they believed their class attendance to be sufficient for them to improve and effectively learn the language. They saw this lack of decision-making willingness as being very negative, and part of a greater issue of student apathy. Teacher 1 makes some strong comments regarding the students' lack of decision-making:

*I think most of the students I have... I get the feeling that most of them don't want to make any decisions. I get the feeling that they come here and they pay to not have to make decisions. To be told what to do, when to do it, and then that'll mean that they learn their English and then everything will be okay.*

![Learner decisions on materials used - desirability](image1)

![Learner decisions on materials used - feasibility](image2)

**Figure 9: Desirability & feasibility of student decisions on materials**
5.2.1 Student decisions on materials

While the survey data (see Figure 9) shows that students expressed a strong desire to assist or make decisions regarding English class material selection, those interviewed expressed mixed opinions when pressed for responses to more specific examples. Student 2 for example, reaffirmed the previous student sentiment that their teacher is the expert and therefore, they ought to make all pertinent decisions, while Student 3 felt strongly that decisions over material selection and usage ought to be collaborative, between student(s) and teacher:

*I think that the teacher and the pupils must be together in the class. It is the teacher who orders, who asks you things, but I think it's important that the pupil respects to the teacher, and the teacher knows and respects the ideas and likes of the students.*

However she also felt that greater student involvement in material selection would help to encourage greater learner autonomy, participation and involvement in one's own learning:

*But... why not? I think this is a way that the pupil participates in their own learning.*

Student 1 also felt that input on materials was both desirable and viable, however he believed that ultimately the decisions ought to be teacher-made. This quote demonstrates his mixed views:

*On one hand I think it's positive for students to choose what they want to do, or if they are more interested in one thing or other things, because if maybe a student is very good at doing some specific exercises, and they're bored doing this kind of exercise in class, I think they shouldn't do it. But I think the last word has to be of the teacher, because they know how to do it in the class, or the ways to reach the knowledge in the best ways. Some influence, but the teacher should always know what is the best or worst.*

The notion expressed of “some influence” mirrors the earlier comments of Teacher 3 concerning “controlled autonomy” - it is becoming increasingly apparent that while autonomy may be both desirable and feasible for both teachers and students, there are degrees to which both groups are willing to pursue it, and to which they currently practise.

5.2.2 Student decisions on course objectives

Teachers and students were also asked about the desirability and feasibility of student involvement and decisions in English course objectives (see Figure 10). Again, the results were predominantly positive, with teachers finding a learner's decisions on course objectives to be very desirable, with both students and teachers believing that this example of a student-made decision could feasibly be introduced into an EFL class. It is clear however, that two
readily identifiable gaps exist between both the teacher and student sample groups, and their general opinions towards the desirability and feasibility of student decision-making.

![Figure 10: Desirability & feasibility of student decisions on course objectives](image)

However, the student interviewees have again expressed opinions broadly different from those revealed through the questionnaire, since all three students expressed a desire for the teacher to design and decide the course, including the course objectives. As Student 2 says:

*I think it's better that the teacher chooses, because she or he is the best person to know what the knowledge must be. The teacher knows best.*

Conversely, Teacher 2 made a very interesting point about exactly this widely perceived notion that “*the teacher knows best*”. She expressed a desire for a greater decision-making balance between teacher and student(s) on all decisions, arguing that teachers may falsely believe they are the most qualified to make decisions rather than students, when this may not in fact always be the case:

*I think it has to be a joint decision. This is a topic that I've discussed quite a lot with teachers and the consensus is that, they always seem to think that they know best; “I've had all this experience and I know what I'm doing and I've taught this class for so many years...”. But it has to be a joint decision because ultimately, they [the students] do know themselves...*  

However, Teacher 2 later goes on to say that it is ultimately the teacher who should have the last word, perhaps undermining the more idealistic power-balance mentioned above:

*...I think it has to be, maybe not 50/50, maybe the teacher does need to guide it a little bit...*

While Teacher 2 believes the 'teacher knows best' notion may be a fallacy, she still feels the teacher has to ultimately control course related decisions. Throughout the teacher interviews there was a
growing sense of conflict between theory and practice – what teachers want and what they do – this is a prime example.

5.3 Desirability vs. Feasibility of Student Abilities

Similar to the questionnaire section regarding learner decisions, the questions relating to potential student abilities also received predominantly positive responses from both teachers and students. However, this is an area of student autonomy where the results clearly demonstrate the aforementioned gap between teacher and student desires and perceptions of feasibility. It's evident that teachers found the examples of autonomous abilities and capacities to be more strongly desirable than students, while students felt these abilities were more feasible (see Figure 11).

Figure 11: Desirability & feasibility of student abilities

5.3.1 Student ability for evaluating one's learning

One of the potential abilities presented to teachers and students in the survey concerned the ability to evaluate one's own learning. Students expressed a great degree of desire for making decisions over their evaluations, and believed allowing students to make these students was generally feasible. Teachers however, appear much more uncertain concerning its feasibility (see Figure 12).
It is possible that the teacher's uncertainty as to the desirability of students' self-evaluation may well be connected with the earlier discussed pressures and limitations that many L2 courses (especially exam courses) bear. Teacher 3 felt that exam preparation classes demanded a very specific skill set:

...I think that with, for example, the Cambridge exam classes, the focus and emphasis is on equipping them with certain skills that they need to know. And you're trying to mirror the same reading skills and activities and styles that they will expect to see.

It is reasonable to suppose that teachers may therefore find that students are not suitably equipped to evaluate such focused skills.

Despite this, in the student interviews the concept of student self-evaluation was favourably discussed by every student. All three students had encountered some experience of self-evaluation processes in their English classes, and all spoke positively of the experiences. Students 2 and 3 felt that some forms of evaluating their own learning allowed them to self-correct and identify mistakes they are capable of correcting themselves, without the need for a teacher to do so. They believed that in so doing, the error was more memorable and they felt confident they would be less likely to repeat similar mistakes in the future. Student 3 says:

It's a good thing, because sometimes we do the things, but we didn't know what we did. So for me, it's very important and it's very useful to see what I did and what mistakes I made, and how I can improve and I can correct this. So for me, it's very important and useful. It's like learning to not make the same mistake all the time.

Student 1 agreed, but felt that any attempt on the part of a student to evaluate their own learning must be under the supervision of the teacher, as they are the individuals who are truly
responsible for evaluating one's proficiency:

Well, I think it's positive for me or another student, because you discover if you are doing things well or not. I think it's a very positive point for the student, but always under the vision of the teacher. I think the teacher has to be controlling it.

Interestingly, none of these student interviewees had been involved in any decisions over their evaluations, nor any form of self-evaluation (at least, none made known to them) in previous studies – despite the fact that all three have completed high school and university level studies. This would suggest that EFL and L2 teaching may be more accepting of learner autonomy, and interested in developing autonomous skills that mainstream state education in Spain and may well account for some of the student-related limitations to autonomy.

### 5.3.2 Student ability for independent learning

Two of the abilities presented in the online survey concerned how learners learn – independently, or through collaboration and co-operation. Interestingly, 80% of the teachers believed that the ability to work independently was very desirable in their adult students, while student responses were much more evenly distributed, suggesting some uncertainty from the student population regarding independence (see Figure 13). Both teachers and students felt that independent study and learning practices were feasible in the EFL classroom.

![Figure 13: Desirability & feasibility of independent learning](image)

These questionnaire results suggest that 'independence' as either a word or practical notion (or both) is perceived far more positively amongst teachers than students. Indeed, in the follow-up interviews, all three teacher participants used the word 'independent' (or some deviation thereof) to define autonomy in a positive manner. Teacher 3 highlighted the relationship between independence and
the opportunity to expand one's learning opportunities, by engaging with the L2 language outside-the-class:

*Personally, I think it's where a person is able to act independently, taking the information and resources they need to act independently with the language, outside of the classroom.*

Teacher 1 developed the notion of independence by including independent “discovery” as a key concept in her understanding of autonomous learning. She explained that:

*As far as a learner's concerned, autonomy is obviously independent learning. So, it would be the learner learning something new, but discovering it themselves. Discovering the new information, or the new ideas, or the new concept themselves. As opposed to, for example, what a word means – if the teacher told them what the word means in a direct translation. That wouldn't be, I don't think, learner autonomy.*

Her views reflect those of Student 1 mentioned earlier, in which he felt that independent learning and discoveries was more valuable than being 'fed' all the information directly from the teacher.

The survey results however, present a stark contrast between student and teacher beliefs. Yet, it became apparent when engaging with the student interviewees, that all three of them participated in independent learning activities both in- and out-of-class, and all three considered these to be valuable learning experiences. Student 2 felt that independent work gave her the opportunity to personally understand and create the knowledge – to internalise the information – before taking part in collaborative activities, while Students 1 and 3 both seek out extra opportunities for independent study. Student 3 says:

*It's very important to do homework and exercises at home. I try to do other activities or study to improve my English. I ask the teacher for some things to do, and sometimes I choose what I want to do.*

![Figure 14: Desirability & feasibility of co-operative learning](image-url)
It became clear in the student interviews that student respondents may have responded less positively towards independent study in the questionnaire stage, as they understood the concept to be studying alone in isolation, without the support of a teacher and classmates. All student interviewees felt such learning was highly ineffective and would have a detrimental impact on the effectiveness of one's learning. Student 1 highlighted the multi-faceted nature of L2 learning, valuing the importance of both independent and group-work, demonstrating the interdependent aspects of learning he found valuable:

*If you have partners, you can learn with them, from what they do, or if they do something well or don’t do it. I think all of them are complementing, but I think the worst is if you have to learn alone with no help.*

### 5.3.3 Student ability for collaborative learning

Indeed, students and teachers agreed that learning with classmates through co-operation and collaborative activities was both desirable and feasible (see Figure 14). Teachers overwhelmingly saw the ability to learn through co-operation as being highly desirable, with 93% of teachers identifying it as 'very desirable'. Teacher 1 felt that such activities promoted learning, but furthermore, than she had a responsibility as an educator to help develop and expand the students' capacity for, and consideration of learning – to help them engage in learning activities and content topics that they may not naturally choose. Working with others was also seen as a positive means through which to learn by all student interviewees, despite the significant 'gap' between teachers' and students' desire for collaboration identified in the survey. Student 1 felt that group work allowed students to share and correct one another:

*If you have partners, you can learn with them, from what they do or if they do something well, or don’t do it.*

Student 3 also expressed positive opinions about L2 group co-operation, while highlighting the importance of collaboration as one of several learning opportunities. She felt that a balance between individual and group work was preferable, saying:

*I think that there are moments that it's better to be independent, but in other moments in group is better. I think that when we are doing an exercise in class, it's better to do it in group, because my classmates can tell me information and knowledge which I don't have, and vice versa.*

It becomes apparent therefore when considering how learners believe they learn, that while the survey results demonstrate a teacher/student gap, both teacher and student interviewees see value in developing independent and collaborative learning skills. All the students and teachers interviewed
experienced and utilised a variety of learning activities and abilities, with the general consensus suggesting that learning alone is not as effective nor motivational as participating in independent exercises as part of a bigger group.
Chapter 6 – Conclusions

Conducting, collating and organising the research has been an interesting and enlightening process. I can indeed identify evidence showing that EFL teachers and students generally support the two trends observed in my own classes; that students who demonstrate autonomous behaviours can become more effective EFL learners; and that some students are resistant towards, and find such habits and behaviours, difficult. My findings have presented a range of understandings of autonomous behaviours, abilities and activities, which appear to broadly conform to established theoretical understandings of learner autonomy, and support a range of critical theories.

In this chapter I will review and consolidate the primary results of interest in order to re-examine my research questions, and relate my findings to existing literature. I propose that autonomy is widely perceived as having a positive effect on EFL learning, note the interdependency of successful learner autonomy, and draw attention to an evident gap between the desirability and practicality (or, feasibility) of autonomy in an EFL class. I'll also review the perceived limitations encountered in the implementation of autonomy, as well as the limitations and significance of this study.

6.1 Summary of Results

Generally, I find that my study's results confirms and corroborates both theoretical conceptions (and challenges to) learner autonomy, as well as previous studies conducted into teacher and student perceptions and beliefs of autonomous learning.

It is clear that EFL learners and teachers view learner autonomy as something positive, which may well help learners to become more effective and successful, and which is related to students motivation and their previous educational experience. Teachers offered a predominantly more positive perception of autonomy, while also acknowledging several limitations to its implementation and successful operation in the EFL classroom.

Both students and teachers consider learner involvement in decisions to be positive, yet with a required degree of control, guidance and/or supervision from the teacher in order to maintain high standards and the required level of learning. In comparison however, teachers found the abilities suggested to develop autonomous learning to be far more desirable and generally more feasible than the student sample group.
Both teachers and students identified that while autonomous learning may well be beneficial for the students, that for various reasons they considered autonomy to be a flexible notion, which can grow and weaken, offer degrees of freedom and control as required. On the whole, I have found teacher and student understandings of learner autonomy to suggest a highly organic and fluctuating concept which is, above all, adaptable, changeable and malleable to serve a range of interests to different degrees of intent.

6.2 Discussion of Results

6.2.1 Autonomous learning has positive effects on learners

Learner autonomy has generally been perceived and interpreted positively by both the EFL teachers and students involved in this study, with teachers highlighting the belief in both the questionnaire and interviews that autonomous learners will be more effective, more motivated and can more easily relate their classwork to their life and experiences with English in general. This result parallels similarities to the previous studies of Camilleri (1997), Reinders & Lázaro (2011), Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) and Shahsavari (2014), who all found teachers' perceptions of autonomous learning to be very positive. Similar to Shahsavari's study, my questionnaire data reveals differences between teachers and students concerning the extent to which they believe autonomy may help learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would. In both studies, teachers have strongly agreed that autonomous learners will learn better, while the student results were more unclear.

It is my contention that the student survey responses may appear more mixed in part due to the greater challenge students have encountered in considering autonomy as both a theoretical and practical notion. While EFL teachers may well have been exposed to, or familiar with, some degree of learner autonomy either theoretically or practically, students generally were not made aware of any participation in, or explicit benefits of learning this way, and therefore found the concept more difficult to define, explain and evaluate. Certainly, the differences evident between student survey and interview responses may well demonstrate that the word 'autonomy' invokes confusion or false-understandings amongst the student sample group, since when presented with examples and more specific questions in the interviews, it became clear that students did in fact make use of behaviours and abilities which would be considered autonomous, according to (2013b) three perspectives on learning autonomy. What's more, the student interviewees generally praised the effectiveness of such learning experiences.
6.2.2 Interpretations of autonomy

Benson's (2013b) political perspective was widely discussed in both the questionnaire and interview stages of this study, since opportunities to empower students through decision-making and greater control are easily recognisable and quantifiable to a large number of people. However, teacher and student views were a little mixed. It seems clear that in theory, both students and teachers feel learner empowerment and greater degrees of freedom and self-fulfilment (Littlewood, 1999, p. 71) would benefit students. However, student and teacher interviewees all expressed doubts about the extent to which political autonomy may be: a) practical, and b) desirable in an extreme/complete form. The teacher was widely considered to be the ultimate decision-maker and knowledge expert, responsible for controlling any student-led decisions.

Teachers and students seem most comfortable and familiar with qualities associated more closely to Benson’s (2013b) psychological perspective of learner autonomy; in which learners are encouraged to forge deeper, internalised understandings and construct the knowledge individually and subjectively (Holec, 1981, pp. 25-26). Teachers and students agreed that autonomous learning practices encouraged self-construction of knowledge, rather than being ‘spoon fed’ by the teacher, and found such learning to be more valuable. Furthermore, teachers expressed a desire and responsibility to teach in a manner which they felt was predominantly more constructive and effective for their students, even if these methods and styles were unfamiliar to learners. My findings support Little's (2007, p. 16) belief that besides teaching L2 content, a teacher ought to develop abilities (such as communicative skills) which in turn, help to develop autonomous learning. Teachers appeared to perceive autonomous learning skills as benefiting students outside, as well as inside the class; however, neither the teachers nor students involved in this study expressed any consideration or appreciation of the longer-term benefits often associated with autonomous learning, and the impact of autonomous learning on future learning opportunities (see: Littlewood, 1999; Knapper, 1988, OECD, 2007). Teachers and students alike were very concerned with, and rigidly specific to, their current English course in question, unwilling or unable to consider a wider context. My study is not unique in this regard, Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) encountered similar results.

6.2.3 Interdependent nature of autonomy

Two areas which received very strong results in terms of survey data and interview responses, were the student capacities for independent and co-operative learning – or, learning independently and/or in collaboration with others. Teachers overwhelmingly felt that developing the ability to learn
independently was a highly-desirable skill, while students presented much more varied responses. Teachers saw independence and independent work as a desirable and effective means through which to learn, and although students were more mixed and unsure in the questionnaire, the three student interviewees all acknowledged that independent work as a part of their studies was very positive, if used in conjunction with other modes of knowledge acquisition (i.e. group work).

In the interview process it became apparent that not all survey respondents may have distinguished between independent learning opportunities with the support and guidance of a teacher, and learning alone in isolation. Students felt strongly that learning alone (rather than learning independently) was not effective, supporting Benson's (2011, p. 91) sentiment that learner autonomy does not mean leaving a student on their own. It is my belief that this distinction between independent work and working alone may not have been clear to student survey participants, and may therefore account for the difference in results between student questionnaire respondents, and student interviewees.

In addition to independent learning, my results also support the notion of learning in conjunction with others – both peers and the teacher. Students expressed a desire for a balance of learning opportunities – individual work, group work, working with the teacher or under their guidance, collaborating to solve problems with peers, and using resources independently at home. Teachers overwhelmingly saw co-operative learning and collaboration as a very positive ability which would benefit a learner's EFL studies, with a giant 93% of teacher questionnaire respondents perceiving co-operative learning as highly desirable. In this aspect, my teacher results are far more positive than those of Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) and Shahsavari (2014).

Overall teachers and students involved in both the survey and interview stages of this study reinforced the notion of interdependent learning; a complex but effective interplay between learner, teacher, materials, environment and peers was seen as the most effective and desirable means through which to learn EFL, supporting the theoretical frame proposed for this research in chapter 2 (Boud, 1988; Freyok, 2013; Higgs, 1988; Little, 2007).

6.2.4 The gaps

While not always apparent in the analysis of one set of data, it has become evident in my analysis of both the quantitative and qualitative data that there is a clear 'gap' between what teachers and students may desire in principle, and they feel is realistically achievable (the 'desirability/feasibility gap'). Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) and Shahsavari (2014) (whose questionnaire instrument I have adopted and adapted for this research) similarly identified a difference in trends when comparing
responses to desirability and feasibility for a variety of student decisions and abilities. In the case of EFL teachers, it emerged during the interviews that while teachers felt student decision-making and greater involvement in course decisions was desirable (as is corroborated in the questionnaire data), that in reality teachers felt these decisions would be difficult to accommodate, opting instead for a 'controlled' degree of autonomous decision-making. It appears teachers are willing to empower their EFL students, adopting elements of Benson's political perspective (see: Benson, 2003, pp. 3-4; Benson, 2011, p. 112; Benson, 2013b, p. 24; Little, 2009, p. 223; Littlewood, 1999, p. 71), but only to a certain degree.

Student interviewees presented a very different view of student decision-making than the questionnaire results. The student interviewees generally felt that course decisions ought to be made by the teacher, supporting a more traditional, teacher-led view of classroom practices as identified by Little (1995, p. 85), in contrast to the results from the online survey (forming therefore, one of several 'survey/interview gaps'). According to this more traditional view, the teacher is perceived as the individual responsible for organising and deciding, working against learner autonomy. In contrast, teachers felt student involvement in decisions would help them to feel more involved and accountable for their studies, supporting the questionnaire's findings.

When reviewing and analysing the data concerning potential student abilities, a much bigger and more pronounced gap becomes apparent – that teachers find the examples far more desirable than the student sample group. This evidence supports the trend similarly identified by Borg & Al-Busaidi (2012) with EFL teachers in Oman. Both sets of data from teachers; quantitative and qualitative; support Holec's notion of autonomy as a capacity, as well as supporting the notion of more individualised, subjective knowledge creation (Holec, 1981, pp. 25-26). The teacher interviewees located the term 'autonomy' quite clearly with several of the abilities presented in the questionnaire, while students however offered a much less clear result. Student respondents to the survey offered far less clear opinions, with several interviewees explaining and contextualising these results through their regard of the teacher as a 'knowledge expert' responsible for transmitting and organising the correct knowledge, rather than creating opportunities for the students to create their own understandings.

6.2.5 Limitations to autonomy

Despite the generally positive interpretations and perceptions of autonomous learning in this study, teacher interviewees were quick to provide examples of limitations to autonomous learning, including institutional pressures, coursebook restrictions and reticent learners themselves. My
findings compliment those of Shahsavari’s (2014) study, in which teachers also identified several limitations to autonomy. In both studies, learner related factors have been most cited by EFL teachers as impeding effective autonomous learning. In addition, my teacher interviewees highlighted the pressures of time; corroborating Little’s (1996) suggestion that autonomy can take more time (p. 85), which is often challenging when you have specific L2 content objectives to cover; and the additional pressures of operating a successful business in conjunction with providing effective learning opportunities, as previously highlighted by Brookfield (1995, pp. 15-16).

In many cases, teachers felt that while students of all ages and proficiencies could develop a capacity for autonomous learning, they also believed that older, more 'traditional' learners often struggled with autonomy, finding it frustrating and a stark contrast to their previous studies. This set of results confirms Boud’s (1988) assertion that prior educational experiences will affect a student's readiness to participate in autonomous learning opportunities (p. 24). One clear example of this concerns the ability to self-evaluate one's learning – none of the students interviewed had ever engaged in activities such as this before their EFL classes, yet with practice, had found them to be highly beneficial exercises. It is my contention that L2 teaching therefore, including the EFL sector, may well therefore be more embracing and accepting of autonomous learning than many public educational institutions in Spain. Shahsavari (2014) identified a similar gap between EFL and state educational systems, with her findings also suggesting that the Iranian education system promoted an active teacher/passive learner model. Teachers in her study suggested that greater student responsibility caused students to challenge the teacher's experience, in my results students mirrored this perception of traditional teaching roles, accounting for it as a 'trust' and 'confidence' in their chosen academy and the expertise of their teacher.

6.3 Significance of Results

I believe that this research project contributes to existing research and the EFL field in several principle ways. Firstly, despite the popularity of autonomy as a pedagogical practice, there is surprisingly little empirical research considering autonomy directly (Boud, 1988, p. 31), with individuals such as Benson (2011) calling out for additional studies to examine learner autonomy (2011). The practical implementation and realisation of language learner autonomy remains ambiguous (Little, 2007, p. 15), with even less known about what autonomy means to practitioners and learners who are not actively researching and theorising about its nature. My research is valuable in-so-much that it contributes an additional dimension to a field of limited existing
research, limited both geographically and thematically.

Secondly, the results of this study serve to validate the contemporary understandings of learner autonomy, which in turn supports the critical theory explored and commonly referred to by EFL researchers, pedagogues and practitioners. It is my contention that contemporary interpretations of learner autonomy are relevant and appropriate for the EFL context in Spain. Furthermore, the findings serve to support similar results from similar studies conducted in Iran, and Oman (amongst others), demonstrating that while undoubtedly there are vast cultural and educational differences between these countries, several beliefs and perceptions of learner autonomy and its impact are more universal than one might originally suppose.

Furthermore, it is believed that learner autonomy popularity may well be (at least in part) related to the exponential rise of computer technologies and the role of computers in language learning – what Schmenk (2005) calls the “technologization” of autonomy (pp. 107-112). The vast availability of online resources and learning opportunities radically extends, or possibly even replaces, classroom teaching practices (Benson, 2011, pp. 148-150), and if EFL practitioners wish to adapt with market demands an awareness of autonomous learning may not only benefit their careers, but become a prerequisite for professional survival. Benson (2013a) suggests L2 teachers may well need to revise their pedagogical understandings of out-of-classroom language learning to include digital literacies, effectively following, rather than controlling, autonomous learning trends (pp. 839-840). I believe that by exploring EFL learners' and teachers' perceptions of language learner autonomy, we may be able to identify how real this future is, and what students expect and wish of their teachers going forward.

Finally, these results help EFL practitioners in Spain to better locate their own opinions and ideas of autonomy against their peers, and perhaps more valuably; to garner some sense of how learners often share, but also frequently diverge from their perceptions of autonomy. Understanding our learners is key in helping us to develop classes and learning opportunities which will best serve them as students of English, and learners in general.

6.4 Limitations of Results

I feel it is important to acknowledge the fact that the participants involved in this study, while controlled in terms of sample population, are by no means representative of the populations in general. Teacher participants all expressed an interest in professional development, exchanging
ideas through professional networks and communities of practice, and the notion of autonomy itself. It would be unreasonable, in my opinion, to purport that all EFL teachers in Spain are similarly predisposed to such concepts and educational methodologies, and that rather, this sample group may represent a group of teachers with a 'higher-than-the-average' disposition towards learning autonomy and interest in contemporary pedagogical discussion.

Similarly, all student participants were volunteers, who expressed willingness to engage in the online questionnaire and some in the interview stage of the study. Given that both data collection methods were conducted entirely in English, it is my contention that these EFL student participants are more likely to seek out and complete extra learning opportunities – qualities found within autonomous learners. They are likely to be more autonomous in nature than students who received or were directed to the online questionnaire web-link and were not interested in responding. However, such students may well often the most colourful and enlightening views towards autonomy, since these students may offer greater familiarity and awareness of such learning methods.

One significant limitation to my research is realised in the small number of survey respondents. Ideally, with more time, one would strive to achieve at least 50 respondents in total, if not more, in order to open up the findings to generalisations. Generalisations about my results are not possible, since the quality of the data is unfortunately open to questioning. A larger sample group would strengthen the reliability of the results.

Finally, as with the existing studies referenced in chapter 3, my study is limited by the nature of its research – I sought to understand EFL teacher and student perceptions of autonomy, however, very little is known of the actual autonomous practices these individuals, and others like them, engage in and promote. In order to better appreciate and develop autonomous learning methodologies and strategies, research with significant periods of classroom observations are imperative.

6.5 Recommendations

In light of evidence suggesting that learner autonomy may be a far more gradual and adaptable concept than individuals may first believe, my principle recommendation for EFL practitioners and learners alike is to consider 'controlled' degrees of autonomy which may be more easily implemented into existing EFL classrooms and courses, with students who may or may not have experienced some degree of autonomy previously. When considering autonomy as a notion always
in change and in motion, EFL professionals can be more realistic and appropriate in their expectations and desires for autonomy.

In addition, I strongly recommend that EFL teachers and academies open up more honest dialogue between their students and themselves, in order to more explicitly and openly inform learners of how they are learning and why their teachers feel these methods and practices are most beneficial. I have found during the course of this research that EFL students are generally unaware of the more autonomous learning styles and activities their teachers appear to employ, and have responded very positively towards the methodology behind it when explained. Despite the learner centred limitations highlighted during the course of this study, I feel many students would appreciate and value communication concerning their learning opportunities and the considerations behind them. Therefore, teachers should begin to inform their students of the reasons behind certain activities and classroom choices, especially if they are initially encounter resistance.

6.6 Further Research

As discussed earlier, while I feel this research has been successful in depicting teacher and student interpretations, perceptions and beliefs about language learner autonomy, I do feel further research into the real practices and methods utilised is vital in further expanding and developing autonomous theory and knowledge. Studies involving wide-scale observations would, in my opinion, add a wealth of data and understanding to the field of autonomous learning, and would help to corroborate or disprove the gap between desirability and feasibility – theory and practice – as identified in mine, and other studies concerning perceptions rather than practical teaching.

Furthermore, while my study contributes data and subsequently, value, to the existing field of research concerning autonomous learning, I believe that additional studies in a broader variety of cultural context; including comparative studies between adults, teenagers and children; would also yield interesting results with which to compare existing knowledge. I would especially suggest to future researchers that the perceived difference in acceptance of autonomous learning styles between younger and older adults may prove an interesting area to explore and develop. Certainly, the more research carried out the more pedagogues, practitioners and business owners can best appreciate, understand and maximise effective use of autonomous learning.
APPENDICES:

Appendix A: Copy of survey questions (including information page & consent)

Learner Autonomy Questionnaire

This questionnaire is part of a study about learner autonomy in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) carried out by Vicky Anderson, for her Master’s thesis in Adult Learning at Linköping University.

The objective of this study is to discover what teachers and learners in Spain consider autonomy to be, and to consider ways to improve and develop autonomy in the future. Your participation is voluntary, not obligatory. Your answers are very important to us, and there are no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answers. We interested in your opinions and ideas.

This questionnaire is for adults who live in Spain and are:
- a) studying English as a foreign language in an academy or with a private teacher
- b) EFL teachers

It should take about 15 minutes to complete. Questionnaires completed before 30/04/2015 have the opportunity to win a 20€ gift voucher (cheque de regalo) for amazon.es!

If you have any questions/doubts, or do not understand something, please contact Vicky Anderson at vlanderson@live.co.uk.

Thank you so much!

Please read and check:
- I have read this information and understand the reason for this study.
- I know who to contact with questions about this study.
- I understand that my answers will be anonymous and confidential.
- I am participating in this study as a volunteer.
- I understand that my answers may be cited in publications, reports, web pages, etc, but my name will not be used.

*Required

1. Name: *

2. Surname(s): *

3. 20€ amazon voucher
   To enter this prize competition, please write your email address:
4. I am an... *
   *Mark only one oval.
   ○ EFL teacher    Skip to question 5.
   ○ EFL student    Skip to question 45.

Teachers: Can I participate?

5. Are you EFL teacher currently working with adults? *
   *Mark only one oval.
   ○ Yes
   ○ No    Stop filling out this form.

Teachers: Can I participate?

6. Do you work in Spain? *
   *Mark only one oval.
   ○ Yes
   ○ No    Stop filling out this form.

Teachers: Can I participate?

7. Are you currently working in the private sector (i.e. not state schools or universities)? *
   Please note: this does not have to be full-time work, it may be additional private hours to 'top-up' public sector teaching.
   *Mark only one oval.
   ○ Yes
   ○ No    Stop filling out this form.

Teachers Section 1: Learner Autonomy

Please give your opinion about the statements below by ticking ONE answer for each. The statements are not just about your current job and in answering you should try to consider your experience as a language teacher more generally.

8. Statement *
   *Mark only one oval per row.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Independent study is an activity which develops learner autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities to complete tasks alone</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
4. Autonomy means that learners make choices about how they learn.
5. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.
6. Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.
7. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.
8. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.
9. It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.
10. It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and adults.
11. Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.
12. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.
13. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.
14. Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centred classrooms.
15. Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.
16. Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.
17. Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.
18. Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.
19. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.
20. Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.
21. Co-operative group work activities support the.
development of learner autonomy
22. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials
23. Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy
24. Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy
25. Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy
26. Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy
27. The ability to monitor one’s learning is central to learner autonomy
28. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated
29. Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner
30. To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning

Teachers Section 2: Desirability and Feasibility of Learner Autonomy

Learners are involved in decisions about...

This group of statements gives examples of decisions LEARNERS might be involved in.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:

a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. ideally) you think it is

b) say how FEASIBLE (i.e. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.
9. The objectives of a course *

**DESIRABILITY**
Mark only one oval.

- Undesirable
- Slightly undesirable
- Quite desirable
- Very desirable

10. The objectives of a course *

**FEASIBILITY**
Mark only one oval.

- Unfeasible
- Slightly feasible
- Quite feasible
- Very feasible

**Learners are involved in decisions about...**
This group of statements gives examples of decisions LEARNERS might be involved in.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:

a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. ideally) you think it is
b) say how FEASIBLE (ie. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

11. The materials used *

**DESIRABILITY**
Mark only one oval.

- Undesirable
- Slightly undesirable
- Quite desirable
- Very desirable

12. The materials used *

**FEASIBILITY**
Mark only one oval.

- Unfeasible
- Slightly feasible
- Quite feasible
- Very feasible

**Learners are involved in decisions about...**
This group of statements gives examples of decisions LEARNERS might be involved in.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:

a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. ideally) you think it is
b) say how FEASIBLE (ie. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU
CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

13. The types of tasks and activities they do *

**DESIRABILITY**
*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Undesirable
- [ ] Slightly undesirable
- [ ] Quite desirable
- [ ] Very desirable

14. The types of tasks and activities they do *

**FEASIBILITY**
*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Unfeasible
- [ ] Slightly feasible
- [ ] Quite feasible
- [ ] Very feasible

Learners are involved in decisions about...

This group of statements gives examples of decisions LEARNERS might be involved in.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:
a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. ideally) you think it is
b) say how FEASIBLE (i.e. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

15. The topics discussed *

**DESIRABILITY**
*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Undesirable
- [ ] Slightly undesirable
- [ ] Quite desirable
- [ ] Very desirable

16. The topics discussed *

**FEASIBILITY**
*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Unfeasible
- [ ] Slightly feasible
- [ ] Quite feasible
- [ ] Very feasible

Learners are involved in decisions about...

This group of statements gives examples of decisions LEARNERS might be involved in.
For each statement there are two tasks to complete:
a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. ideally) you think it is
b) say how FEASIBLE (ie. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

17. How learning is evaluated *

DESIRABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Undesirable
☐ Slightly undesirable
☐ Quite desirable
☐ Very desirable

18. How learning is evaluated *

FEASIBILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Unfeasible
☐ Slightly feasible
☐ Quite feasible
☐ Very feasible

Learners are involved in decisions about...
This group of statements gives examples of decisions LEARNERS might be involved in.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:
a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. ideally) you think it is
b) say how FEASIBLE (ie. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

19. The teaching methods used *

DESIRABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Undesirable
☐ Slightly undesirable
☐ Quite desirable
☐ Very desirable
20. The teaching methods used *

FEASIBILITY
Mark only one oval.
- Unfeasible
- Slightly feasible
- Quite feasible
- Very feasible

Learners are involved in decisions about...
This group of statements gives examples of decisions LEARNERS might be involved in.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:

a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. ideally) you think it is
b) say how FEASIBLE (i.e. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

21. Classroom management *

DESIRABILITY
Mark only one oval.
- Undesirable
- Slightly undesirable
- Quite desirable
- Very desirable

FEASIBILITY
Mark only one oval.
- Unfeasible
- Slightly feasible
- Quite feasible
- Very feasible

22. Classroom management *

TEACHERS SECTION 2: Desirability and Feasibility of Learner Autonomy

Learners have the ability to...

The next group of statements gives examples of ABILITIES learners might have.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:

a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. ideally) you think it is
b) say how FEASIBLE (i.e. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH
You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

**Learners have the ability to...**
This group of statements gives examples of ABILITIES learners might have.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:

a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. ideally) you think it is

b) say how FEASIBLE (ie. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

23. **Identify their own needs** *

**DESRABILITY**

*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Undesirable
- [ ] Slightly undesirable
- [ ] Quite desirable
- [ ] Very desirable

24. **Identify their own needs** *

**FEASIBILITY**

*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Unfeasible
- [ ] Slightly feasible
- [ ] Quite feasible
- [ ] Very feasible

**Learners have the ability to...**

This group of statements gives examples of ABILITIES learners might have.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:

a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. ideally) you think it is

b) say how FEASIBLE (ie. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

25. **Identify their own strengths/weaknesses** *

**DESRABILITY**

*Mark only one oval.*

- [ ] Undesirable
- [ ] Slightly undesirable
- [ ] Quite desirable
- [ ] Very desirable
26. Identify their own strengths/weaknesses *

FEASIBILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Unfeasible
☐ Slightly feasible
☐ Quite feasible
☐ Very feasible

Learners have the ability to...
This group of statements gives examples of ABILITIES learners might have.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:
 a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. ideally) you think it is
 b) say how FEASIBLE (i.e. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

27. Monitor their progress *

DESIRABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Undesirable
☐ Slightly undesirable
☐ Quite desirable
☐ Very desirable

28. Monitor their progress *

FEASIBILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Unfeasible
☐ Slightly feasible
☐ Quite feasible
☐ Very feasible

Learners have the ability to...
This group of statements gives examples of ABILITIES learners might have.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:
 a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. ideally) you think it is
 b) say how FEASIBLE (i.e. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.
29. Evaluate their own learning *

DESIRABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Undesirable
☐ Slightly undesirable
☐ Quite desirable
☐ Very desirable

30. Evaluate their own learning *

FEASIBILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Unfeasible
☐ Slightly feasible
☐ Quite feasible
☐ Very feasible

Learners have the ability to...
This group of statements gives examples of ABILITIES learners might have.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:
a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. ideally) you think it is
b) say how FEASIBLE (i.e. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

31. Learn co-operatively *

DESIRABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Undesirable
☐ Slightly undesirable
☐ Quite desirable
☐ Very desirable

32. Learn co-operatively *

FEASIBILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Unfeasible
☐ Slightly feasible
☐ Quite feasible
☐ Very feasible

Learners have the ability to...
This group of statements gives examples of ABILITIES learners might have.

For each statement there are two tasks to complete:
a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. ideally) you think it is
b) say how FEASIBLE (i.e. realistically do-able) you think it is for ADULT LEARNERS YOU
CURRENTLY TEACH

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for feasibility.

33. Learn Independently *
   DESIRABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   - Undesirable
   - Slightly undesirable
   - Quite desirable
   - Very desirable

34. Learn Independently *
   FEASIBILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   - Unfeasible
   - Slightly feasible
   - Quite feasible
   - Very feasible

Teachers Section 3: Your Learners and Your Teaching
To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

35. In general, the students I teach English most often to have a fair degree of learner autonomy.*
   Mark only one oval.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Unsure
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

36. Please comment on why you feel this way:
37. In general, in teaching English I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy. *

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly disagree
- Disagree
- Unsure
- Agree
- Strongly agree

38. Please comment. You may want to explain why and how you promote learner autonomy, if you do, or explain why developing autonomy is not something you focus on at work:

---

Teachers Section 4: About Yourself

Please tell us about your background.

39. Years of experience as an English language teacher: *

Mark only one oval.

- 0-4
- 5-9
- 10-14
- 15-19
- 20-24
- 25+

40. Years of experience as an English language teacher IN SPAIN: *

Mark only one oval.

- 0-4
- 5-9
- 10-14
- 15-19
- 20-24
- 25+
41. Highest qualification: *
   Mark only one oval.
   - Certificate
   - Diploma
   - Bachelor's
   - Master's
   - Doctorate
   - None

42. EFL qualifications (please tick all relevant): *
   Tick all that apply.
   - CELTA/Trinity Cert
   - DELTA/Trinity Dip
   - MA in TEFL/TESOL or Linguistics
   - None of the above

43. Nationality:

44. Gender: 
   Mark only one oval.
   - Male  Skip to question 84.
   - Female  Skip to question 84.

Skip to question 84.

Learners: Can I participate?

45. Are you over 18 years old? *
   Mark only one oval.
   - Yes
   - No  Stop filling out this form.

Learners: Can I participate?

46. Do you live in Spain? *
   Mark only one oval.
   - Yes
   - No  Stop filling out this form.

Learners: Can I participate?
47. Are you studying/learning English in classes at the moment? *

Mark only one oval.

☐ Yes

☐ No  Stop filling out this form.

Learners Section 1: Learner Autonomy

Students can make decisions about...

These sentences are examples of DECISIONS you might make in your English classes.

For every sentence there are two activities:

a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. do you want this?) you think it is

b) say how VIABLE (ie. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

48. Course objectives *

DESIRABILITY

Mark only one oval.

☐ Undesirable - I don't want it

☐ A little undesirable

☐ Quite desirable

☐ Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

49. Course objectives *

VIABILITY

Mark only one oval.

☐ Not viable - not practical

☐ A little unviable

☐ Quite viable

☐ Viable - I think we could do this easily

Students can make decisions about...

These sentences are examples of DECISIONS you might make in your English classes.

For every sentence there are two activities:

a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. do you want this?) you think it is

b) say how VIABLE (ie. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.
50. The materials we use, eg. books, listenings *
   DESIRABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   - Undesirable - I don’t want it
   - A little undesirable
   - Quite desirable
   - Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

51. The materials we use, eg. books, listenings *
   VIABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   - Not viable - not practical
   - A little unviable
   - Quite viable
   - Viable - I think we could do this easily

Students can make decisions about...
These sentences are examples of DECISIONS you might make in your English classes.

For every sentence there are two activities:
a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. do you want this?) you think it is
b) say how VIABLE (ie. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

52. The types of activities we do *
   DESIRABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   - Undesirable - I don’t want it
   - A little undesirable
   - Quite desirable
   - Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

53. The types of activities we do *
   VIABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   - Not viable - not practical
   - A little unviable
   - Quite viable
   - Viable - I think we could do this easily

Students can make decisions about...
These sentences are examples of DECISIONS you might make in your English classes.

For every sentence there are two activities:
a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. do you want this?) you think it is
b) say how VIABLE (ie. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes
You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

54. The themes/topics we study *
   DESIRABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   ☐ Undesirable - I don't want it
   ☐ A little undesirable
   ☐ Quite desirable
   ☐ Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

55. The themes/topics we study *
   VIABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   ☐ Not viable - not practical
   ☐ A little unviable
   ☐ Quite viable
   ☐ Viable - I think we could do this easily

Students can make decisions about...
These sentences are examples of DECISIONS you might make in your English classes.

For every sentence there are two activities:
a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. do you want this?) you think it is
b) say how VIABLE (i.e. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

56. How we evaluate our learning *
   DESIRABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   ☐ Undesirable - I don't want it
   ☐ A little undesirable
   ☐ Quite desirable
   ☐ Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

57. How we evaluate our learning *
   VIABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   ☐ Not viable - not practical
   ☐ A little unviable
   ☐ Quite viable
   ☐ Viable - I think we could do this easily

Students can make decisions about...
These sentences are examples of DECISIONS you might make in your English classes.

For every sentence there are two activities:
a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. do you want this?) you think it is

72
b) say how Viable (ie. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

58. How the teacher teaches us, eg. group work, writing tasks, lots of speaking, working in silence *

**DESIRABILITY**
*Mark only one oval.*

- Undesirable - I don't want it
- A little undesirable
- Quite desirable
- Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

59. How the teacher teaches us, eg. group work, writing tasks, lots of speaking, working in silence *

**FEASIBILITY**
*Mark only one oval.*

- Not viable - not practical
- A little unviable
- Quite viable
- Viable - I think we could do this easily

**Students can make decisions about...**

These sentences are examples of DECISIONS you might make in your English classes.

For every sentence there are two activities:

a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. do you want this?) you think it is

b) say how Viable (ie. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

60. Organising the class, eg. tables, controlling noisy people *

**DESIRABILITY**
*Mark only one oval.*

- Undesirable - I don't want it
- A little undesirable
- Quite desirable
- Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

61. Organising the class, eg. tables, controlling noisy people *

**VIABILITY**
*Mark only one oval.*

- Not viable - not practical
- A little unviable
- Quite viable
- Viable - I think we could do this easily

**Learners Section 1: Learner Autonomy**
Students can...

This group of sentences are examples of ABILITIES students might have (= things you CAN do in your English classes).

For every sentence there are two activities:

a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. do you want this?) you think it is

b) say how VIABLE (i.e. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

Students can...

This group of sentences are examples of abilities students might have (= things you CAN do in your English classes).

For every sentence there are two activities:

a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. do you want this?) you think it is

b) say how VIABLE (i.e. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

62. Say what you need to study *

DESRIRABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Undesirable - I don't want it
☐ A little undesirable
☐ Quite desirable
☐ Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

63. Say what you need to study *

VIABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Not viable - not practical
☐ A little unviable
☐ Quite viable
☐ Viable - I think we could do this easily

Students can...

This group of sentences are examples of abilities students might have (= things you CAN do in your English classes).

For every sentence there are two activities:

a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. do you want this?) you think it is

b) say how VIABLE (i.e. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.
64. **Understand what you’re good/bad at**
   
   **DESIRABILITY**  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   
   - Undesirable - I don’t want it  
   - A little undesirable  
   - Quite desirable  
   - Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

65. **Understand what you’re good/bad at**
   
   **VIABILITY**  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   
   - Not viable - not practical  
   - A little unviable  
   - Quite viable  
   - Viable - I think we could do this easily

---

**Students can...**

This group of sentences are examples of abilities students might have (= things you CAN do in your English classes).

For every sentence there are two activities:

a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. do you want this?) you think it is  

b) say how VIABLE (i.e. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

66. **Monitor changes in your English level**
   
   **DESIRABILITY**  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   
   - Undesirable - I don’t want it  
   - A little undesirable  
   - Quite desirable  
   - Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

67. **Monitor changes in your English level**
   
   **VIABILITY**  
   *Mark only one oval.*  
   
   - Not viable - not practical  
   - A little unviable  
   - Quite viable  
   - Viable - I think we could do this easily

---

**Students can...**

This group of sentences are examples of abilities students might have (= things you CAN do in your English classes).

For every sentence there are two activities:

a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. do you want this?) you think it is
b) say how VIABLE (ie. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

68. Evaluate your level *

DESIRABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Undesirable - I don't want it
☐ A little undesirable
☐ Quite desirable
☐ Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

69. Evaluate your level *

VIABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Not viable - not practical
☐ A little unviable
☐ Quite viable
☐ Viable - I think we could do this easily

Students can...

This group of sentences are examples of abilities students might have (= things you CAN do in your English classes).

For every sentence there are two activities:
a) say how DESIRABLE (ie. do you want this?) you think it is
b) say how VIABLE (ie. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

70. Study with other people *

DESIRABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Undesirable - I don't want it
☐ A little undesirable
☐ Quite desirable
☐ Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

71. Study with other people *

VIABILITY
Mark only one oval.

☐ Not viable - not practical
☐ A little unviable
☐ Quite viable
☐ Viable - I think we could do this easily

Students can...

This group of sentences are examples of abilities students might have (= things you CAN do
in your English classes).

For every sentence there are two activities:
   a) say how DESIRABLE (i.e. do you want this?) you think it is
   b) say how VIABLE (i.e. practical) you think it is for you and your English classes

You should select one answer for desirability, and one answer for viability.

72. Study independently *

   DESIRABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   〇 Undesirable - I don't want it
   〇 A little undesirable
   〇 Quite desirable
   〇 Desirable - I want to make decisions about this!

73. Study independently *

   VIABILITY
   Mark only one oval.
   〇 Not viable - not practical
   〇 A little unviable
   〇 Quite viable
   〇 Viable - I think we could do this easily

Learners Section 2: Your English Classes
To what extent do you agree with these sentences?

74. I think I am an autonomous student. *

   Mark only one oval.
   〇 Strongly disagree
   〇 Disagree
   〇 Don't know
   〇 Agree
   〇 Strongly agree

75. I think autonomous students will learn English better. *

   Mark only one oval.
   〇 Strongly disagree
   〇 Disagree
   〇 Don't know
   〇 Agree
   〇 Strongly agree
76. Why do you think this? Please comment:
   Note: you can write in Spanish!

77. In general, I think my English teacher helps me to be more autonomous. *
   *Mark only one oval.
   - Strongly disagree
   - Disagree
   - Don't know
   - Agree
   - Strongly agree

78. Examples:
   Note: you can write in Spanish!

Learners Section 3: About Yourself
Please tell us about your background.

79. Number of years studying English (NOT in primary school): *
   *Mark only one oval.
   - 0-4
   - 5-9
   - 10-14
   - 15-19
   - 20-24
   - 25+
80. **Level of English:** * 
Which level are you studying at the moment? 
Mark only one oval.
- Beginner/basic (A1-A2)
- Intermediate (B1)
- Upper-Intermediate (B2)
- Advanced (C1)
- Proficient (C2)

81. **Why are you studying English?** * 
Mark only one oval.
- For my university studies
- For my job
- To find a job
- Because I want to pass an English exam
- To maintain my level
- For fun
- Other: __________________________________________

82. **Nationality:** *

83. **Gender:** *
Mark only one oval.
- Male
- Female

**Further Participation**
In the next part of this study, we would like to talk to people face-to-face about your opinions of autonomy. This would last about 30 minutes.

Participants have the opportunity to win another 20€ gift voucher (cheque de regalo) for [amazon.es](https://www.amazon.es).

84. **Are you interested in the face-to-face study?** * 
Note: only available for people in\around HUELVA, Andalucía. 
Mark only one oval.
- Yes
- No

85. **If you answered YES, please write your name:**
86. **And email address:**

87. **And/or mobile telephone number:**

88. **And location:**

powered by

[Google Forms]
Appendix B: Interview consent form

Research Project - Language Learner Autonomy

Thank you very much for agreeing to participate in this study. This Information Sheet explains what the study is about and how we would like you to participate.

The objective of this study is to discover what teachers and learners in Spain consider autonomy to be, and to consider ways to improve and develop autonomy in the future.

The researcher Vicky Anderson, from Linköping University, would like to interview you. The interview will be audio recorded and will last approximately 15-30 minutes.

Your participation is voluntary, not obligatory. Your answers are very important to us, and there are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. We interested in your opinions and ideas.

If you have any questions/doubts, or do not understand something, please contact Vicky Anderson at vlanderson@live.co.uk.

Thank you.

Please read and check:

- I have read this information and understand the reason for this study.
- I know who to contact with questions about this study.
- I understand that my participation involves being interviewed and audio recorded.
- I have had time to consider participation and agree to take part in this study voluntarily.
- I understand that my answers will be anonymous and confidential.
- I understand that my answers may be cited in publications, reports, web pages, etc, but my name will not be used.
- I give copyright of any research materials to Vicky Anderson.
- I can cancel my participation in this study at any time.

Name of Participant: ____________________________________________ Date: ______________

Researcher Signature: ____________________________________________ Date: ______________
BIBLIOGRAPHY:


