In the Name of God

The Beneficent, The Merciful

English Language Department

M.Sc. Thesis in Language Teaching

Exploring the Techniques EFL Teachers Use in Fostering Learner Autonomy

By: Hossein Mehrashian

Supervisor:

Dr. Seyyed Ali Ostovar-Namaghi

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to my family especially my parents who support me both mentally and financially and also my professor Dr. Ostovar for his great help during the process of my thesis.

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مالکیت نتایج و حق نشر

- کلیه حقوق معنوی این اثر و محصولات آن (مقالات مستخرج ، کتاب ، برنامه های رایانه ای ، نرم افزار ها و تجهیزات ساخته شده است) متعلق به دانشگاه شاهرود می باشد . این مطلب باید به نحو مقتضی در تولیدات علمی مربوطه ذکر شود .
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Abstract

The difficulty of learning a second/foreign language and also the shortage of time as well as the increase in language learning costs leads us towards discovering the effective techniques of fostering learner autonomy. Although some techniques have been frequently explored by previous studies, none of them was conducted empirically through the voice of language teachers in Iran. The current study aims at exploring teachers' techniques and methods on fostering learner autonomy. By grounded theory, the researcher theoretically sampled concepts through interviewing at least 16 teachers who taught English either in public or private language schools or just in private schools. The interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed by applying open coding, selective coding, and axial coding. In a cyclical process of data collection and analysis, the researchers found the effectiveness of learner autonomy techniques presented by the teachers in order to lead learners towards autonomous learning in the class and out of it. Some of the techniques are new in the body of the knowledge and the results are applicable to the educational system, both public and private language schools, EFL learners, and EFL teachers in Iran.

Keywords: Lerner autonomy, fostering autonomy, autonomy techniques, teacher strategies on fostering autonomy

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CHAPTER

ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1.Overview

Early interest in autonomy in language education was in part a response to the ideals and expectations aroused by the political turmoil in Europe in the late 1960s (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). They presented the factors that contributed to the search for autonomy within the field of language education which main ones were :a reaction against behaviorism in psychology, education, and linguistics; the emergence of autonomy as a desirable educational ideal; technological developments contributing to the spread of autonomy and self-access; flexible learning programs to tailor different learning needs of adult learners; and the increase in student population, encouraging the development of new educational structures, such as counseling and resource centers. More specifically, Benson (2001) holds the view that the concept of autonomy entered the field of foreign language education in 1971 through the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project. The initial aim of the Project was to provide adult learners with opportunities for lifelong learning.

Learner autonomy as a new emergent concept in the field of language learning had a great impact on both teachers and learners to have a beneficial kind of teaching and learning in the classroom and out of it. It also helps them to manage their own time and costs because any moment of time is precious today. Similarly, everyone desires to decrease the costs of his learning. Besides, the teachers incline to teach effectively in the classroom and waste less time for their teaching. Generally, the definition of autonomy is broad and it ranges from taking responsibility for one's own learning to having total control of learning oneself (Benson, 2001; Benson & Voller, 1997b; Cotterall & Crabbe, 1999; Dam, 1995; Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1980; Little, 1991a; Wenden, 1987). As the definition indicates, autonomous learners are more responsible for their learning and it eases and facilitates the work of the teacher in and out of the classroom. Therefore, Learner autonomy reduces the time and costs of learning for those who are busy or those who want to learn in a short period of time; furthermore, it guarantees the effectivity of learning by increasing the motivation of learners.

Today, Learners can improve their own learning due to development in the field of technology. Learner autonomy may be linked to current language learning outside the classroom with the advancement of technology and online networking (Benson, 2011; Benson & Chan, 2010). The demand for language education for tourism, business, and

migration, together with technological advancement (Benson, 2007, 2011; Gremmo & Riley, 1995), has given rise to the need for flexible modes of learning, e.g. the use of self-access multi-media centers, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), distance learning via the Internet, and social, interactive forms of learning through Web 2.0 technology (Benson, 2007, 2011; Hafner & Miller, 2011; Lafford, 2009; McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). So, learners can benefit from electronic devices (personal computers (PCs), laptops, tablets, smartphones, etc.) to run language learning apps, to watch foreign language movies and series, and to download and listen to podcasts and radio programs, or they can use online Networking applications and websites (Bussu, what's app, telegram, duo lingo, etc.) for online communication such as video and voice call with a native speaker or a non-native partner. The teacher's role is significant; he should instruct learners how to use these technologies-based sources properly. They also can suggest learners the best sources of learning online. As a result, self-accessibility, ease of use, low-cost availability, the authenticity of learning material are some useful advantages of using technology-based sources of language learning.

Actually, no one wants to spend a big part of his time and money to learn a second language; therefore, it is necessary for them to look for different techniques and methods in order to be autonomous learners and to take the responsibility of their own learning with or without a teacher in or out of the classroom setting. Thus, identifying and applying practical techniques of fostering learner autonomy is essential for those learners who tend to be autonomous, motivated, and up-to-date. One of the best ways of identifying these techniques is following those EFL Teachers who are most experienced and knowledgeable in the field of autonomy. Those who truly believe in learner autonomy and apply the best and effective techniques in their learning process both as a teacher or a learner. It's worth mentioning that specific techniques of fostering autonomy can be attributed to specific language skills. Thus, the study tries to present the best and practical techniques of fostering learner autonomy for both teachers and learners.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

In order to learn effectively, the learners should be motivated and autonomous in their learning process. They also should be free to choose their own learning materials in order to be motivated and dynamic in learning a foreign language especially English. But most learners in Iran are not ready to take the responsibility of their own learning due to some

limitations in the educational system and the culture. Moreover, the extended courses of foreign language learning in both public or private schools increase the costs of learning for both educational system and learners. In addition to costs, the time is another aspect of learning other languages. Some learners are not merely learners, they may have an occupation and it is hard for them to spend much of their time for learning another language in either private or public language schools. Therefore, in the study, we will present some effective techniques collected from most experienced teachers in the field of autonomy in order to enhance learner autonomy and subsequently learning process among the EFL learners. Our techniques will help learners to be autonomous and motivated in learning and they will not spend much of their time and money for language learning.

1.3. Significance of the Study

As we discussed earlier, the findings of the study will help learners to learn a foreign language effectively and easily by providing the opportunity of self-selecting learning materials and the techniques to the learners. Moreover, the educational system in Iran can use the findings to reduce the costs of long-term language teaching that is not much effective so far. It also can decrease, the allocated time for learning in educational settings and learners can take the responsibility of their own learning even after the class and without the help of any teacher. The teacher role can be considered as a counselor, facilitator or someone who teaches learners to be autonomous using self-access materials and practical techniques. The last reason for conducting this study is to change the traditional way of teaching and learning in Iran's educational system. The learners should rely on themselves instead of their teachers to be more motivated and less anxious.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

This study aims at exploring the effective techniques of fostering learner autonomy through cyclical interview of Iranian public and private schools' teachers. This study also aims at collecting the best techniques and strategies which foster the autonomy of learners in the scope of schools of Iran. As a result, the collected data help educational system, teachers and also learners to decrease the time and costs of teaching and learning and also to increase the effectiveness of learning a foreign language. Moreover, it can help them to take the responsibility of their own learning even after finishing their language course

in the school. Since the study is qualitative, it does not have any hypothesis. More specifically, the study will try to answer the following question:

-Which techniques do teachers use in their classroom to foster learner autonomy?

1.5. Limitations of the Study

Although the research has reached its aims, there were some unavoidable limitations. First, finding the teachers who really believed in autonomy in or out of the classroom was difficult. However, most teachers of the public schools were experienced in language teaching, but only a few of them were experienced in the field of learner autonomy. In addition, since there is no room for technology in most Iranian public schools, some teachers were not expert in terms of using technology in the classroom to foster autonomy. Second, cyclical interviewing could not be done because of some factors including time, culture, private schools' policy and etc. Some participants were too busy and they did not have much time to allocate for further interview sessions. In addition, since the majority of private schools' teachers are females, it was hard to appoint one or more interview session due to cultural issues. Moreover, because the finding of the study may affect the income of private schools, most of them were reluctant to cooperate. Finally, however, there may be great and most experienced teachers in the field of learner autonomy in other cities of Iran, due to lack of time and financial issues, we attempted to find the best teachers only in Sabzevar city.

1.6. Delimitations of the Study

To delimit some limitations of the study, we tried to interview with only the teachers of private language schools who were most experienced and knowledgeable in the field of learner autonomy. However, most teachers of the public schools did not truly believe in learner autonomy or were not much experienced in leading students towards autonomy, but some of them who teach in either public and private schools have been selected for participation. All participants are from Sabzevar private schools or those who teach in both public and private schools. We try to select only the accessible teachers for cyclical interviewing. Because of lack of time, the duration of data collection was within 6 months (cyclical interviewing and classroom observation).

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1. Introduction

This chapter is allotted to the concept of learner autonomy and its various aspects and values in language education and learning. Since some of the most influential factors that can promote learner autonomy are discussed. The rest of the chapter is allocated to reviewing some of the recent empirical studies on the impact of learner autonomy on language learning. What follows is a brief history of learner autonomy in language education.

2.2. Learner Autonomy in Language Education

2.2.1. The Origin of Learner Autonomy in Language Education

Individual autonomy was regarded as the foundation of human dignity by Kant (Hill, 1991). The increasing interest in autonomy as an educational goal can be traced to changes that have occurred in social sciences, psychology, philosophy, and political science (Finch, 2001). One of the changes in educational philosophy, for example, is the recognition that learning to learn is more important than knowledge (Pemberton, Li, Or, & Pierson, 1996).

Early interest in autonomy in language education was in part a response to ideals and expectations aroused by the political turmoil in Europe in the late 1960s. According to Gremmo and Riley (1995), the factors that contributed to the search for autonomy within the field of language education include: movements of minority rights; a reaction against behaviorism in psychology, education, and linguistics; the emergence of autonomy as a desirable educational ideal, with a direct influence on adult education in Europe; technological developments contributing to the spread of autonomy and self-access; rising internationalism since World War II; flexible learning programs to tailor different learning needs of adult learners, with varying degrees of learner-centeredness and self-direction; commercialization of much language provision, leading to learners as consumers making informed choices in the market; and the increase in student population, encouraging the development of new educational structures, such as counseling and resource centers.

More specifically, Benson (2001) holds the view that the concept of autonomy entered the field of foreign language education in 1971 through the Council of Europe's

Modem Languages Project. The initial aim of the Project was to provide adult learners with opportunities for lifelong learning. The *Centre de Recherches et d 'applications en Langues* (CRAPEL), led by Henri Holec at the University of Nancy, France, rapidly became a focal point for research and practice in the field. The approach developed at CRAPEL was the idea of self-directed learning to create responsible learners, utilizing self-access language learning centers (Benson & Voller, 1997).

It was Holec (1980) who brought the idea of autonomy in learning for improvements in social and ideological context. He included that industrially advanced Western countries are characterized by social progress in terms of an improvement in the 'quality of life' at the end of the 1960s. This project report to the Council of Europe thus played a key role in popularizing on autonomy in language learning. Their journal *Melanges Pedagogiques* has also greatly contributed to the dissemination of research on autonomy from the 1970s to the present day. In the 1990s, the idea of autonomy in language education spread to all parts of the world including Asian countries (Benson, 2001).

2.2.2. The Definition of Autonomy in Language Education

The definition of autonomy is broad and can range from taking responsibility for one's own learning to having total control of learning oneself (Benson, 2001; Benson & Voller, 1997; Cotterall & Crabbe, 1999; Dam, 1995; Dickinson, 1987; Holec, 1980; Little, 1991; Wenden, 1987). The literature usually refers the concept of autonomy to its Western origin. One of the first institutions committed to promoting autonomy in language learning was the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project, established by the University of Nancy, France, in the 1970s. The concept of autonomy was based on social actions to improve the quality of life" by developing one's ability "to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society (Holec, 1980, p. 2). Holec defines autonomy in language learning as "the capacity to take charge of one's own learning (ibid, p. 3)." Benson (2001) emphasizes that autonomy is an attribute of the learner's approach to language learning rather than a method of teaching or learning. An autonomous learner can participate in classroom learning as well as learn in a self-directed learning mode.

The views of the scholars from language education surveyed in this literature review are summarized by definitions of learner autonomy in Table 2.1, and by characteristics of autonomous learners in Table 2.2.

Table 2.1

Definitions of Autonomy in Language Education

Author(s)	Definition
Holec (1980, p.3)	"the ability to take charge of one's own learning."
Dickinson (1987, p. 11)	"This term describes the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with this learning and the implementation of those decisions."
Little (1991, p.4)	"a *capacity* – for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action. It presupposes, but also entails, that the learner will develop a particular kind of psychological relation to the process and content of his learning. The capacity for autonomy will be displayed both in the way the learner learns and in the way he or she transfers what has been learned to wider contexts."
Broady & Kenning (1996, p.12)	"Autonomy refers, therefore, to the management of one's own affairs as opposed to a situation of dependence in which one is subjected to decisions and control by some outside body."
Littlewood (1999, p. 73)	"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,… if we are teaching language for communication… The goal is to develop a capacity to communicate *autonomously*…"

Benson (2001, p. 47)	"capacity to take control of one's own learning… a multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times."

Table 2.2

Characteristics of an Autonomous Learner

Author(s)	Characteristics of autonomous learner
Dam et al. (1990, p. 102, cited in Gardner & Miller, 1999, p. 6)	"…an active participant in the social processes of classroom learning … an active interpreter of new information in terms of what she/he already and uniquely knows … [someone who] knows how to learn and can use this knowledge in any learning situation she/he may encounter at any stage in her/his life."
Little (1995, p. 175)	"…the autonomous learner tends to integrate whatever he or she learns in the formal context of the classroom with what he or she has already become as a result of developmental and experiential learning. … [T]he autonomous learner has the means to transcend the barriers between learning and living that have been a major preoccupation of educational psychology, educational theory, and curriculum development."
Littlewood (1996, p. 428)	"We can define an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions. This capacity depends on two main components: *ability* and *willingness.*"
Nunan (1997, p. 193)	"The fully autonomous learner, therefore, operates independently of classroom, teacher or textbook."
Gardner & Miller (1999, p. 6)	"…those who 'initiate the planning and implementation of their own learning program"

As pointed out by Benson (2007) and Little (2007), Holec's (1981) definition of learner autonomy, "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p. 3), has been widely cited in the literature and seen as fundamental and robust. From a learner-centered self-access approach the term "take charge of" indicates the learner as the agent of his/her learning. Autonomous learners are able to take responsibility for their learning (Benson, 2007) and autonomy can be evidenced by their independence and active involvement in their learning (Dickinson, 1995). Autonomous learners have the characteristic of being able to "transcend the barriers between learning and living" (Little, 1995, p. 175); in other words, transferring what has been learned in teacher-led educational structures to wider contexts (Little, 1991).

During the (European) Enlightenment period, personal autonomy was introduced as an educational goal. According to Kant (1933), this refers to one's ability to make rational decisions independently. This conceptualization exerted a great influence on education and later, language learning (Schmenk, 2005). Dearden (1972) defined autonomy in education as the ability to choose, decide, deliberate, reflect, plan, and judge one's learning. Further, autonomous learners should be able to free themselves from others' direction and their past or rigidities (Gibbs, 1979) and respond to and act on the environment (Boud, 1988). Through active participation, learners are more aware of their own learning systems and assume a greater control of their learning (Kelly, 1963). Conceptualizing autonomy beyond one's ability, Dewey (1944) contended it is a moral responsibility in a democratic society. Autonomous learners have to master knowledge beyond subject matter, solve problems on their own, develop their internal discipline, and deconstruct the role of teachers. Deschooling is the extreme approach proposed by Illich (1971), who argued that the best learning takes place in a casual, non-institutional setting. This controversial idea may be linked to current language learning outside the classroom with the advancement of technology and online networking (Benson, 2011; Benson & Chan, 2010). In sum, these scholars maintain that learners should be capable of and responsible for acting and make rational decisions individually.

In the 19th century, autonomy was linked to the idea of self-education detached from schools and teachers. It spread to language education through adult self-directed learning outside formal education (Benson, 2011). Candy (1991) classified self-directed learning into four aspects: personal autonomy (as a kind of personal attributes), self-

management of willingness and capabilities, learner control of institutional learning, and the pursuit of learning opportunities in the natural setting. However, this initial conceptualization of self-directed learning gradually decreased in popularity in the field of language education. Language learning now, especially English, usually takes place under a structured syllabus within institutions. According to Benson (2011), although self-directed learning and autonomy share similarities, when applied in adult education, self-directed learning refers to the broad area of one's ability to take part in non-institutional learning while autonomy refers to one aspect of self-learning as a personal attribute. In the field of language education, autonomy refers to the field of inquiry on its own as well as one's responsibility and capability to control one's learning. Self-directed learning refers to the mode of learning under which learners make learning decision on their own rather than others (Benson, 2011).

Autonomy in language learning has gained popularity since the 1970s, due to the rise of individualism and personal freedom (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). The earlier approach to autonomy, which focuses on learning in a self-access center and learning strategy training, was seen as an alternative to classroom learning. Nowadays, the demand for language education for tourism, business, and migration, together with technological advancement (Benson, 2007, 2011; Gremmo & Riley, 1995), has given rise to the need for flexible modes of learning, e.g. the use of self-access multi-media centres, computer-assisted language learning (CALL), distance learning via the Internet, and social, interactive forms of learning through Web 2.0 technology (Benson, 2007, 2011; Hafner & Miller, 2011; Lafford, 2009; McLoughlin & Lee, 2010). Since the 1990s, with the popularity of the communicative teaching approach, which emphasizes learner-centeredness and communicative efficiency (Gremmo & Riley, 1995; Hafner & Miller, 2011), learner autonomy has flourished in the field of second language learning and teaching (Little, 1991, 2007, 2008), with the learner cast as the key player in the process of learning. Thus, learner autonomy has evolved as a field on its own and is now viewed as a multi-dimensional construct.

2.3. Different Dimensions of Learner Autonomy

Autonomy has different aspects and each of them should be fostered in order to involve learners in autonomous kind of learning. Benson (2102) distinguished between three kinds of autonomy which are language learning autonomy, learning autonomy, and

personal autonomy. He stated that there is a mutual relationship between these three aspects of autonomy. He also believed that:

> Personal autonomy entails learner autonomy because the process of learning to be autonomous must itself involve autonomy. Learner autonomy entails language learner autonomy, because learning is largely a matter of language-mediated socialization and because personal autonomy itself entails self-expression and autonomy in language use. This is not to say, of course, that personal autonomy depends on knowledge of more than one language (Benson, 2012, p. 37).

Furthermore, Benson (2012) stated that teachers should foster personal autonomy in order to foster learning and also foreign language skills that are relevant to personal autonomy because there is a close relationship between the two concepts. For instance, Raz (1986) believes "Autonomy is not the natural state that individuals are in when left to exercise free choice. The idea of individual autonomy is actually a strong theory of the good – that the good life is one in which individuals are the authors of their own lives" (p. 83). However, Crabbe (1993) states that the ideological aspect of learner autonomy relies on the learners to select their exercises freely and they should not allow the choices made by social institutions. Therefore, a good autonomous foreign language learner should be self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware and he believed that they should use a foreign language as a means of self-expression (Benson, 2012).

According to Paiva and Braga (2008), the emergence of communicative language learning in the seventies and the emphasis on the cognitive process put autonomy at the center of FL teaching. As Benson (1997) has argued, currently applied linguistics discourses have at least three versions of learner autonomy that need to be distinguished: technical, psychological, and political. He describes them as follows.

1. In 'technical' versions of learner autonomy, the concept is defined simply as an act of learning a language outside the framework of an educational institution and without the intervention of a teacher.
2. 'Psychological' versions define autonomy as a capacity—constructor attitudes and abilities--which allows learners to take more responsibility for their own learning.

3. Lastly, 'political' versions of learner autonomy define the concept in terms of control over the processes and content of learning. The main issue for political approaches is how to achieve the structural conditions that will allow learners to control both their individual learning and the institutional context within which it takes place. (p.19)

In this regard, Littlewood's (1997) three-stage model also involved dimensions of language acquisition, learning approach, and personal development. In the context of language acquisition, autonomy involved an ability to operate independently with the language and use it to communicate personal meanings in real, unpredictable situations (autonomy as a communicator). In the context of classroom organization, it involved learners' ability to take responsibility for their own learning and to apply active, personally relevant strategies (autonomy as a learner). And in a broader context, it involved a higher-level goal of greater generalized autonomy as individuals (autonomy as a person) (p.81).

2.4. Approaches to the Development of Learner Autonomy

In this study, the approaches to fostering learner autonomy are scrutinized from various perspectives and then are discussed under further subcategories. Benson (2001) classifies six approaches to developing learner autonomy. These approaches are teacher-based, learner-based, resource-based, technology-based, curriculum-based, and classroom-based.

2.4.1. Teacher-Based Approaches

According to Nguyen and Gu (2013), the focus of teacher-based approaches is on teacher professional development and teacher education. These approaches have been developed on the assumption that changing teachers' beliefs about autonomy, building their commitment to autonomy, and encouraging practices that support learner autonomy will result in classroom changes in favor of learner autonomy.

2.4.1.1. The Role of the Teacher

Several researchers have acknowledged that teachers play an instrumental role in the development of autonomy within their learners (Breen & Mann, 1997; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Little, 1995; Smith & Vieira, 2009). Also, "the ever-increasing necessity for

teaching students how to become independent and autonomous learners […] changed the traditional ideas about language teachers' roles" (Yang, 1998, p. 128). What kind of role must teachers assume to be as effective as possible in this capacity? Little (1995), as well as Burkert and Schwienhorst (2008), argue that teachers must become autonomous themselves, in order to help their students to develop as independent and responsible learners. This can be achieved by understanding the curriculum as the teacher's own curriculum – a curriculum which is inevitably shaped by the teacher's personality, background knowledge, and experience. Al Asmari (2013) indicated that a teacher, as a facilitator, can promote learner autonomy through the curriculum by integrating the principles of autonomy into the learning goals, the learning process, tasks, learner strategies and reflection on learning. In the classroom, the students are encouraged to be interdependent and to work collaboratively. Being aware of the personal nature of the curriculum makes it possible to determine areas which provide room for learner autonomy. These will be areas which lend themselves to the negotiation of content, materials, and activities, which in turn will foster learner responsibility.

The point of negotiation leads to dialogical interaction (Freire, 1970) between the teacher and the students. This interaction of negotiating is an integral part of learner autonomy and thus part of the role of the teacher and learner. It requires a change of traditional learner and teacher roles. Ciekanski (2007) claimed that this change in roles also requires new terminology. She stated that "the educational relationship included in the term teacher is no longer adapted to the definition of the autonomous learning relationship" (p. 113). Given this claim, she prefers the term "adviser" in her writing. In one of her studies, she aimed to "determine the nature and the role played by the specific relationship established between adviser and learner in relation to the fostering of autonomous learning" (p. 113). The context in which the study was conducted was a language resource center where students could meet with advisers on a voluntary basis. In respect to the role of the adviser, she found that "advisers assume multiple pedagogical roles when supporting autonomous language learners, and they switch between these roles frequently" (p. 123). Ciekanski called the different roles postures. From the analysis of her data, she found that advisers frequently switched between the advising posture, tutoring posture, teaching posture, companion posture, and accompanying posture. The notion of the teacher role as being multi-faceted has been confirmed by Yang (1998), who

stated: “new roles for teachers include: helpers, facilitators, advisors, and guides” (p. 128). Yet another confirmation of this finding is provided by the work of Chiu (2008), who carried out a qualitative analysis of the content of teacher emails written over the course of an online EFL class. Chiu identified that the teacher was taking on different roles in the online conversation with the students. It was found that the teaching role diminished over the course of the class and that the counseling role, which was “essential” (p. 106) to the development of learner development, persisted in the communication. The change in the role of the teacher, from the traditional provider of knowledge to one of facilitator or as an advisor in the learning process, has also been treated by Akaranithi and Panlay (2007).

Tudor (1993) suggests that the main role of the teacher in the traditional modes of teaching is the supplier of knowledge. On the other hand, teachers promoting learner autonomy perform their role differently. Their role is more of a facilitator and counselor to help students to take the responsibility by setting their own goals, planning practice opportunities, or assessing their progress. It means that learner autonomy depends on teacher autonomy as both are fully involved in achieving the optimum effectiveness of language teaching and learning. Teachers guide the students to accept responsibility for their own learning, guide them to be reflectively engaged in planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning.

Al Asmari (2013) Teachers need to consider integrating students’ preferences into teaching to promote students’ learning and motivation and to help students appreciate social interaction through the use of technology in language learning. Many language teachers deploy technology to provide students with opportunities to continue learning outside the classroom because web-based learning allows learners to work at their own pace and to have the freedom to choose their own materials.

According to MacKenzie (2014), the teacher is also required to design teaching and learning activities that will critically engage students through a variety of tasks. In addition, the teacher must create ongoing opportunities for students to actively use and expand their language skills, practice higher order thinking skills where analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information are required. This, along with sharing their ideas with their peers in activities and tasks that challenge them to use language both

spontaneously and creatively, will assist students in transferring skills that they can utilize in the real world.

Over the past decade, teacher education for the development of learner autonomy has increasingly become a focus of interest (Dam, 2008; Vieira, 2007; Smith & Vieira, 2009; Chiu, 2008). This development in the research is a necessary next step because teachers who themselves have never learned to be autonomous learners will have a harder time to establish teaching principles that require their students to take responsibility for their own learning. Furthermore, in order to be effective as a language teacher in fostering autonomy in our learners, it is necessary to be able to empathize with them and to have a sense of how they must feel in their situation as autonomous learners. Given the increasing acceptance of learner autonomy as a desirable goal of language education, the question about particular competencies and conditions required for teachers to promote learner autonomy (Smith & Vieira, 2009, p. 45) thus becomes more pressing.

2.4.1.2. Teacher Education for Autonomy

The fact that learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are linked is widely acknowledged in the literature (see Kohonen, 2003; Lamb & Reinders, 2008; Sinclair, McGrath, & Lamb, 2000; Vieira, 2007; Vieira, 2009; Young, Hafner, & Fisher, 2007). McGrath (2000) defined teacher autonomy as self-directed professional action and freedom from control by others. An exemplary view of teacher education for autonomy is presented Little's (1995) paper, which he concluded with the words that "teacher education should be subject to the same processes of negotiation as are required for the promotion of learner autonomy in the language classroom" (p. 180). The aspect of negotiation has been taken up by Voller (1997). To the principle of negotiation, he added (1) the assumption that an autonomous approach requires a transfer of control to the learner, and (2) the need of teacher self-monitoring and reflection.

In fact, there are certain values that keep recurring in the literature and thus seem to represent a consensus among researchers as to what needs to happen in teacher education for autonomy. These values are a reflection, collaboration, and action research. An example of how the principles of reflection and action research can be implemented in a teacher education program was presented by Vieira (2009). She described the *Pedagogy for Autonomy* project, a Portuguese teacher education project established based

on the premise that "reflective teaching and learner autonomy are perhaps like the two sides of the same coin" (p. 151). The project had two goals. The first was to use a reflective approach to teacher education in order to prepare secondary language teachers for the implementation of a pedagogy for autonomy. The second was to use action research projects to encourage learner autonomy in EFL learning. The program extended over a period of three years and was broken up into three stages: preparing for innovation, preparing for action research, and doing action research (i.e., implementing innovation). At the first stage, the teachers attended a course which focused partly on "the critical analysis of information on autonomy as a pedagogical goal in EFL teaching/learning contexts" (p. 152). The purpose of the second stage was to guide the teachers in the development of action research projects. During the third stage, the teachers implemented their action research project in one of their classes. Vieira evaluated the *Pedagogy for Autonomy* project based on the research journals written by the teachers, project reports, and questionnaires. Overall, the results (even though the process of data analysis is not specifically described) showed that the effects on learner training towards autonomy and teacher training towards reflective practice are very encouraging. The students demonstrated a more effective use of learning strategies and a better understanding of what it means to learn a foreign language (p. 154). Also, the teachers agreed on the effectiveness of the collaborative action research projects. The importance of collaboration in teacher education has been highlighted also by Kennedy and Pinter (2007). Smith (2000) has confirmed the value of "collaborative reflection" on second language learning and pointed out its significant effects on his own teaching and teacher education work (p. 98). On the whole, the work that has been done points to the necessity of teacher autonomy in order to make progress towards a sustained pedagogy for learner autonomy. Key principles for teacher education thus seem to be collaboration and ongoing self-reflection, for example by means of action research. To some extent, these principles are already part of teacher education programs. Maybe all that is missing is a shared commitment to autonomy.

2.4.1.3. Learners' Perception of Teachers' Role

Based on literature review, Cotterall (1995) states that there are two main ideas about teacher roles in the process of language learning. The first one considers the teacher as a source of power and authority in the classroom, and the second one regards teacher

as facilitator of learning. She also believed that the learners' belief about the power and authority of teachers in the classroom prevent those teachers who want to transfer their responsibility to their learners. Kumaravadivelu (1991) surveyed on learners' expectation on teacher role and recognized that learners see the teacher as a source of power who should control everything in the classroom. This view will be an obstacle to autonomous learning.

Wenden (1995) claims that teachers should train learners in order to be autonomous in the classroom. Galloway and Labarca (1990) suggest that language teachers should prepare a framework for their learners and gradually lower the level of support as learner autonomy is fostered. To sum up, Cotterall (1995) stated that teachers should be considered as a counselor and facilitator of learning and autonomy in the classroom. Those learners who believe that teacher should control everything in the class, are not ready for gaining autonomy. On the other hand, the teacher should prepare the learners to be independent, raise their awareness about the learning process and shift the responsibility to them gradually.

Thus, if learners want to foster their autonomy, they should change their ideas about the roles of teacher and learners. Although, leaners should not take the responsibility of their own learning solely and also the teacher is responsible in the learning process. The teacher's role is to help and advise learners to get familiar with their new roles in the classroom (Ho & Crookall, 1995).

Furthermore, one way in which this can be done is for the teacher to create an environment in which responsibility is shared. While selected and structured by the teacher, such an environment can allow learners to exercise increasing responsibility through decision making that is either done independently of others or in a situation where they choose to be part of a group and, therefore, to be dependent upon it for their learning. (Ho & Crookall, 1995).

2.4.2. Learner-Based Approaches

Learner autonomy is defined as the students' ability to take control over their own learning. In relation to this, "learner-based approaches focus directly on the production of behavioral and psychological changes that will enable learners to take greater control over their learning" (Benson, 2001, p. 142). Sheerin (1997) distinguished two ways in

which this can be attempted: through learner training and learner development. While learner training is described as the teaching of a certain skill set, for example how to use a dictionary most effectively or how to develop techniques to learn vocabulary most effectively, the term learner development is used in reference to cognitive and affective skills that help learners to become more independent and self-directed. Importantly, Sheerin posits that "learner development is not something that teachers do to learners, although there may be ways the process can be encouraged and facilitated" (Sheerin, 1997, p. 60). Recently, the different approaches have come to be summarized under the term learner development (Wenden, 2002), which is generally defined as the process "to help learners learn how to learn" (Wenden, 2002, p. 34).

2.4.2.1. Leaner Development

As far as skills and competencies which should comprise learner development are concerned it is useful to look at some of the literature on successful language learners. One of the most influential works on this topic has been conducted by Rubin (1975). Rubin posited seven characteristics of good language learners: They (1) are willing and accurate guessers, (2) have a strong drive to communicate, (3) are rarely inhibited, (4) attend to form, (5) use as many opportunities as possible to practice their language skills, (6) monitor their own speech and the speech of others, and (7) attend to meaning (pp. 45-47). Looking at this list gives the impression that successful language learners simply do everything. In order to make these findings more applicable and useful in terms of autonomy the work of Gremmo and Riley (1995) is helpful. In response to research like the one carried out by Rubin, they stated that

> the aim of learner training is not to transform all learners into 'successful' language learners […], but rather to help learners to come to terms with their strengths and weaknesses, to learn a language efficiently in ways which are compatible with their personalities. (Gremmo & Riley, 1995, p. 158)

The awareness of one's own strengths and weaknesses leads to the realm of metacognition. Without explicitly mentioning metacognition, Rubin's (1975) sixth characteristic of successful language learning relates to this part of learning. He stated that "part of his [the successful language learner's] monitoring is a function of his active participation in the learning process" (p. 47). Monitoring can also be seen as self-

assessment, which is one of two parts of the metacognitive realm of language learning, next to self-management (Rivers, 2001). According to Victori and Lockhart (1995), metacognitive knowledge applied to second language learning "refers to the general assumptions that students hold about themselves as learners, about factors influencing language learning and about the nature of language learning and teaching" (p. 224). In their study, they focused learner training on metacognition and combined it with contact classes (traditionally instructed classes) and self-directed learning in resource centers. They found that this resulted in "some degree of autonomy" (Victori & Lockhart, 1995, p. 232) in 40 out of 41 cases and that the learners perceived an increased rate of progress.

Nevertheless, the importance of metacognition still does not answer the question which actual skills should be part of learner training. Ho and Crookall (1995) noted that five skills are considered key to self-directed or autonomous learning, namely (1) choosing instructional materials, (2) settings learning objectives and prioritizing them, (3) determining when and how long to work on each objective, (4) assessing progress and achievements, and finally (5) evaluating the learning program (p. 236). Any pedagogical approach aiming at fostering learner autonomy needs to allow learners to some extent to practice these skills. Obviously, there are many different ways of achieving this.

2.4.2.2. Pedagogical Application

One tool to aid learner development is the use of learning diaries or task sheets (Grima, 2000; Porto, 2007). These tools can be used to assist learners in learning to reflect on their learning process and find out what kind of activities work best for them. They are also easily integrated into work cycles, where they can be used at the end of a sequence to self-evaluate the effectiveness of the most recent work.

One example of a learner-based approach is Natri's (2007) report on the implementation of a self- and peer-evaluation system in a French class at a university in Finland. Natri's goal was to raise her "students' awareness as learners and their ability to evaluate their own language skills" (p. 109). The evaluation system consisted of different parts: First, at the beginning of the course, the students were asked to write a short history of themselves as language learners. In this history, they addressed questions like how long and where they had studied French. The second component was the students' self-evaluation of their linguistic skills in relation to the Common European Frame of

Reference (the European equivalent to the proficiency guidelines of the American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages). They were given a self-assessment grid which gave criteria according to which the students could determine their proficiency level in each linguistic skill (in this case, the skills were reading, listening, spoken interaction, spoken production, and writing). Also, at the beginning of the class, Natri explained to the students the desired linguistic proficiency in reference to the common proficiency guidelines.

This self-evaluation served the purpose of learner autonomy in different ways. It helped the students to become more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses (i.e., maybe they thought themselves to be strong in reading comprehension and weak in spoken interaction). The fact that the students were told which proficiency level was desired for the class, helped them to set realistic goals for themselves. As Natri (2007) points out, the students' self-evaluation also benefits the teacher in that it provides valuable feedback on the students' perceived strengths and weaknesses and their history as language learners. It would be relatively easy to include in their history as language learners (given that they have experience learning a second language) questions about their preferred types of activities and modes of language learning. This feedback could, in turn, be used for the further development of an ideas and activity bank that serves as a starting point for the work cycle. As a result of her self-evaluation system, Natri found that students generally rated their reading skills higher than their listening skills, although this might be due to factors specific to the Finish education system. She also reports that "from the beginning of the course and the first self-assessment, students pay more attention to their weaker skills and tend to devote more time to developing them" (Natri, 2007, p. 114). The ability to evaluate and self-direct one's own process of learning is confirmed by other studies as well (Porto, 2007; Rivers, 2001). While Rivers (2001) did not implement any instruments for learner development, he used survey data collected from experienced language learners to examine their metacognitive behaviors. The results indicated that experienced language learners have a high tendency toward learner autonomy, "based upon the learners' self-assessments of learner style, learning strategy preferences, and their progress in the language" (Rivers, 2001, p. 287). It has also been shown that teachers play a significant role in raising their students' awareness of the learning process (Ridley, 2003). Overall, this shows that learner-based approaches can well be integrated with classroom-based approaches to encourage learner autonomy.

2.4.3. Resource-Based Approaches

Resource-based approaches aim at offering language learners the freedom to independently interact with language and learning resources. One of the most widely used ways of implementing a resource-based approach is through self-access. Sheerin (1997) describes self-access as learning materials and organizational systems which are designed for direct access by learners. Alternatively, it has been defined as "a model of language learning in which learners work without direct teacher supervision, at their own pace, and often at times of their own choosing" (Little, 2000, p. 539). Self-access learning can be a supplementary part of a language class, or it can be a course in its own right. Ideally, the learners have the power to determine the way in which they use the resources (often organized in the form of a library of various language learning materials and media), as well as the when and where of their learning. Thus, the potential for autonomy in resource-based approaches is high. Furthermore, resource-based approaches lend themselves to extensive use of authentic language learning materials, for example when the instructor provides a resource bank that organizes authentic materials according to topic or language skills. There have been particularly strong claims for the autonomy potential of self-access learning. Gardner and Miller claim that "self-access is probably the most widely used and recognized term for an approach to encouraging autonomy" (as cited in Benson, 2001, p. 113).

Although there has been evidence that self-access is instrumental in promoting learner autonomy, the provision of self-access learning opportunities does not automatically lead to autonomous learners. This has been shown by Darasawang, Singhasiri, and Keyuravong (2007), who studied self-access learning at a Thai secondary school. They found that several factors were at work which obstructed the development of independence and empowerment of the students. The first factor is a focus on grades. The students were assigned tasks to be completed in the self-access learning center. Their final grade was determined based on evidence that they had completed the assigned tasks. This leads to the second factor, namely that the students were not developing their own sense of direction in learning, but were merely following the teachers' direction. This circumstance deprived the students to develop one of the key features of autonomy. The third factor was conflicting roles of the teacher. In this particular situation, the teachers served as the students' guides, facilitators, and counselors. As has been shown, these roles

are important for teachers to help their students to become autonomous. However, the teachers in this study also served as assessors, which, according to the authors, stifled the increase of self-direction (Darasawang et al., 2007, p. 176). The fourth factor identified as hindering the development of learner autonomy was the fact that the teachers did not see the self-access learning center as a means to help their students becoming autonomous in their learning. They saw it only as a room for an extension of class activities, where students could practice. The findings of Darasawang and others are a good illustration of the caveat stated by Sheerin (1997). She wrote that "it is the way teachers and learners *use* self-access facilities which determines whether independent learning takes place" (Sheerin, p. 54). To put these findings into perspective, it is important to remember that this study was carried out in the context of secondary education in Thailand; a rather specific context. However, many of the problems identified by the authors seem to be fairly universal and are thus warnings to other language educators who want to promote autonomy through self-access learning. Given that the present study will be carried out at an institution of higher education, some of the issues identified by Darasawang and others might be less of a problem. For example, referring to the fact that the students were mostly extrinsically motivated by grade pressure, they state that "because of the restrictions of the grade-oriented curriculum in the secondary school, making project work a requirement for students was the safest way for them" (Darasawang et al., 2007, p. 178). At a higher education institution, curriculum design is more flexible and will more likely allow reducing this factor by designing a grading system that will not interfere with the development of autonomy.

Sheerin (1997) has clearly stated what is necessary in order for self-access learning to effectively foster autonomy: First, it is necessary that learners are prepared for independent learning before they start working with self-access materials. Second, support structures need to be in place while they are working with self-access materials. Third, the materials provided in the self-access library should be geared towards learner independence instead of just being an extension of in-class activities which provide "teacher direction by remote control" (p. 59). The first factor is the need of metacognitive or learner training, which was discussed in the part on learner-based approaches above. The second and third factors fall within the realm of resource-based approaches.

2.4.3.1. Support Structures in Self-Access Learning

The need for support structures for self-access learning has also been described by Toogood and Pemberton (2007), who have designed self-access courses for EFL learners at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. The support structures used for their courses consist of student-created language learning plans, recurring entries in a learning diary, and meetings with peers and teachers. They also introduced certain structural elements to provide more support for their students: They introduced their students to the concepts of general and fundamental language skills. The general skills are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. According to Toogood and Pemberton, problems with the general skills are caused by a lack of knowledge in the fundamental skills, which are pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. By introducing this concept, students are given supportive guidance in respect to areas they should focus on in their learning. The authors also introduced a framework of language practice which recommended a sequence of focused, transfer, and general practice (see Toogood & Pemberton, p. 187). When they evaluated the support structures using questionnaires, interviews and recorded student-teacher consultations, Toogood and Pemberton received mostly positive feedback from their students. However, more reliable research on the efficiency of these support structures would have to be designed so that students have the opportunity to submit feedback anonymously, because the use of interviews might prompt students to give answers they feel their teachers desire to hear (i.e., positive feedback). Nonetheless, the structures implemented by Toogood and Pemberton are examples of how learners can be supported in self-access learning.

2.4.3.2. Materials in Self-Access Learning

According to Dickinson (as cited in Benson, 2001), three kinds of materials lend themselves to use in self-access learning: materials specifically designed for independent learning, commercially produced materials, and authentic materials. In order for learning materials to be effective in supporting independent learning, certain requirements have to be fulfilled. Reinders and Lewis (2006) conducted a study of existing quality guidelines for self-guided learning materials in general education as well as language learning. Based on their review, they constructed an evaluation checklist for self-access language learning materials. The applicability of their list was tested and validated in a later study, where staff working in a self-access center was asked to use the checklist to evaluate 25

resources (Reinders & Lewis, 2008). The criteria of the evaluation checklist are organized in five sections: selecting the resource, accessing the parts of the resource, the learning process, learning to learn, and other features. The criteria categorized in the section "selecting the resource" address the need for directors and staff at self-access centers to quickly sort the resource into a category, for example, a certain language proficiency level or in a certain position within a learning sequence. The section titled "accessing the parts of the resource" contains criteria that address the needs of staff and learners to quickly find relevant parts within the resource (for example through an index, a table of contents, or a glossary). The section titled "the learning process" includes criteria such as objectives, examples, and answer keys provided for tasks. The fourth section, "learning to learn", aims most directly at learner autonomy. It includes the criteria (1) notes on the learning process, and (2) shows how to set goals. Considering the fact that these features are very important in making learners more aware and independent of their own learning process, it is surprising that the section "learning to learn" is so short, compared to the rest of the evaluation checklist.

The criteria developed by Reinders and Lewis (2006) can be applied to all sorts of language learning material that is to be used as part of a self-access learning program. The checklist does not contain criteria aiming at the authenticity of learning material. Authentic language learning materials and texts are generally defined as "genuine samples of language in use not specifically produced for the purpose of language teaching" (Rüschoff, 2010, p. 125). The value of using authentic materials to promote learner autonomy has been emphasized by Little (1997), who claimed that authentic resources can help foster learner autonomy in two ways. The first is that "learners who from the beginning have been exposed to authentic texts rapidly develop confidence in the face of the target language" (Little, p. 231). These learners know that they are able to understand not only texts or activities that have been developed for language learners, but that they are actually able to understand the language that is used by the target culture to communicate. This leads to the second factor, namely that "authentic texts accommodate the two-way relation between language learning and language use" (Little, p. 231). Furthermore, authentic resources can be a motivational factor for students. It makes a big difference for students to know that the language they are interacting with has real significance to a wider community (i.e., the community of target language speakers) instead of just being produced for their use as language learners who are not yet able to

understand the "real version" of the target language. Also, it is important for students, who are often interested in the target culture at least as much as they are interested in learning the language, to know that their learning process brings them closer to the culture as it really is. To conclude, the benefits of authentic resources warrant that they play a central role in resource-based approaches to learner autonomy.

The literature on resource-based approaches reviewed in this section is by no means exhaustive, but, considering that the focus of this study is not primarily to foster learner autonomy through a resource-based approach, this section will be kept rather brief. It is also important to note that the effectiveness of resource-based approaches in developing autonomous learners has not been documented very well (Benson, 2001). It has rather been shown that the mere provision of self-access learning opportunities is not sufficient to help learners to be empowered and become more independent (Darasawang, Singhasiri, & Keyuravong, 2007; Sheerin, 1997).

2.4.4. Technology-Based Approaches

Technology-based approaches are similar to resource-based approaches in their focus on learning materials and learning content. However, as the name suggests, technology-based approaches emphasize the function of technology in the provision and access to learning material. These approaches further autonomy through the learners' independent use and interaction with technology. The potential for autonomy is given in that the way of using technology for learning purposes is always to a certain degree autonomous. After all, it is hardly imaginable that a teacher would direct his students in each click they do. Technology-based approaches overlap considerably with the field of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), which makes use of CD-ROMs and the internet for language learning by incorporating an interactive video program in self-access centers (Gardner & Garcia, 1996). E-tandem – learning a language through a partnership between a native speaker and a non-native speaker – is another way of making use of technology for enhancing LA (Brammerts, 2003). The two approaches to language teaching are not identical though, considering that not all forms of CALL explicitly aim at fostering autonomy. Gremmo and Riley (1995) raised this point as well when stating that "CALL applications . . . are at best a useful but not essential tool, at worst thoroughly counter-productive" (p. 160).

The possible benefits of a technology-based approach have been illustrated by Schwienhorst (2003). He tried to foster learner autonomy through the implementation of tandem learning. In tandem learning, two learners of complementary L1-L2 combinations are brought together and "will then learn from each other, alternating between the role of L2 learners and L1 expert" (Schwienhorst, 2003, p. 431). This learner-expert relationship, which is also at the center of Vygotsky's (1978) model of collaborative achievement, can be established in a face-to-face situation, but constellations where the two individuals converse through email, chat systems, and video- or audio-conferencing are also common. Of particular interest in respect to the development of learner autonomy is O'Rourke and Schwienhorst's (2003) examination of metalinguistic reflection by language learners who were interacting with a tandem partner via a multi-user domain (MOO). However, he found that learners will not automatically use the possibilities afforded them by the technology. Rather, "learners will only exploit these affordances for what they perceive as good and pressing reasons – such as reviewing and correcting their L2 utterances in order to save face" (O'Rourke & Schwienhorst, 2003, p. 56). These results show that the use of technology does not necessarily lead to the development of more autonomy, which is in part achieved through a higher degree of metalinguistic awareness.

Another example of a study that used technology to foster autonomy was written by Luke (2006), who conducted a qualitative study in a fourth-semester university Spanish course. It has to be noted, however, that Luke used computers and material on the internet to supplement his classroom instruction. The approach is thus a hybrid version of a technology- and classroom-based approach to learner autonomy. He designed his intermediate-level Spanish course according to principles of inquiry-based learning and created several opportunities for his students to take responsibility for their own learning – one of the key aspects of learner autonomy. As part of the inquiry-based learning, a large portion of class time was devoted to students' individual projects which they had chosen from a number of content options. Over the course of a project, the students worked through an inquiry cycle. These inquiry cycles consisted of seven phases: (1) exploring the chosen topic, (2) brainstorming questions to be explored, (3) investigating multiple perspectives about the topic, (4) researching and revising, (5) assessment of learning, (6) presentation of the learning, and (7) reflection on the learning process (p.

75). Obviously, the inquiry cycles included several key aspects of learner autonomy, for example, choice of content and activities, self-assessment, and reflection on one's own learning process.

2.4.5. Curriculum-Based Approaches

In curriculum-based approaches to learner autonomy, the idea underlying autonomy in language learning, namely that learners can develop the ability to exercise control over their learning, is extended from particular classroom situations to the curriculum as a whole. Thus, the fundamental question in curriculum-based approaches is: "What should be included in the curriculum to make it conducive to fostering the development of learner autonomy and to giving learners opportunities to pursue their own directions and make fruitful choices for their own learning progress?" (Trebbi, 2003, p. 170). Moreover, according to Nguyen and Gu (2013), curriculum-based approaches focus on the negotiation between teachers and learners. The negotiation is intended to enhance learners' participation in making decisions on learning content, activities, and tasks as well as to evaluate learning.

One way in which autonomy can be promoted on the curricular level is through the process syllabus (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000). Central to the model of the process syllabus is the concept of learner control through negotiation. According to Breen and Littlejohn (2000), the idea of negotiation in the context of language teaching is based on these beliefs: First, learning takes place in the greater societal context. Taking responsibility in the learning process is a skill that can translate to the bigger context of a democratic society in the form of participating citizens. Second, within the framework of negotiation, learning is seen as an emancipatory process instead of a process of transmission of knowledge from the powerful to the powerless. Third, learning is interwoven in social and cultural activities, which means that not only what is learned, but how it is learned matters. Finally, in the framework of negotiation, the learner is regarded as an "active agent of his or her learning in which the interpretation and control of knowledge are an attribute of the learner" (Breen & Littlejohn, 2000, p. 19).

It is clear that learner autonomy and negotiation share the same theoretical basis. Based on this understanding of negotiation, the interpretation of Slembrouck's (2000) report on the implementation of a negotiated syllabus for an EFL course at a Belgian

university becomes clearer. He faced several difficulties as he found that "only very few students made use of the classroom floor for the purpose of planning […], let alone evaluating" (Slembrouck, 2000, p. 147). Slembrouck interpreted his findings referring to a culture of silence that is gradually established among students as they go through the process of education. Confronted with these difficulties during the implementation of a process syllabus, he concluded his report wondering about what it is in a negotiated syllabus that would help to overcome the existing "speech-silence regime" (p. 149) and students' established norms of classroom behavior. One aspect worth considering for the evaluation of Slembrouck's findings is the fact that the students in his class still had to take a language exam at the end of the class. The conflict between the anticipation of an important upcoming exam and the expectation to make decisions about the structure of the class might explain the disappointing results to a considerable degree. This once more shows that learner autonomy can be implemented at the curricular level successfully, only if it is part of a coherent approach extending from the negotiation of content to the (at least partly) negotiation of assessments. Slembrouck's study is also an example of problems that can come up when the teacher's approach to teaching is in conflict with the students' beliefs and expectations. Another example that illustrates the challenges resulting from a mismatch of beliefs and expectations comes from McDevitt (2004), who taught students from Oman English.

Curriculum-based approaches are difficult to implement, given the number of decision-makers involved in the process of syllabus design. Especially in larger educational systems like school districts or entire states, there are powerful stakeholders who are not in favor of learner autonomy on a curricular level. For example, textbook companies have an interest in offering comprehensive textbook series that can easily be used in their entirety as a coherent all-in-one solution. Often, this is also in the interest of administrators and teachers, who have to worry less about finding and organizing appropriate learning materials. In light of these obstacles to curriculum-based approaches to learner autonomy, the significance of teacher autonomy in the development of learner autonomy has gained broad recognition (Breen & Mann, 1997; Ho & Crookall, 1995; Little, 1995; Smith & Vieira, 2009). In the work on teacher autonomy, the emphasis is on the teacher's freedom to implement principles of learner autonomy without being restrained by prescriptive curricula.

2.4.6. Classroom-Based Approaches

Classroom-based approaches aim at introducing principles of learner autonomy to institutional contexts of education. Given the many possibilities in which autonomy can be implemented, there is a considerable amount of literature on classroom-based approaches (Legenhausen, 2003, 2010; Newstetter, 2000; Nicoll, 2007; Thomsen, 2003) as well as material to support teachers who want to encourage autonomy in their students (Scharle & Szabo, 2000). A concept that is particularly helpful in introducing aspects of autonomy in foreign language classrooms is the work cycle (Legenhausen, 2003).

Classroom-based approaches highlight changing relationships and practices inside the classroom. The changes enable teachers to transfer responsibility and control over learning goals, the learning process, and the assessment of learning outcomes to learners (Smith, 2003). The most popular forms of these approaches include cooperative learning (Mizuki, 2003), self-assessment (Thomson, 1996), peer-assessment (Miller & Ng, 1996), and out-of-class learning (Pickard, 1995).

According to Cotterall (2000), language classes aiming at promoting learner autonomy need to provide opportunities for learners to take responsibility for aspects of their own learning process. This goes along with a shift of power from the teacher to the learner and a redefinition of the roles. Cotterall arrived at five principles: (1) learner goals, (2) the language learning process, (3) tasks, (4) learner strategies, and (5) reflection on learning (p. 110). Reflecting on her application and the effect of these principles, Cotterall notes that "by making the language learning process salient, the course helped learners understand and manage their learning in a way which contributed to their performance in specific language tasks" (p. 115). Through observations of learners and the comments on the journals, Cotterall also found that the explicit link between course tasks and learner goals "resulted in an unprecedented level of motivation" (p. 115). In fact, the link between learner autonomy and motivation has been the subject of several studies and it has repeatedly been shown that learner autonomy plays a significant part in learner motivation. (Cheng & Dörnyei, 2007; Dickinson, 1995; Dörnyei & Csizer, 1998; Spratt, Humphreys & Chan, 2002; Ushioda, 2003).

2.5. Motivation and Learner Autonomy

Although the link between motivation and autonomy is in some ways self-evident – both are centrally concerned with learners' active involvement in learning – it has only been explored systematically within the last decade, in part due to the earlier dominance of Gardner's 'socio-psychological' paradigm in L2 motivation research (Dörnyei 2001). A resurgence of interest in motivation in the 1990s and the exploration of alternative paradigms, notably 'attribution theory' and 'self-determination theory' has introduced elements into L2 motivation theory that are clearly relevant to autonomy. Dickinson (1995) and Ushioda (1996) were among the first to explore links between autonomy and motivation based on these new paradigms, and subsequent work has developed the idea that enhanced motivation is conditional upon learners taking responsibility for their own learning (Lamb 2001; Takagi 2003; Ushioda 2003, 2007). Spratt, Humphrey & Chan (2002), on the other hand, based on survey evidence from university students in Hong Kong, claiming that it is the motivation that precedes autonomy. Although the correlational evidence in their study actually says little about causality, it does suggest that we should be cautious in assuming that greater responsibility for learning enhances motivation independently of students' broader willingness to engage in language learning processes.

The idea of autonomy has been introduced into L2 motivation studies mainly through Deci & Ryan's (2000) self-determination theory. Their work emphasizes both the power of 'intrinsic motivation' (understood as 'the vitality, spontaneity, genuineness, and curiosity that is intrinsic to people's nature') and the importance of a 'sense of personal autonomy' (understood as a feeling that 'their behavior is truly chosen by them rather than imposed by some external source') to the development of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Flaste 1995: 30). Understood broadly in this sense, autonomy has begun to play an important role in work on L2 motivation. In Dornyei & Csizer (1998), for example, promoting learner autonomy appeared as one of 'ten commandments' for motivating learners, while Dornyei's (2001a: 102–108) book on motivational strategies included a section on 'creating learner autonomy', which covered various techniques for enhancing learners' sense of control over their learning. Noels and her colleagues have also incorporated self-determination theory into their model of L2 motivation, and their empirical work has suggested relationships between teacher support for student autonomy

and students' sense of self-determination (Noels, Clement & Pelletier 1999; McIntosh & Noels 2004).

Ushioda has made major contributions to the fields of both autonomy and motivation. Drawing largely on self-determination theory, her earlier work emphasized self-motivation as a crucial factor in autonomy (Ushioda 1996; also, Dörnyei 2001), while her more recent work places Deci & Ryan's ideas about intrinsic motivation within a Vygotskyan framework in which social mediation and social environment come to the fore (Ushioda 2003, 2006). Ushioda also links motivation to self-regulation, arguing that 'self-regulated learning can occur only when the ability to control strategic thinking processes is accompanied by the wish to do so' (Ushioda 2006: 15). In sociocultural terms, this ability is mediated through processes of task-focused dialogical interaction involving cognitive and motivational 'scaffolding'. The key to these processes, she argues, is 'a social environment that supports learners' sense of autonomy and intrinsic motivation to pursue optimal challenges through the zone of proximal development'.

Gan (2004) describe second language learning as a cyclical process; strong motivation, positive attitudes, and effective learning effort may result in increased language attainment and the feeling of progress, which may, in turn, enhance motivation and facilitate the further effort. In line with Gan, decreases in students' grades were observed in the examinations due to poor motivation and negative attitudes.

Moreover, motivation and learner autonomy are closely linked to each other (Alderman, 2004). Dickinson (1995) asserts that autonomous learners become more highly motivated and the greater learner autonomy leads to better and more effective work. The reviewed literature on motivation in this paper suggests that there is an important link between autonomy and educational theories of motivation, which could account for the claimed power of autonomy (Malcolm, 2011; Reid, 2007). Spratt et al. (2011) point out that motivation may lead to autonomy or be a precondition for it. Their study indicated the importance of developing a student's motivation to learn in teachers' teaching practice, in advance of the promotion of their autonomous learning abilities. Arguably, one of the main characteristics of autonomy is that autonomous learners should be highly motivated.

2.6. Educational System and Learner Autonomy

The educational system of any country plays the main role in fostering learners towards autonomy. Knowles (1976) stated that learners in a traditional educational system assume to be more dependent learners. Cameron (1990) believed that educational system affects the learners' beliefs about their role in the system. Nunan (1988) distinguished between learner-centered and traditional educational system. Furthermore, he stated that unlike the traditional system, there is a collaborative kind of learning between teachers and learners, so the learners can easily participate in the process of decision-making. Similarly, Benson (2003) claims that autonomy is the ability that helps learners "to plan their own learning activities, monitor their progress evaluate their outcomes" (p. 290). Based on Inozu (2011), the monolingual local context and the traditional setting in which the teachers are in the center of the learning process, leaded learners to rote learning and instrumental approaches and finally it hinders learner autonomy. Littlewood (2000); Gieve and Clark (2005) explored the perceptions of learners on learner autonomy and they found that it was the fault educational system that provided a context which demotivates learner autonomy and not the learners themselves.

Therefore, Nunan (2003) argues that teachers who believe in learner autonomy should help learners to improve their knowledge and skills by integrating a set of learning process goals with language content goals. He sets nine steps to foster learner autonomy by incorporating them into the educational process.

1. Make instruction goals clear to learners.
2. Allow learners to create their own goals.
3. Encourage learners to use their second language outside the classroom.
4. Raise awareness of learning processes.
5. Help learners identify.
6. Encourage learner choice.
7. Allow learners to generate their own tasks.
8. Encourage learners to become teachers.
9. Encourage learners to become researchers.

Candy (1989), in his own right, also points out the menace that formal education can represent to the learners' freedom to make their own choices. According to Candy

(1991), the learners' own volition makes learning happen, and learning is seen as the result of one's own self-initiated interaction with the world.

2.7. Empirical Findings

Over the past decades, many scholars have investigated learner autonomy from various perspectives. In this section, it is attempted to provide a body of research on different factors and approaches influencing learner autonomy. In this regard, information and communication technologies (ICT) influence different aspects of language learning. In recent years, rapid development in technologies benefits the language learning especially learner autonomy. Therefore, some researchers linked ICT with Learner autonomy and worked on the relationship between these two concepts.

Banafa (2008) conducted a study on using technology and its effects on enhancing pronunciation and he found that computers were beneficial for improving pronunciation because using these devices provided a safe atmosphere for learners. Similarly, Kruk (2012) worked on technology and its relationship with fostering autonomy in pronunciation. He investigated and compared two experimental groups (autonomy as a goal and traditional classroom controlled by the teacher) with a control group in which the learners received no instructions. The results showed that the learners in group 1 (autonomy as a goal) who are provided with a computer and internet-based activities on pronunciation were better than other groups in terms of autonomy.

Another kind of technology which helps improving pronunciation is Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR). ASR provides a safe and private situation for learners (Levis & Suvorov, 2014). It can help learners to practice pronunciation at desirable speed and receiving feedback from the recognized words (McCrocklin, 2016). In this line of research, Hincks (2003) worked on a program based on ASR (Talk to me) in a Technical English course and found that learners with automated Phone Pass test through Talk to Me program are more successful in acquiring good accent than those who never used this program. "Given the increasing ubiquity of ASR technology, there is a critical need for research that looks at the ways ASR tools may help students practice autonomously in their pronunciation learning." (McCrocklin, 2016, p. 28). McCrocklin (2016) also conducted a study and found that learners who used ASR for enhancing their

pronunciation inclined to be autonomous. Moreover, he found that using technology can foster learner autonomy. He also stated that:

> It is also important to note that while the students in this study were learning English in an English-rich environment, ASR is likely to be an invaluable tool for teachers of foreign language learners who do not have easy access to native speakers. Even with easy access to native language speakers, ASR was useful for providing students with the safe space (safe from the anxiety that may accompany communication within others) that they needed to perform extensive experimentation with the language. (p. 35)

Using ASR or other technology-based tools for improving pronunciation autonomously helps teachers to have more free time in the classroom to work on other aspects of the learning process.

The development of technology especially in the field of mobile telecommunication and internet have largely influenced learner autonomy and increased the level of electronic literacies. With this regard, Pawlak and Kruk (2012) investigated the effect of internet resources on the development of learner autonomy as well as the impact of learner autonomy on improving in English language proficiency. They divided the participants into two groups: one group used the Internet in their learning process while the other group learned in a traditional way with the help of course books. The results showed that the participants who learned by use of the Internet were better autonomous learners as well as more proficient ones. Similarly, Arnold (2006) identified 11 factors that promote autonomy in the online environment: flexible access, learning facilitation, self-selection, a lack of face-to-face contact, media choices, community peer learning and dialogue, peer review, negotiated learning activities, self-evaluation, evaluation of performance, and reflection on learning.

In the same line of research, Dang and Robertson (2010) investigated the effects of running a web 2.0 Learning Management System (LMS) in an EFL course. The collected data demonstrated that there is a cyclical relationship between the three learner autonomy abilities and it also showed the various local student's view on socializing and academic activities in online and offline contexts. Moreover, the influence of social and academic factors on shaping students' e-habits can be realized by that as well as the socio-

cultural values that the online learning dimensions contributed to students' offline social life. So the ICT can be used widely in syllabus design in order to enhance learner autonomy among the learners.

In another study, Mutla and Eroz-tuga (2013) distinguished between two types of Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC) which are synchronous (sender and receiver of messages are both present simultaneously). and asynchronous (communicating with others through computers apps not necessarily simultaneously). According to, Bowles (2004) the most common features of synchronous communication tools are real-time, two-way communication, and text-based online chat. The most common types of latter are blogs, Emails, and message boards. They claimed that learners using CALL are free to select the suitable time, location, and situations of the learning process that is the main feature of learner autonomy. Moreover, they can be motivated in language learning by choosing interesting and favorite topics and getting familiar with different kinds of learning methods and strategies in the classroom. "Moreover, the internet can contribute to the development of learners' language learning strategies by exposing learners to a digital social environment with many native speakers to whom the students do not have access to their local community" (p. 110). Students who learn with computers can work individually at a comfortable pace, so they are more likely to take personal responsibility for learning both inside and outside the classroom.

Moreover, Katz (2015, Unpublished) examined the relationship between cell-phone based SMS delivery and cognitive and affective aspects of learning at the university level. Results of the study indicate no significant differences between students in the cell-phone based SMS delivery and snail mail delivery groups on the standardized achievement test. However, there were significant differences between the students in the two delivery groups regarding learner autonomy, learner motivation, and learner satisfaction. Students who received their vocabulary definitions via cell-phone based SMS delivery were characterized by significantly higher levels of learner autonomy, learner motivation, and learner satisfaction than their counterparts who received vocabulary definitions via snail mail delivery hardcopy.

In addition, Sato, Murase, & Burden (2015) believed that successful vocabulary learning through MALL would improve learner autonomy and automatization of recalling vocabularies. They also conducted a study on MALL-based learning materials and paper-

based vocabulary lists and its relation to learner autonomy. The results indicated that use of MALL can enhance vocabulary recall and learners tended slightly to be more autonomous and motivated than paper-based vocabulary lists. Similarly, Steel (2012) claimed that use of mobile apps helps learners to master vocabulary acquisition, memorization, accessing to the meaning and contexts, as well as, reading, writing, grammar, and translation tasks. She labeled the vocabulary mobile learning apps including dictionaries, translators, and verb conjugators as "indispensable".

In terms of methodological aspects of learner autonomy investigation, a number of researchers employed both interview and questionnaire to elicit precise information from the learners. Using mix method increases the reliability of studies and decreases the chance of occurring errors in the surveys. Similarly, a few number of researchers using this kind of investigation on learner autonomy. For instance, Balcikanli (2010) investigated the perception of students-teachers on learner autonomy in Turkey using questionnaire and the findings indicated that they had a positive attitude towards applying the principles of learner autonomy in the curriculum. Contrarily, most of them rejected the participation of students in the decision-making process because they concerned with time and place of the educational course.

Moreover, Learner autonomy falls into the category of human science hence working on this particular concept requires specific techniques to elicit detailed information from the participants. Qualitative studies using interviews are the best tool for this. Kandemir (2015) explored this question, "What are the views of academics working in an English Language Teaching (ELT) department about 'learner autonomy' and how they implement it in their classes?" The results indicated that teachers believe in autonomy and try to apply it in their courses. They also stated that students are supported by them to enhance their autonomy.

Studies which carry out quantitatively, are popular in most fields of studies. These studies ensure the proper data which gather in those studies. This kind of researching is favorite among most of the researchers. Here, we mentioned some of the studies that are done quantitatively in relation to learner autonomy. Mackenzie (2014) examined different dimensions of foreign language contexts and design a system into a fall semester Reading and Writing course to enhance learner autonomy among the learners. Collected data

showed that it helped learners to understand the importance of collaborating learning in the learner autonomy.

Concerning cultural and intercultural factors, Buendía Arias (2015) worked on EFL learners from the different cultural background by comparing the similarities and differences between the learners of Chinese and Colombian public universities to evaluate the learner autonomy. The collected data indicated that there is a significant difference between these two groups of learners in relation to learner autonomy. There is a significant discrepancy between these two groups in terms of teacher's goals and needs. The Colombian students know the benefits of collaborating learning which improves the learner autonomy.

With regard to proficiency differences, Liu (2014) examined the differences between elementary and intermediate students in relation to the perception of acquiring listening skills using online resources. The results showed that students who use technologies to acquire listening skill did not have major progress. However, university students enhance their listening proficiency by using technologies. Moreover, findings showed that motivation and attitude of the learner, as well as learner autonomy, improves the progress of students.

Taking psychological and sociological aspects of language learning into account, Lamb (2011) explored the perception of a group of motivated learners about the language learning and their identity as learners and its relation to their level of motivation and autonomy. In the first year, the learners claimed that their identity help them to take control of their learning and they also were motivated to learn L2. However, in the second year, the increasing of teacher control affected their identity and motivation. Moreover, this showed that identity of the learners is still fragile and is affected easily by the external factors. Furthermore, Yildirim (2012) explored four Indian English learners' attitudes about responsibilities of teachers and learners in the process of language learning to elicit information about the autonomy of Indian Learners. The findings indicated that there is no clear border between two group of non-autonomous and autonomous learners.

In the same line, Glas and Cardenas-Claros (2013) worked on a twofold pedagogical proposal for English Language Teaching intended to foster intrinsic motivation and democratic empowerment through a combination of meaningful cultural

content taken from the New English cultures and autonomous learning, including technology-supported student participation and self-reflection. The findings showed that using cultural content followed by learning forms which satisfy the students' psychological needs for autonomy, affects the intrinsic motivation of the learners.

In another study, Tilfarlioglu and Ciftci (2011) investigated the relationship between self-efficacy and learner autonomy, self-efficacy and academic success, learner autonomy and academic success, and self-efficacy and learner autonomy with academic success. Also, it was aimed to explore the effect of self-efficacy on academic success, the effect of learner autonomy on academic success and the effect of self-efficacy and learner autonomy on academic success. The results showed that there was a positive relationship between self-efficacy and learner autonomy, self-efficacy, and academic success, and learner autonomy and academic success.

Gamble, Aliponga, Wilkins, Koshiyama, Yoshida, and Ando (2012) also examined the students' attitudes of Japanese universities towards taking responsibility and ability of autonomy in inside and outside the classroom. The findings indicated that there was no difference between students' perception of learner autonomy in students regardless of motivation. However, in terms of their ability, those with high motivation were more capable of doing autonomous tasks.

With regard to the students' needs, Ahmadzadeh and Zabardast (2014) conducted a study on students' preferences in self-autonomy for language learning to find out the similarities and differences between students of Haccettepe and Selcuk universities. The results of the study show students tendency to a well-planned combination of communicative and non-communicative activities that will enhance both effective teaching and learn in different fields.

Employing a learner-based approach to the promotion of learner autonomy, Feng (2015) attempted to investigate the impact of autonomy on low proficiency level students' vocabulary learning. The first part of his study focused on exploring how learners perceived and experienced their autonomous vocabulary learning, with a questionnaire and group discussion applied to collect data. During the second part of the study, the data were discussed collaboratively by six teachers to identify the different approaches utilized by learners. Results also revealed that a weak 'top-down' approach in implementing

learner autonomy is inadequate. Teachers need to provide scaffolding skills tailored to learners' context-specific needs, for which a strong 'bottom-up' approach is more appropriate in supporting autonomous learning. In this case, classroom time should be allocated to demonstrate the strategies and teachers should work collaboratively to develop resources and materials for learners' autonomous vocabulary learning. The study also addressed the need for establishing an effective intervention for supporting learner autonomy.

Following the same trait, Kannan and Miller (2009) worked on a model of how an initially resistant, fearful, and/or anxious student can use emotionally unpleasant experiences to transform himself or herself into a more autonomous and successful learner. The findings for both of our subjects showed that changes in the emotional state happened concomitantly within the same time frame as specific cognitive and behavioral changes. These changes included greater proficiency with technology, improved mastery of course content and (in our opinion of greatest interest) evidence of an increase in the degree of learner autonomy. Evidence of the participants' emotional states comes from three convergent mutually-supporting sources. These were 1) research seeking to document the concurrent self-report: the participant made one or more statements that described his or her experience of a particular emotion, 2) behavioral observation: the participant acted in a way that would normally be accepted as a symptom of the emotion (e.g., avoiding a person, place, or activities when the subject said that he or she was afraid of it), and 3) retrospective self-report: in a follow-up interview, the participant reported retrospectively that he or she had experienced the particular emotion at the time in question.

In another study, Validi and Rashidi (2014) attempted to discover any possible relationship between language learners' speaking ability and their autonomy in language learning in an English as a foreign language (EFL) context. The result indicated that some learners with high autonomy scores were invited to an interview on how they managed their language learning process. The findings from the interviews showed that for the learners' teachers were more guides than pedagogues and that for them taking language classes was not as essential as it was for their classmates.

Shangarfaam and Ghazisaeedi (2013) investigated the relationship between EFL learners' autonomy, first language essay writing, and second language essay writing in

Task/Content-Based Instruction. The results of this research revealed that there is a positive and significant relationship among EFL learners' autonomy, first language essay writing, and second language essay writing in Task/Content-Based Instruction. Also, it was shown in the data analysis that autonomy was a better predictor of English essay writing as compared to Persian essay writing.

Picón Jácome (2012) conducted a study to find out to what extent a teacher-student partnership in writing assessment could promote high school students' autonomy. The results showed that the students developed some autonomy reflected in three dimensions: ownership of their learning process, metacognition, and critical thinking, which positively influenced an enhancement of their writing skills in both English and Spanish. Likewise, the role of the teacher was found to be paramount to set appropriate conditions for the students' development of autonomy.

Mackenzie (2014) examined a number of dimensions within the context of a foreign language classroom and describes a system that was incorporated into a fall semester Reading and Writing Course in order to promote learner choice and autonomy within a constructivist framework. Based on the collected data, this helped them understand the value and importance of sharing and collaborating with their peers to reach a common goal of learning. Students seemed to become more independent.

In terms of teacher-based approaches, Espinosa (2015) constituted an effort to provide teachers and researchers with a general and practical step-by-step guide for the design of course syllabi, based on the promotion and development of learner autonomy. The results showed that the 20 students enrolled in the course gradually developed or reinforced autonomous behaviors related to their English learning process in and out of the classroom.

In another study, Nakata (2011) investigated teachers' readiness for promoting learner autonomy. He attempted to do so by exploring the perceived importance of and the use of strategies for promoting learner autonomy among Japanese high school teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL). The findings from two studies, one quantitative using a closed questionnaire, and the other qualitative using a focus group interview, showed that many Japanese EFL high school teachers while displaying different dimensions of autonomy in different ways, are not fully ready to promote

autonomy in their learners. He indicated that most teachers realized the importance of the strategies, but did not use them as much as they supported them both with students and with themselves. Moreover, the social/cultural context impinges on what teachers decide to do to promote their students' and their own autonomy and the three dimensions of readiness (i.e., behavioral, situational, and psychological) were conditioned by the social/cultural context which was filtered by teachers' professional/personal lives. He concluded that to achieve the full characteristics of language teacher autonomy, one's professional autonomy must be integrated with teaching autonomy.

Concerning the importance of teacher autonomy, Xu (2015) reported on a 3-year case study of four novice EFL teachers in China that examined the impact of collaborative lesson preparation on the development of their teacher autonomy, and the joint impact of collaboration and autonomy on their professional development. Data analysis of 48 individual interviews, 47 journal entries, and 26 classroom observation sessions revealed: (1) the collaboration takes two forms: the product-oriented collaboration dedicated to producing a complete, ready-to-use set of teaching resources as a visible product, and the problem-based collaboration featuring discussions on certain teaching issues, which does not provide concrete help in physical forms but inspires insights and facilitates exchange of teaching experience; and (2) the two types of collaborative lesson preparation have different impacts on the development of novice teachers' autonomy which is mediated by the level of teacher anxiety provoked by the circumstances of collaboration. He concluded by indicating that to join collaboration and autonomy for synergy requires the promotion of teacher development.

2.8. Summary of the Empirical Findings and Statement of the Gap

As it was indicated above, the concept of learner autonomy has been investigated from multiple perspectives in relation to various approaches and elements influencing its promotion. A vast array of these investigations has fallen upon the technology-based approaches proved to positively foster learner autonomy in educational context facilitating the learning process (Banafa, 2008; Kruk, 2012; Levis & Suvorov, 2014; McCrocklin, 2016; Hincks, 2003; Pawlak & Kruk, 2012; Dang & Robertson, 2010; Katz, 2015). Some other researchers have shed light on the ways by which the concept of learner autonomy can be better studied (Balcikanli, 2010; Kandemir, 2015; Mackenzie, 2014). With regard to cultural elements, Arias (2015) has reported of significant

differences in relation to learner autonomy and in terms of the goals and needs of different ethnic groups. The study of teachers and learners' attitudes toward autonomy has also shown a great tendency to the promotion of learner autonomy (Yildirim, 2012; Tilfarlioglu & Ciftci, 2011; Gamble et al., 2012; Ahmadzadeh & Zabardast, 2014). Moreover, some scholars (Lamb, 2012; Glas & Cadenas-Claros, 2013) have indicated the fact that learner autonomy can be fostered through the promotion of motivation. There were also some studies that put learners at the locus of attention and explored learner related factors that may influence the degree to which learner autonomy can be encouraged (Feng, 2015; Kannan & Miller, 2009; Validi & Rashidi, 2014; Shangarfaam & Ghazisaeedi, 2013).

According to Benson (2001), one of the main categories which are in line with autonomy is teacher-based approaches. The teacher can have an active role in the process of enhancing autonomous learning. Although this approach has been employed by a number of researchers (Espinosa, 2015) indicating that the promotion of learner autonomy is directly integrated with the promotion of teacher autonomy, the actual practices of the teachers and the exploration of the ways by which they attribute to the promotion of learner autonomy in language classrooms seem to be a neglected essential that needs to be investigated. Thus, the very purpose of this study was to explore the different methods and strategies encouraged by Iranian English teachers to foster learner autonomy in EFL classrooms. The next chapter elaborates on the procedures whereby the present study was conducted and the data were analyzed.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1. Overview

The founders of grounded theory (GT) were Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, who believed in the emergence of theory through qualitative data analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). The Grounded Theory (GT) is defined by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as “the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research” (p. 2). Strauss and Corbin (1990) stated that there are multiple levels of collecting, developing, and categorizing the data in grounded theory. Pandit (1996) claimed that concepts, categories, and propositions are three underlying elements of GT, the first main units of analysis are concepts which are from data conceptualization and not real data. The second one is categories. Corbin and Strauss (1990) believed that categories are higher in level and more abstract than the concepts they represent. Categories are considered as fundamental aspects of the developmental theory. Finally, Propositions demonstrate the generalized relationships between a category and emerging concepts of that category and also between distinct categories. Glaser and Strauss (1967) labeled this element as 'hypotheses'. For instance, constant comparative method and theoretical sampling are two essential methods for developing a grounded theory (Creswell, 2007; Locke, 1996; Strauss & Corbin; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998).

3.1.1. Three Types of Grounded Theory

3.1.1.1. Classic Grounded Theory

Glaser is the founder of a branch of grounded theory which is labeled as ‘‘classic grounded theory'' (Hallberg, 2006). The grounded theory is a methodology that needs the high attention of researchers to analyze the concepts and ideas by constant comparison and conceptualization (Glaser, 2002). He also believed that the GT is the outcome of emerging conceptual categories and their dimensions incorporated into hypotheses resulting in a multivariate theory. Glaser (1978) has proposed three criteria for increasing the quality of the grounded theory studies: (a) Fit and relevance, which means the level of relationships between categories and its relevant data, (b) Workability which is the integration of categories into the emerging core category, and (c) Modifiability which is defined as incorporation of the concepts into the theory using constant comparative method.

3.1.1.2. Reformulated Grounded Theory

The publication of a book by Strauss and Corbin (1990), under the title of "Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques" was the beginning of "reformulated grounded theory". They proposed a new method in grounded theory methodology which was supplementary to Glaserian Classic GT. The perspective of these two authors about grounded theory is more pragmatic than Glaser's "classic GT", and the positivist perspective of Glaserian is rejected and not included in the methodology anymore (Hallberg, 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1990) state that ''doing analysis is, in fact, making interpretations'' (p. 59). Moreover, they believe that reality can always be interpreted, rather than fully known

3.1.1.3.The Constructivist Grounded Theory

Charmaz (1995, 2000, 2006) has presented a constructivist model of the grounded theory, which can be seen as an approach between positivism and postmodernism. Constructivism assumes that there are multiple social realities simultaneously rather than the one and only ''real reality''. In a constructivist grounded theory, it is stressed that data is constructed through an ongoing interaction between researcher and participant. It is also assumed that action and meaning are dialectical; meaning shapes action and action affects meaning. The researcher takes a reflexive stance and studies how, and sometimes why, participants construct meanings and actions in specific situations (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz argues that grounded theory should focus on meaning, action, and process in the studied social context. He also differentiates between an Objectivist and a constructivist view of grounded theory. She argues that Objectivist grounded theory, represented by Glaser's classic model of the grounded theory, starts out with the conception that data represent facts about the social reality and that meaning is inherent in the data, and that the researcher's aim is to discover this meaning. Charmaz and Henwood (2008) explain the process of grounded theory as follows:

> We gather data, compare them, remain open to all possible theoretical understanding of the data, and Develop tentative interpretations about these data through our codes and nascent categories. Then we go Back to the field and gather more data to check and refine our categories (p. 271).

Constructivist Grounded Theory has some characteristics which are suitable for qualitative studies to be reliable and valid. Charmaz (1995) has proposed a number of grounded theories' characteristics as follows: (1) The collection and analysis of data are simultaneous; as the researcher collects data, he should analyze it to collect more data, (2) The generation of analytic codes and categories is from the data and not from pre-existing concepts; the theory should be generated from the raw data and not from the literature, (3) It helps the researchers to realize the underlying social processes in the data; this is helpful in investigating social phenomenon, (4) The abstract categories are constructed inductively; categories are generated based on experience and knowledge of researchers (5) Developing the categories by theoretical sampling, (6) Analytical memos are written between coding and writing stage, and (7) Categories are incorporated into the theoretical framework.

3.2. Data Collection

Here are many techniques of data collection in grounded theory that are observations, interviews, or other research sessions (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006). Additionally, Creswell (2007) has proposed four methods of collecting data qualitatively which are fieldwork, observation, interviews (including group interviews and focus group), and document analysis. Moreover, collecting the Document, interviewing, and observing the participants are some common techniques of data collection in the literature (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Strauss and Corbin (1998) insisted on the importance of listening to the voice of participants as a source of data collection. However, the best qualitative techniques of data collection in grounded theory are semi-structured, in-depth interviews and focus groups.

Glaser and Strauss (1967) stated that the researchers can enhance their validity and reliability of their study by the use different perspective about a particular category and examine its properties. Therefore, "The grounded approach advocates the use of multiple data sources converging on the same phenomenon and terms these 'slices of data.'" (Pandit, 1996, p. 8).

"The process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop his theory as it emerges" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 45).

When the main and core categories are emerging at the beginning of the data collection phase, it is necessary to cover the data deeply (Pandit, 1996). It should be noted that data collection and data analysis continue simultaneously during the qualitative studies (Kolb & Hanley-Maxwell, 2003).

3.2.1. Field Note

Field note is a good way of collecting the data in grounded theory that helps the researcher to get the gist of participants' ideas and how these ideas can be analyzed without the hardship of writing down (Holton, 2007). Turner (1983) stated that:

> ...documentary sources were treated like sets of field notes. Analysis and category generation was commenced at the first paragraph of the report, and a theoretical framework generated which would handle the aspects perceived to be of interest to each paragraph (p. 342).

3.2.2. Observation

Observation is a way of collecting data more empirically than other methods. The interviewer can check the behavior of participant directly and carefully and then judge based on his observation. Observing the participant is a kind of process in which the researcher can study and observe completely the contribution of participants to gather data (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). The important aim of observing the participants is to help the researcher to have a complete understanding of the research setting and the participants. Sometimes the observation process and interviewing are used together to gather data from the participants' own words (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006).

3.2.3. Interview

In a qualitative study, Interview is a tool for researchers to elicit views and ideas from other individuals. There are many types of interviews, including structured, semi-structured, open-ended, face-to-face, telephonic, one-on-one, computer-assisted interviews, group interviews, and focus group interviews etc. (Khan, 2014). Semi-structured interviews help the interviewer to have a topic guide or relevant questions for each interviewee (Polit & Beck, 2008). A face-to-face interview is beneficial for the researcher to observe the interviewees in terms of non-verbal communication and it also helps both researcher and participant to eliminate any ambiguity (Khan, 2014). The

interview has an interactive feature and it is often considered as a practice in grounded theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Glaser and Strauss (1967) added that through an interview, a large amount of data can be gathered by researchers and they should continue the process of data collection until the data saturation. Additionally, Glaser (1978) believed that interview can be considered as a passive listening to individuals in the studies and it can be later followed by theoretical sampling and focused questions on the emergent categories. Charmaz (2006) believed that different sessions of the interview over time with intensive interviewing are better than a single structured interview and it will provide more detailed perspectives of participants' life. There is no predetermined and specific time duration for each interview session, but the recommended time is about 60 to 90 minutes. However, the time and duration of interview sessions are influenced by the participant's responses to each question (Khan, 2014). Analyzing the interview data should start exactly after the finishing of each interview (Bickman & Rog, 2008).

3.3. Data Analysis

Bogdan and Biklen (2007) state that analyzing the data is a systematic process in which moving and arranging of obtained data from the interview transcripts, field notes, and other sources help the researchers to improve their understanding of the data and the demonstration of what has been observed. The process of decreasing the information into the manageable units and information coding are two main parts of the analysis process (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As we discussed above, analysis and data collection are two simultaneous processes which are inseparable in GT. However, some steps of analysis process will be introduced as follows.

3.3.1. Coding

Strauss and Corbin (2008, 1998, 1990) point out data analysis procedure as coding. Coding can be divided into three levels of analysis: (a) open coding, (b) axial coding, and (c) selective coding. These three levels help the researchers to collect the information completely during the data collection process. These three types of coding process are not necessarily consecutive and each of them is an independent kind of analysis (Pandit, 1996).

In the first phase, which is open coding, the data is compared continuously by the researcher and also the questions were asked about whether the concepts are understood

or not. It is also defined as a process of producing the primary concepts from the data and sampling is purposeful and systematic. During open coding, the researcher asks a set of questions about the data which are: “What is this data a study of?”, “What category does this incident indicate?”, “What is actually happening in the data?”, “What is the main concern being faced by the participants?”, and “What accounts for the continual resolving of this concern?” (Glaser, 1998, p. 140). These questions can provoke the theoretical sensitivity of the researcher. The line-by-line coding process is effective for ensuring the verification and saturation of categories and it also helps the researcher to avoid missing the main category (Holton, 2007). Pandit defined open coding as labeling and categorizing of the data. The concepts are the outcome of categorizing and labeling. He also added that:

> Data are initially broken down by asking simple questions such as what, where, how, when, how much, etc. Subsequently, the data are compared and similar incidents are grouped together and given the same conceptual label. The process of grouping concepts at a higher, more abstract, level is termed *categorizing*. Open coding requires the application of what is referred to as 'the comparative method', that is, the asking of questions and the making of comparisons (1996, p. 10).

In the second phase of coding which is axial coding procedure, all data are used in new ways in order to discover the truth about specific category and concepts after creating the connection between categories by open coding. Moreover, sampling is systematic and structured in order to help validate the relationship between the data. By the continuation of asking questions and constant comparisons, the process of thinking inductively and deductively about relating subcategories to a category is an essential part of axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 2008).

Finally, the selective coding is defined as a process of recognizing and selecting the core category and relating it to other categories systematically, validating the similarities and relationships of those categories and then completing the categories. It is a kind of formalizing of the relationships between these categories and turn it to theoretical frames (Strauss & Corbin, 2008, 1998, 1990). “It also involves the *integration* of the categories that have been developed to form the initial theoretical framework” (Pandit, 1996, p. 11).

Glaser (1978) and Charmaz (1995) state that there is two steps in analyzing the data in coding process: (a) Line by line, open coding (substantive) and (b) Theoretical coding. “Theoretical coding conceptualizes how the substantive codes may relate to each other as a hypothesis to be integrated into a theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 72). These theoretical codes help the researcher to keep the conceptual level in writing about the concept and their mutual relationships (Holton, 2007).

3.3.2. Constant Comparison

The researchers develop the concepts using the constant comparison through analyzing and coding of the data at the same time (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). The main reason for using this kind of comparison is to estimate the level of data support for emerging categories. It also supports the emerging categories by explaining the properties and dimensions of the categories simultaneously (Glaser, 2003). The constant comparative method "combines systematic data collection, coding, and analysis with theoretical sampling in order to generate a theory that is integrated, close to the data, and expressed in a form clear enough for further testing" (Conrad, Neumann, Haworth, & Scott, 1993, p. 280). Glaser and Strauss (1967) claimed four stages for constant comparison: "(1) comparing incidents applicable to each category, (2) integrating categories and their properties, (3) delimiting the theory, and (4) writing the theory" (p. 105). The advantage of this analyzing method is the emergence of substantive theory from the raw data. (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

3.3.3. Core Category Emergence

Glaser (1978) explained the necessity of core category for grounded theory as follows: the establishment of a theory is because of a core category. The lack of it endangers the relevance and workability of the grounded theory. Most of the categories and variations of the data should be related to the main or core category and these categories indicate how the core category relates to the participants. After detailed and well-done constant comparative method, a core category starts to appear. "This core variable can be any kind of theoretical code: a process, a typology, a continuum, a range, dimensions, conditions, consequences, and so forth” (Holton, 2007, p. 275). The main function of core category is theory integration and theoretical saturation. “The criteria for establishing the core (category) within a grounded theory are that it is central, that it

relates to as many other categories and their properties as possible, and that it accounts for a large portion of the variation in a pattern of behavior. It relates meaningfully and easily with other categories" (Glaser & Holton, 2004, p. 54).

3.3.4. Data Saturation

Saturation is considered as a basic concept in grounded theory and it is up to the researchers' decision. To have a better judgment about when you should stop data collection, it is essential to begin theoretical sampling in the process of data collection too early (Hallberg, 2006). Theoretical saturation is the main criterion for when the researcher should stop the theoretical sampling and the data collection process (Pandit, 1996). Core categories with the considerable power of explanation should be highly saturated. When a theory is saturated that it is unchangeable by the new data and it is detailed (Pandit, 1996). Glaser and Strauss define the saturation, in which:

> ... No additional data are being found whereby the (researcher) can develop properties of the category. As he sees similar instances over and over again, the researcher becomes empirically confident that a category is saturated... when one category is saturated, nothing remains but to go on to new groups for data on other categories, and attempt to saturate these categories also (1967, p. 65.)

Constant comparing of the concepts to elicit properties and dimensions of each category is the main tool for theoretical saturation. This process continues until no new properties and dimensions are elicited from the continuation of coding and comparison method. After theoretical saturation, the investigation of theoretical codes is done in order to integrate the concepts of the core category and consequently to generate hypothesis (Holton, 2007)

3.3.5. Memo Writing

Holton (2007) define memo writing as "theoretical notes about the data and the conceptual connections between categories. Memo writing is a continual process that helps to raise the data to a conceptual level and develop the properties of each category. Memos also guide the next steps in the further data collection, coding, and analysis "(p. 275). We should differentiate between memos and detailed description. Memos are extracted from the constant comparison of indicators and concepts. The memos should be

brief and about a few lines. Then, as the process goes on, it can be more extensive by integration of previous memos and generate new memos from further conceptualization. Early memoing of emerging concepts can enhance theoretical sensitivity and also theoretical sampling.

Memo writing is considered as a step in the coding process and the first draft of your research. Researchers consider the writing memo is an important part of the coding process. Corbin and Strauss (1990) claimed that:

> Writing theoretical memos is an integral part of doing grounded theory. Since the analyst cannot readily keep track of all the categories, properties, hypotheses, and generative questions that evolve from the analytical process, there must be a system for doing so. The use of memos constitutes such a system. Memos are not simply "ideas." They are involved in the formulation and revision of theory during the research process (p. 10).

Pandit (1996) explained three kinds of the memo in coding: code memos, theoretical memos, and operational memos. Code memos are used during the open coding and then it focuses on conceptual labeling. The second ones relate to axial and selective coding and it focuses on paradigm characteristics of the process. The writing of theoretical memos is the core stage in the process of generating grounded theory. “If the researcher skips this stage by going directly to sorting or writing up, after coding, she is not doing grounded theory” (Glaser, 1978, p. 83). Finally, operational memos relate to the research design and it contains directions.

3.4. Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity is defined as "their ability to generate concepts from data and relate them according to normal modes of theory in general" (Glaser, 1992, pp. 27-30, 49-60). It is also considered as a significant concept in grounded theory and it indicates the capability of the researcher to employ his or her experiences, skills, and knowledge to manipulate gathered data in new methods (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Hutton (2007) stated that analytic temperament and competence are necessary for theoretical sensitivity. By using analytic temperament, the researcher is able

to keep his or her analytic distance from the data and he/she can be patient against regression and confusion. It also helps researchers in precocious processing for the emergence of concepts. Glaser (1998) claimed that there should be the possibility of developing theoretical insights and abstract conceptual ideas from different kinds of data. He suggested that reading widely can be a means of improving theoretical sensitivity. Therefore, it should be followed by researcher's reflexivity and it should determine the interaction between researcher and participant and how does viewpoint of researchers influence the analysis process and the results (Hall & Callery, 2001).

3.5. Theoretical Sampling

Theoretical sampling is the process of selecting and investigating more subjects to extract the new perceptions and ideas and to develop the already extracted concepts (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998). It can be divided into two parts: (1) The selection of initial case and (2) The selection of additional cases based on the analysis of the first case and emerging theory (Pandit, 1996). Glaser and Strauss (1967) indicated that "theoretical sampling is the process of data collection for generating theory whereby the analyst jointly collects, codes and analyzes his data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop a theory as it emerges" (p. 45). So, it is used to collect more data to confirm and to reject the main categories. Holton (2007) stated that the process of data collection is influenced by the emerging theory. The additional data collection cannot be arranged in advance of the emerging theory. Rather than, the researchers can find where to gather data by coding the initial data and comparing the groups; then, the emerging codes and dimensions will be saturated. Charmaz (1990) stated that theoretical sampling can be used often with three processes of coding which are represented by Strauss and Corbin (2008). We have explained these three coding processes in Coding section (3.3.1).

3.6. Limitations

This qualitative research design like other designs have some limitations. Larsson (1993) believed that Trustworthiness, the agreement between data and its result, and transferability are the main concepts that are related to the quality of the study results. Explaining trustworthiness and limitations of the research are the main factors in considering the integrity and completeness of the study (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992).

Additionally, respondent validation is a kind of triangulation that helps researchers to allow their informants to judge about the rationality of the results. Parry (1998) stated that constant comparison and theoretical sampling are two main procedures that can help the increase of validity in research. So, evaluating the quality of grounded theory by triangulation and the trustworthiness of respondents is necessary for increasing the validity.

Another limitation of grounded theory design is sampling procedure. This kind of sampling can be a source of bias and subjectivity in the qualitative research. Bodgan and Biklen (2006) stated that purposive, convenience and theoretical sampling procedure may cause bias in sampling.

3.7. The Study

3.7.1. Research Design

This study is a qualitative research based on Strauss and Corbin's Grounded Theory methodology. The data is gathered through cyclical interviews, observation, and existing documents to generate a new theory. Data collection and data analysis occur simultaneously. The data analysis is based on a series of open, axial, and selective coding techniques to identify concepts and then to build the theory. Another process called "constant comparison" is used to compare the data have already been collected and to emerge the new concepts. The analyzing process is used intuitively and subjectively by the researcher to interpret the data. However, the sampling size is determined based on Theoretical sampling and saturation, the sample size should be between 15 to 50 participants. The data collection continues until no more data is elicited.

3.7.2. Sampling Procedure

Sampling in the study was according to grounded theory methodology. It is done by applying the theoretical sampling into the process of data collection. According to GT, the sampling in the qualitative studies should be based on the analysis of initial data collection. At first, we attempted to collect data from the most experienced teachers in Sabzevar City, Iran who truly believe in learner autonomy and their techniques were practical in this field. Then, the collected data from the first interviewees has been analyzed so that some new perceptions and concepts emerge. The emerged concepts

determined where and how we should collect the data based on the theoretical framework. We sampled the concepts instead of sampling the participants.

3.7.3. Participants

The participants of the study were 16 Iranian EFL teachers of private language schools. Since all participants should truly believe in learner autonomy and had enough experience in this field, we only selected private language schools' teachers. In private language schools, the learners are more likely to learn independently and the teachers are more motivated and skillful to lead learners towards autonomy. The selected teachers in the study were both from private schools and those teachers who taught English in both private and public schools in Sabzevar City, Khorasan-Razavi State. The experience of participants in teaching English ranged from 5 to 15 years. Six participants were male while the others were females. Among the participants, 12 had B.A degree and rest of them had M.A in language teaching. All the selected participants had a positive view of learner autonomy and the application of it into their syllabuses. The participation of teachers was free.

3.7.4. Data Collection

As we explained earlier, there are different ways to collect data based on grounded theory. One of the popular ways to collect data in GT is an interview which is of three kinds (free, semi-structured, and structured interview). In the study, we collected the data through a semi-structured interview. At first, one general question is asked in first interview session which was "which techniques the teachers use to foster learner autonomy inside or outside the classroom?". The questions and participants' answer were in Persian to avoid any ambiguity and to reduce the anxiety of participants. Then the interview transcribed in Persian and by exploring the literature, the English equivalent of categories is written. There was no time limit for each interview, but the average speaking time for each participant was about 15 to 35 minutes. All interview sessions were audiotaped and transcribed. As we stated before, the collected data through interview was done cyclically and at least two or more interview sessions held to gather data in details. After the analyzing the first interview, some concepts and categories emerged. In addition, by reviewing the literature, some criteria for categorizing and coding the data was extracted. So, after analyzing the first interview as well as reviewing the literature,

we asked two more questions in the second interview which was “1. What are the roles of educational resources, technology, curriculum, and classroom on fostering learner autonomy?”, and “2. How teachers can foster learner autonomy inside or outside the classroom?”. And finally, after constant comparison and analyzing the data, we asked two more questions in the third interview which was: “1. Which techniques are used by learners to be autonomous?”, and “2. How motivation can enhance the autonomy of the learners?”.

There are other ways to collect data based on grounded theory including field notes and observations. Due to the shortage of time, we could not use field note or observation completely to gather data. Moreover, because of private schools’ policy and principles as well as the anxiety of teachers by the presence of an observer, only 8 out of 16 were observed during the class to check the techniques whom they use to foster autonomy. The observer attended the class as a learner to check the teacher’s teaching methodology and he compared the observed data with interview data to find out the similarity or discrepancy of what they have said before. After comparison, the observer made notes about every possible technique that leading to learner autonomy.

3.7.5. Data Analysis

As we discussed above, the process of data collection and data analysis in the grounded theory methodology is simultaneous. So based on Strauss and Corbin, the study attempted to analyze the data through open, axial, and selective coding. At first, we compared the gathered data constantly to obtain the primary concepts of learner autonomy. After exact and line by line analysis of the data, all primary concepts and ideas were written down as memos. Then, all concepts categorized and labeled based on the data collected through both literature and interviews. After that, by applying the axial coding process, the emerged categories and concepts are compared to other categories and eventually, the logical connection between the categories will be found. Finally, through selective coding, the subcategories are related to core categories. In addition, similarities and differences between the categories will be identified.

After the data was compared, analyzed, labeled, categorized and its properties and dimensions were founded, the process continued until no additional data was founded or technically the data was saturated theoretically. The researcher tried to be sensitive

theoretically during the data analysis through memo writing. By writing memos the researcher can compare all the concept and categories to other concepts logically without the data missing. Consider how we code the data in the next section.

3.7.6. Coding Procedure

Coding procedure is the vital part of data analysis because it affects the reliability and validity of the study. We have attempted to code the data carefully and based on grounded theory methodology. At first, we identified seven different criteria based on literature review. These seven criteria are "Resource-Based", "Learner-Based", "Technology-Based", "Teacher-Based", "Curriculum-Based", and "Classroom-Based" techniques as well as "Motivation". Six criteria out of seven were rooted in literature helped us to categorize the extracted codes correctly. Among these criteria, the motivation was extracted from the analysis of participants' interview data. We abbreviated the categories to facilitate the analysis of the data as follows: Resource-Based (RB), Learner-Based (LB), Technology-Based (TB1), Teacher- Based (TB2), Curriculum-Based (CB1), Classroom-Based (CB2), and Motivation (M).

For the Resource-Based (RB) criteria, we extracted six subcategories by analyzing the interviews and observations. The elicited subcategories for RB were (1) *Movies and Series*, (2) *Music and Songs*, (3) *Podcasts*, (4) *Novels and Short Stories*, (5) *Extensive Reading*, and (6) *Newspapers and Magazines.* For example, the first subcategory emerged by analyzing this sentence: "*There are a lot of TV-series students can download and watch to improve their listening ability.*" The frequency of this sentence or similar ones was 16 (29%) of whole data in terms of RB. The researcher categorized and enlisted the frequency and examples for other subcategories based on the literature and interview analysis in chapter four (see Table 4.1). For other criteria, we did the same process to code and to categorize the data logically. The process has been explained in detail in chapter 4.

3.7.7. Establishing Credibility

To establish credibility, the study benefitted from two inter-coders who participate in the coding procedure. The coders separately did their work on categorizing and coding the data. After the process finished, the coders compared their extracted codes and categories from the data; then the similar codes and categories are approved by the coders after the comparison is done. But after the process, a few obtained codes and categories were different in terms of coders perspectives. To solve the discrepancy, the coders tried to discuss it in order to reach a consensus. However, a few codes and categories were removed after the comparison and the discussion. As a result, only those extracted codes and categories maintained which were the same by the coders view to increase the reliability and validity of the data analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

4.1. Overview

As it was indicated before, the purpose of this study was to explore the ways through which Iranian EFL teachers contribute to the promotion of learner autonomy. In doing so, a series of interviews were conducted to obtain data, then they were analyzed based on a coding scheme designed for the purposes of the study comprising the different approaches to learner autonomy, which were discussed in Chapter 2. In this chapter, the results of the data analysis are presented and further discussed in accordance with the approaches and factors influencing learner autonomy.

4.2. Techniques

In Chapter 2, six mainstream approaches purposed by Benson (2001) to learner autonomy were discussed and explained. Although the findings of the present study showed that most of the techniques based on these six approaches were mentioned by Iranian EFL teachers in fostering autonomous learning, only resource-based techniques were frequently taken in comparison to other techniques. What follows thoroughly provides the results of the study with regard to each of these techniques.

4.2.1. Resource-Based Techniques

The data analysis showed that most Iranian EFL teachers rely on resource-based techniques to promote autonomous learning and encourage learners to improve a variety of language skills and sub-skills including listening, reading, speaking, writing, pronunciation, and vocabulary. Some excerpts from the interviews stating this advantageous point are given below. Table 4.1 summarizes the frequency and the function of resources mentioned by the participants. In the following example, the interviewee explained how the use of self-access materials such as movies and series can improve learners' vocabulary knowledge. What is implied here is that the use of authentic materials can provide learners with meaningful input that can foster the acquisition of language vocabulary. By identifying *'with the main character'* (meaningful input) and '*repetition of colloquial language*' (practice) students '*can better learn*' (acquisition) the vocabulary of the target language. One of the participants explains:

> *Watching movies help learners to identify with the main character and see themselves in the same situation … the repetition of*

> *colloquial language and expressions results in the learning of those expressions or words by the students … By watching comedies, students can better learn the expressions, idioms, and proverbs of that language. It is also better to watch movies and series twice or more, one time with Persian subtitle and for the next time with the English subtitle. This will help learners to be less distracted by the movie and to pay more attention to the language instead of the movie's characters or setting.*

It is indicated that the repetitive use of auditory resources such as music and songs accompanied with orthographical clues can help learners improve their comprehension ability. Moreover, by the promotion of autonomy, learners are given the opportunity to '*choose*' their own resources and can achieve a great level of listening proficiency which leads to the improvement of language comprehension. For instance, one of the participants explains:

> *I think that listening to music and songs can help learners to acquaint with the pronunciation of the words and also its meaning. The more they listen, the better they understand the song. Once they are able to understand music, in fact, they've achieved listening mastery to a great extent and can comprehend series and movies more easily. It's better to listen to music and songs with their lyrics so that the learners are able to get a better understanding of their meaning… This can encourage students to choose their favorite songs and memorize them with the lyrics help…, which improves their comprehension.*

As we stated earlier, the use of self-access reading materials can also be beneficial to promote learner autonomy. Moreover, the integration of reading materials with auditory ones can help learners simultaneously develop their reading and speaking competencies. Nonetheless, the data analysis showed that most of the teachers participated in this study encourage extensive reading and the use of reading resources since they can be advantageous in various ways. Among the various kinds of reading materials, the learners can benefit from magazines and newspapers, which are authentic or novels and short stories which are interesting to the learners. However, since magazine

and newspapers are hard to understand for beginners, the graded reading materials are recommended. Consider the following extract from the interview.

> *I always advise my students to read magazines or newspapers whose topics are both appealing and interesting. It's better to use texts that are supplemented with audio files ... learners should first read silently as they are listening to the audio files and then practice their own reading … in this way, … they can improve their reading pace and learn the correct pronunciation of the words …*

One of the participants explains his views about extensive reading and the use of different reading materials:

> *Constant reading practice can significantly improve learners' reading ability… [students] learn expressions that are contemporary and functional and are commonly used in real contexts … [reading materials] are interesting to the learners … I highly recommend my students to read novels or short stories because they can develop comprehension, vocabulary range, and grammar … in most cases, grammatical structures are captured in their [students'] minds that can improve their writing ability … there are a lot of graded reading materials … they are easier to access and all students at any level of language proficiency can benefit from reading resources …*

The above examples justify the tendency towards the promotion of self-access reading materials by the teachers. As it is indicated from the extracts, reading resources can be exploited to improve '*reading ability*', '*comprehension*', '*vocabulary*', '*grammar*', and '*writing ability*' due to being '*interesting*' and '*easier to access*'. The following table summarizes the results of data in relation to resource-based approach.

Table 4.1

The Summary of Results on Resource-Based Technique

Resources	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Movies & series	16	29%	*There are a lot of TV-series students can download and watch to improve their listening ability.*
Music & songs	9	16%	*… hit songs are great sources of listening materials since they are popular and students enjoy listening to them*
Podcasts	5	9%	*I usually introduce ESL podcasts to my students to improve the vocabulary and listening skills …*
Novels & short stories	14	26%	*… even at lower levels, students can read graded story books such as Steps to Understanding.*
Extensive reading	7	13%	*Sometimes I ask my students to report the news in foreign countries so that they have to read in English to get a bonus point …*
Newspapers & magazines	4	7%	*A huge fan of movies myself, I always encourage students to read about their favorite celebrities from magazines …*

As it is shown in the above table, the use of movies and series was mostly recommended by the teachers as a resource for promoting autonomous learning. The second most frequent resource was the use of novels and short stories while the indicators

of newspapers and magazines were least frequently identified in data analysis. The findings indicate of greater reliance on resource-based approach to other approaches in terms of frequency counts. In this study, an overall number of 55 responses were classified as the indicators of resource-based approach.

4.2.2. Learner-Based Techniques

Based on the data analysis most of the indications made in relation to learner-based techniques were to improve the speaking ability of the learners. As it was suggested in the literature, a learner-based approach is one that provides opportunities for the learners to evaluate their language ability. Most of the participants of this study (N = 10) referred to *self-talk* as a useful strategy to provoke autonomy and improve speaking ability. Consider the following excerpt.

> *… A technique that can be used by students to improve speaking is talking to self. They can be the speaker and the listener of a conversation and speak to themselves in English… so they can see what parts of the language they are missing or what they need to know in order to be able to use the language efficiently…*

This example shows how self-talk can help learners evaluate their speaking ability. When one is talking in English he/she may become aware of the language components needed to carry out a language function. In other words, self-talk helps learners to identify what they know and what they do not know about the language. Therefore, an autonomous learner can work on his/her language deficiencies to improve his/her speaking ability. According to some of the interviewees (N = 2), this evaluation can also be done by a peer which leads to the combination of autonomy and collaboration. For example,

> *They can think or talk to themselves aloud and ask a classmate or friend to evaluate their speaking …they also can talk to themselves and if they have problems in generating some sentences, they can make notes about something in which they do not master it. Then the notes can be sent to a teacher or partner for correction.*

Although, there were other ways in which self-talk proved to be beneficial. The extract shows that apart from opportunities for self-evaluation, self-talk can increase learners' self-confidence. This notion was suggested by 5 of the EFL teachers participated in this study. Moreover, as it is suggested by the second extract, 4 out of 16 interviewees indicated that self-talk can help learners practice what they are supposed to present in the classroom. In other words, self-talk provides the chance for well-preparation of students. Therefore, we can infer that this preparation may cause autonomous learners to become confident in their language use. Consider what follows.

> *… For example, learners can speak to their reflection in a mirror. This helps them increase their self-confidence so that they are able to speak in real situations with less anxiety and at ease… they can also talk to themselves about the things they need to use. For example, in case of English class, they can wonder what should I tell the teacher when I enter the class, what should I tell the teacher if I wanted to go out, or, in other cases, what should I say in other situations where I have to speak in English …*

Furthermore, some of the participants (N =5) mentioned that *diary writing,* as a substitute strategy for promoting autonomy in writing skill, helps learners keep track of their writing ability over time and check their progress as they are developing in English. The following excerpt is an example of this observation.

> *Diary writing is an effective strategy for improving writing. Students shouldn't be forced to write but should do it freely. For example, they can write about the things that happen to them during a day. And, if they keep them somewhere, then they can use them to see their progress …*

Another strategy which was proposed by the participants was *voice record*. All the teachers shared the idea that students can evaluate their ability and progress of speaking skill through voice record. The following excerpt highlights the benefits of this strategy.

> *To improve their speaking skill, they'd better record their own voice as they speak in English in order to check the pronunciation and*

> *grammaticality of their speech and find their mistakes … they can even send the files to their friends for further feedback and suggestions for correction … they can also keep the audio files for a period of time and check their progress later and compare it to their current proficiency as they are developing in English …*

As it is indicated by this example, we can infer that voice record provides learners an opportunity to evaluate their speaking in three different ways: a) self-evaluation, b) peer-evaluation, and c) intra-evaluation (evaluation over time). Based on the data analysis, 7 indications of self-evaluation, 3 indications of peer-evaluation, and 5 indications of intra-evaluation were identified in the present study.

Moreover, the analysis revealed that the use of voice record can promote autonomy for the learners who do not have a peer to practice their speaking outside the classroom context. Based on the interviews, most learners lack the opportunity to use English outside the language classroom, therefore, they would not have the chance to practice what they have learned. But, voice record can help learners become their own interlocutors. Consider the following example.

> *For those who find it difficult to find a partner … they can record their own voice and then listen to it … they can read from a conversation and record their voice, then they can speak instead of A or B by muting that part.*

As it is suggested in this excerpt, students can use their voice record of a conversation and play the role of each of the interlocutors. In this way, they can imagine themselves in a real conversation where they listen and respond to another person. Although this strategy is a very common language practice in classrooms, it provides learners with an opportunity to practice more at home and become autonomous in their learning. Nonetheless, the indications of this strategy were not frequently found in the data analysis (N = 2). Table 4.2 summarizes the findings on learner-based approach to the promotion of autonomous learning.

Table 4.2

The Summary of Results on Learner-Based Technique

Strategy	Advantages		Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Self-talk	Evaluation	by self	8	19.5%	*They can talk to themselves to see how well they can speak.*
		by peer	2	4.9 %	*… a friend can judge their fluency while they practice a speech.*
	Increase in confidence		5	12.2%	*When they listen to their own voice, they feel better about their progress.*
	Preparation		4	9.7 %	*They can practice in advance and record their voice before a presentation.*
Diary writing	Progress check		5	12.2%	*If they collect their writing samples, they can later use them to check their writing progress.*
Voice record	Self-evaluation		7	17.1%	*They can check their pronunciation and intonation …*
	Peer-evaluation		3	7.3%	*.. friends can comment on their voice records …*
	Intra-evaluation		5	12.2%	*Students should keep track of their progress by recording their voice …*
	Compensation for the lack of a peer		2	4.9%	*They can take the roles of different people as they take part in imaginary conversations …*
Total			41	100%	

As it is shown in the above table, the results indicated of 3 main strategies proposed by the participants for fostering learner autonomy within a learner-based approach. As you can see, all the strategies are advantageous in that they provide learners with opportunities to evaluate their language ability. Amongst these strategies, voice record and self-talk had the greatest frequencies in the evaluation of speaking ability of the learners in various ways. A total of 61 indications were identified in relation to how learners can gain autonomy to evaluate themselves. The remaining 21 indications of learner-based approach were related to the promotion of self-confidence (N = 10), preparation (N = 8), and compensation (N = 3).

4.2.3. Technology-Based Techniques

It was discussed in Chapter 2 that technology-based techniques are closely related to resource-based techniques in that they make learners independent in accessing learning materials. In addition, CALL provides learners with interactive programs that make use of the internet and CD-ROMs in language learning. The findings showed that most of the indications were made in relation to the provision of self-access learning materials with the use of technology while very few indications were identified with regard to the application of technological programs in language learning.

As it was mentioned earlier in this chapter, the participants of the study highly relied on resource-based techniques to promote learner autonomy. Based on the analysis, the participants mainly suggested 6 different categories of resources that were accessible via either the internet or supplementary CD-ROMs. Based on data analysis, the internet was the most frequent means of providing self-access resources; all the participants (N = 16) suggested that students can download all sorts of learning materials from the internet. While, fewer teachers (N = 4) referred to the use of supplementary CD-ROMs to provide learning materials, which was limited to the provision of audio files of reading resources. Consider the following extracts from the interviews.

> *Reading materials are easy to access through the internet, there are a lot of different graded readers available on different websites such as www.Britishcouncil.org or www.irlanguage.com …*
>
> *… Students at all levels of proficiency can find useful listening materials on the internet, for example, lower level students can*

download English learning podcasts that are available on www.ESL-pod.com ... while higher level students can download more authentic podcasts provided by radio programs such as NPR or download TED Talk presentations from ...

Almost all English course books come with some supplementary materials like audio CDs and video DVDs, ... that are suitable for the learners' level of proficiency...

Regarding the use of technology in language learning, only a few indications (N = 3) were found that included the use of social networks, the internet, and mobiles. The first medium was introduced as a way of "*interacting with other peers and creating opportunities for the learners to practice their speaking"*. The second one was to "*improve learners reading ability through web browsing and surfing"*. The last one "*can be used by the students to record their voice and check their speaking for fluency and accuracy"* (quoted from interview transcriptions).

4.2.4. Teacher-Based Techniques

Despite the importance of teacher-based techniques to the promotion of autonomy, its results are reported to last due to the fact that it comprises other techniques to a great extent. As it is indicated by the results of other approaches, most of the techniques that were suggested before required teachers to introduce and explain the ways through which a learner can achieve autonomy in learning. For instance, when the participants were asked, "*How can you promote learner autonomy as a teacher?"* they mainly explained how they teach different strategies to their students so that they would be able to use them as an autonomous learner. Therefore, all the statements of this sort were counted for as an indication of teachers' role in a teacher-based approach. What follows is an indicator of teachers' role in teaching learning strategies.

I usually tell my students to watch TV-series that are filled with useful and practical English, Friends for example. First, they should watch with Persian subtitles so that they get familiarized with the context. Then I tell them to watch with English subtitles to distinguish the exact words and phrases used by the characters.

Finally, I tell them to watch without subtitles and try to remember the meaning and the language …

However, in terms of writing skill, there were some interviewees who directly emphasized the role of the teacher as an adviser in promoting autonomy. It should also be noted that a distinction was made between the direct and indirect indication of teachers' role, that is, in the analysis, it was concerned if the responses were directly referring to the fact that there should be a teacher who advises students in language development. Consider the following excerpts.

I believe that writing is an important skill and the role of the teacher in writing is very important, so there should be an expert who teaches writing principles and styles to the students… so I introduce some books that can provide useful information about different writing styles…if they want to effectively develop in writing, I recommended them to seek for their teachers' advice or to send them their drafts for feedback and correction…

As you can see in these extracts, the participants emphasized the role of teachers in advising their students' writing development. Based on the data analysis, all of the indications directly emphasizing the teachers' role were in relation to developing writing skill. The following table shows the frequency of the results on this matter.

Table 4.3

The Direct and Indirect Referents to Teachers' Role

Referent	Frequency	Percentage	Examples
Direct	14	27.5%	*Teachers have an important role in developing writing skill*
Indirect	37	72.5%	*… they'd better listen to audio files as they read …*

As it is shown in this table, a total of 51 referents were found with regard to the teachers' role in developing learner autonomy. The direct and indirect indications showed

that the participants were somehow aware of the fact that they, as teachers, are responsible to provide their learners with sufficient information before expecting them to become autonomous. Yet, in comparison to the overall number of referents (N = 176) concerning the promotion of learner autonomy, approximately 30% of the indications emphasized the teachers' role. This issue will be further discussed in the Discussion chapter of this study.

However, a teacher-based approach is not merely limited to the teachers' role and the transfer of control but it requires teachers to self-monitor and reflect on their teaching as autonomous teachers themselves. Based on the data analysis, there were no indications referring to this issue. In other words, none of the participants neither stated nor implied that they are also required to become autonomous in or reflect on their teaching to promote learner autonomy.

4.2.5. Curriculum/Classroom-Based Techniques

Curriculum-based and classroom-based techniques are similar in that they both promote the learners' control over the learning goals, process, and assessment. But, they differ in that they are implemented at two different levels; the former is determined by the educational authorities and institutional policies while the latter is limited to the classroom context and teachers' decisions. In terms of the curriculum-based approach, all 16 participants indicated that they had no control over the curriculum since they were working at language institutes and they had to follow the institutional syllabi. For instance, consider the following excerpt from the interviews.

> *Well, we teach the course books that are introduced by the institute, even we have to cover some specific units from each course book, … [so] I think that students can't have autonomy in that area …*

Similarly, the other participants supported the idea that the curriculum is determined by external factors beyond the teacher and the students' control. Therefore, no indications were found in relation to the ways through which learner autonomy could be promoted within a curriculum-based approach.

However, with regard to classroom-based approach, the results were slightly different. As it was mentioned before, the participants of this study indicated that students

are not in control of learning contents within an institutional context. Yet, in terms of classroom activities, learning tasks, and assignments, 9 out of 16 participants of the study indicated that they give their students an opportunity to choose how to participate in the classroom. The following excerpts are some examples extracted from the interviews.

> *I always have two-term projects for the students, one is a presentation and the other is writing an essay. But, I let them choose their topics for both projects so that they are able to talk and write about their interests …*
>
> *When we are modeling a conversation, I never force my students to do exactly as it is said in the book. They are free to make changes to the model and use their own words.*
>
> *There are times when the students are not in a good mood for learning, so I ask them to come up with a topic for discussion. Then we sit in a panel and simply talk about it …*

As it can be indicated from these examples, classroom autonomy for the participants of this study was defined as a matter of choice, that is, they were free to choose topics not yet the course syllabus or their learning goals. The following table summarizes the frequency of statements referring to the promotion of autonomy based on the coding scheme and in terms of techniques.

Table 4.4

The Frequency of the Findings in Terms of Techniques

Techniques	Frequency	Percentage
Resource-based	55	31%
Learner-based	41	23%
Technology-based	20	11%
Teacher-based	51	30%

Curriculum-based	-	-
Classroom-based	9	5%
Total	176	100%

As it is shown in the table, resource-based Techniques had the highest number of referents in data analysis and teacher-based indications were second in frequency. These findings suggest that the participants of this study highly rely on external resources and encourage their students to pursue language learning outside the classroom context. The analysis showed that the internet was the most important means of accessing learning materials but its application was, to some extent, limited to the provision of resources.

4.3. Motivation

Throughout the interviews, the participants of the study mainly talked about various strategies and ways that can promote autonomous learning. As it was discussed in the second chapter, learner autonomy and motivation are closely bounded. Therefore, the very purpose of this section is to account for the different strategies that were believed to improve motivation by the participants. As it can be indicated from these following example, the opportunity for evaluation had a great role in motivating students to gain autonomy in learning. Based on the analysis, a total of 19 indications were found referring to the fact that learner autonomy can increase learning motivation. Almost half of these indications (9 out of 19) referred to the effect of evaluation on learners' motivation. One of the participants explains:

> *I believe that motivation gives students something to check their progress with. When they see how well they have improved, they'll be more motivated and eager to learn. Moreover, they can compare what they've written before with their recent writings to check their writing improvements. This can motivate them to keep track of their writing samples.*

There were two other elements seemed to affect motivation: 1) choice and 2) technology. The data analysis showed that 9 of the referents to learner motivation were the indicators of the fact that having a choice in choosing learning resources and assignment topics can motivate the learners to a great extent. Consider the following excerpt about the selection of listening materials by the learners and how can it motivate them to learn better.

> *… Listening to songs with lyrics motivates students to choose listen to their favorite songs and memorize their lyrics. Then, they can sing those songs when they are alone which leads to improvements in speaking and pronunciation.*

In terms of writing, choosing the topics for writing freely can help them to develop their writing skill by writing about the favorite topics which are interesting and motivating for students. One of the interviewee states:

> *… When students choose their own topics for writing or discussion, they are more motivated to write or talk because they usually have sufficient background knowledge about the topic, which is an important prerequisite for writing and speaking.*

With regard to the effects of technology on learner motivation, there was only 1 indicator that referred to the interest and learning motivation caused by the use of technology for the learners. Consider what follows.

> *… They can also use social programs like Skype and Facebook to chat online with their native partners. The use of such programs is an incentive for the learners to speak in an authentic context and to a real person on the internet.*

As it is indicated from this example, technology can provide learners with opportunities to use language meaningfully in an authentic context. Although, this was the only referent to this issue based on the data analysis.

4.4. Summary of Findings

This chapter thoroughly presented the results of the study using the developed coding scheme in accordance with approaches to the promotion of learner autonomy in literature as well as the techniques extracted from the interviews. The analysis revealed that all techniques to learner autonomy except for curriculum-based techniques were accounted for in the interviews. However, the frequency of these techniques varied in relation to the EFL teachers' reliance on each. The highest frequency belonged to resource-based techniques, that is, the participants mostly believed that the use of self-access materials can promote autonomous learning. The next frequent techniques to learner autonomy were teacher-based techniques in that the interviewees directly or indirectly referred to the role of the teacher as an adviser and facilitator of gaining autonomy in learning. The learner-based techniques took the third place in terms of frequency highlighting the importance of opportunities for self-evaluation for the learners to promote learner autonomy. Yet, it was surprising that with increasing developments in technology its role in fostering autonomy was lesser mentioned by the participants and it was mostly limited as a means of providing learning materials. Concerning the last two sets of techniques, curriculum-based techniques were thought to be out of teachers control while classroom-based could be applied by giving students the power of choice in the classroom.

With regard to motivation, the analysis revealed that Iranian EFL teachers participated in this study believed that autonomy can lead the increase in learners' motivation in three different ways: 1) evaluation, 2) choice, and 3) technology. The first two was mentioned to an equal extent (9 indications each) while the third one was only referred to once as a means of improving learners' motivation. Next chapter thoroughly discussed the findings of the present study in relation to the previous findings in terms of the promotion of learner autonomy.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Overview

The purpose of this study was to explore the ways through which Iranian EFL teachers promote learner autonomy in their actual practice. Concerning the close relationship of autonomy and motivation, the secondary purpose of this study was to investigate how autonomous learning can increase motivation in teachers' beliefs. Employing Benson's (2001) classification of approaches to learner autonomy, a coding scheme was developed for data analysis. The findings indicated that Iranian EFL teachers take all of the approaches, except for curriculum-based approach, to different degrees. In terms of motivation, the participants of this study believed that learner autonomy can improve learning motivation through self-evaluation, choice, and technology.

5.2. Discussion

According to Benson (2001), self-access materials are probably the most widely used means of promoting autonomy. So, it was not surprising that resource-based approach had the highest frequency amongst other approaches to fostering learner autonomy. The results showed that Iranian EFL teachers in this study encouraged their students to benefit from a number of different resources to improve their language in various skills. Yet, as it was suggested by some researchers (Toogood & Pemberton, 2007; Sheerin, 1997; Darasawang et al., 2007), the provision of self-access does not necessarily lead to autonomy in learning. As it was stated by Sheerin (1997), the effective promotion of learner autonomy through self-access learning requires three prerequisites: a) learners' preparation, b) support structures, and c) graded materials. The learner preparation requires learners' metacognitive awareness of the ways which are compatible with their personalities (Gremmo & Riley, 1995). Moreover, independent learning necessities readiness and enthusiasm towards the use of self-access materials. In this regard, there were no indications referring to the importance of learner preparation in data analysis. Whereas, in terms of the support structure, the results were promising in that not only the participants signified the effects of different resources on language skills but also did they introduce strategies to exploit the use of self-access materials. According to Toogood and Pemberton (2007), raising the awareness of language skills gives students supportive guidance in areas they should focus on in their learning. Concerning the third factor influencing a resource-based approach, there were some teachers who indicated that self-access materials should suit the learners' level of language proficiency but none

of them specified how and where learners can obtain such materials. In other words, the exploration of learning materials seemed to be a job for the learners themselves. Consequently, we may infer that not all the requirements of a resource-based approach to the promotion of learner autonomy are not adequately met. In other words, however, the participants of the present study believed that the use of self-access materials has the potential of fostering autonomous learning, their attempts may not necessarily lead to having independent learners.

The promotion of autonomous learning within a learner-based paradigm necessities learner training and development (Sheerin, 1997). The results of the present study indicated that the participants seemed to have a superficial understanding of this approach. However, the term is defined as the ability to take control over one's own learning, it does not necessarily mean to have students randomly work on the language. As it was mentioned before, there are certain behavioral and psychological changes that will enable them to take responsibility for their learning (Benson, 2001). A learner-based approach helps learners learn how to learn (Wenden, 2002) by developing their metacognitive awareness. The data analysis revealed that evaluation and monitoring were the only components of metacognition taken into account by the participants. In other words, a learner-based approach was defined for them as the control over learning process and the evaluation of one's progress while there were no specifications on how such evaluation can take place. This is in contrast with the work of some researchers (Grima, 2000; Porto, 2007; Natri, 2007) who used a variety of instruments to provide learners with opportunities to evaluate themselves. According to Feng (2015), need to provide scaffolding skills particular to learners' specific needs in order to adequately support a learner-based approach which, in Ridley's (2003) words, leads to its integration with classroom-based approaches to foster learner autonomy.

Although, it was revealed that autonomy in the classroom had a different sense in the participants' minds. They believed that only giving the students the advantage of choice literally leads the promotion of learner autonomy. According to Smith (2003), classroom-based approaches bring about changes enabling teachers to transfer the control over learning objectives, learning process, and the assessment of the learning outcomes for learners, which leads to cooperating learning (Mizuki, 2003). While the choice referred to by the participants of the present study merely was limited to the topics of

assignments and panel discussions. The promotion of learner autonomy within classrooms requires opportunities for the students to take responsibility for various aspects of their learning (Cotterall, 2000) rather than just choosing how to participate in classroom activities.

Concerning the use of technology, the findings were rather surprising since with the growing interest in the application of technological developments, particularly CALL-based approaches, in language learning (Banafa, 2008; Kruk, 2012; Levis & Suvorov, 2014; McCrockling, 2016; Pawlak & Kruk, 2012; Arnold, 2006; Dang & Robertson, 2010; Mutla & Eroz-tuga, 2013), its use was simply limited to the provision of self-access materials through the internet and/or CD-ROMs. In other words, technology was mainly used as a source of obtaining learning materials and its effective role in the facilitation of language learning and the promotion of learner autonomy somehow appeared to be neglected. Although there were few indications referring to the use of technology in favor of language learning, there seemed to be a lack of familiarity with its potential in the promotion of learner autonomy, for example, the implementation of E-tandem (Brammerts, 2003; Schwienhorst, 2003) and the incorporation of interactive video programs and the internet (Gardner & Garcia, 1996; Luke, 2006). Generally, despite the prevailing role of technology in accessing learning materials, it could be exploited in many various ways in order to foster autonomous learning. Therefore, the need for raising the awareness of language teachers and introducing new developments in the application of technology in language learning is considerably felt, which gives importance to the role of teachers in promoting learner autonomy.

As it was discussed in Chapter 2, teacher-based approaches necessity the roles of the teachers as well as their own development as autonomous teachers. The results of this study significantly supported the previous findings (Smith & Vieira, 2009; Al Asmari, 2013; Chiu, 2008; Akaranithi & Panlay, 2007) on the importance of teachers' role in the promotion of learner autonomy. The participants of the present study mainly introduced different strategies and resources to foster autonomy in their learners. The role of teachers was significantly evident in all stages of data analysis concerning each of the approaches to the promotion of autonomous learning. Yet, there was a contrasting exploration in relation to teachers' education and the fact that they must become autonomous themselves (Dam, 2008; Little, 1995; Burkert & Schwienhorst, 2008).

The role of the teachers in fostering learner autonomy is manifested in negotiation and dialogical interaction between the teacher and the students (Freire, 1970). The findings showed that the role of teachers in this study was mainly to teach students strategies and ways through which they can improve various language skills on their own. From this perspective, the role of the teacher as an advisor was highlighted within all approaches to learner autonomy. However, other teacher roles seemed to be unknown to the participants of the study. According to Tudor (1993), they can also act as the facilitator and counselor helping students take responsibility by setting their own goals, planning practice opportunities, or assessing their progress. They can also integrate learners' preferences into their teaching to promote learning and motivation (Al Asmari, 2013). Moreover, teachers are required to design and develop learning activities and tasks that critically engage students in the learning process (McKenzie, 2014).

In terms of teacher education, the findings indicated that none of the participants were aware of the fact that they are also in need of reflection and collaboration in order to foster learner autonomy. That is, teachers are required to gain autonomy in taking professional actions and freedom from the control of others by reflecting on their teaching practice (Vieira, 2009). Such reflection could also be done through collaboration with other teachers to promote teaching and teaching autonomy (Kennedy & Pinter, 2007; Smith, 2000). The results of the current study were in line with those of Nakata's (2011) investigation on teachers' readiness for promoting learner autonomy in that Iranian EFL teacher participated in this study also seemed not to be fully prepared in doing so. Moreover, the findings call for a need for the promotion of teacher education and teacher autonomy similar to the research conducted by Espinosa (2015) and Xu (2015) who developed programs to help teachers develop their teaching to promote learner autonomy.

Considering the relationship between motivation and autonomy, the results of this study were in accordance with previous findings indicating the importance of intrinsic motivation in promoting learner autonomy (Deci & Ryan, 2000) due to the fact that the ways through which autonomy leads to the increase in motivation were related to personal factors. The evaluation, choice and the use of technology were believed to intrinsically improve learners' motivation towards independent learning.

5.3. Conclusion

The comparison of obtained data from the interviews with Benson's (2001) classification of approaches to autonomous learning indicated that the participants of the present study have a relative understanding of the term. The concept of autonomy was simply defined as the control over one's own learning while there are many requirements needed to be met in promoting learner autonomy. Amongst which, the role of teachers proved to be quite significant in all the approaches to fostering independent learning. Autonomy is a step-by-step process of independence from teachers to autonomous learning. Yet, it is not achieved unless learners are well-prepared and well-equipped to set off their journey to learning a foreign language on their own. In doing so, these are the teachers who are responsible to provide learners with sufficient metacognitive awareness of learning process and teach them the required learning skills to pave the way towards autonomous learning. Therefore, EFL teacher should consider the following notions in their teaching practice if they are willing to have autonomous learners.

1. It should be noted that preparation of students and their metacognitive awareness are two essentials for self-access materials to be effective in promoting learner autonomy. There are many students who have access to learning materials but they do not know how to adequately benefit from their resources. The role of teachers is first to psychologically encourage learners to work on self-access materials. Then, they should make students aware of the potential of external resources and teach them how to learn from those materials. Moreover, they should bear in mind that self-access learning is a supplementary part of a language class and students should not be obligated to take it. Within a resource-based approach, learners work at their own pace and the materials must suit learners' proficiency level and needs in order to be effective.

2. The application of a learner-based approach requires its integration with classroom-based approaches. The necessary metacognitive skills can be acquired within the classroom context where students are able to choose their learning resources in accordance with their learning goals, assess their progress, and evaluate their learning. More importantly, it must be considered that evaluation plays an important role in promoting learner based autonomy and it can be achieved through various tasks in language classrooms.

3. However, the technology is the most important means of providing learning resources, it can be exploited in language learning. The developments in technology have offered opportunities for the learners to interact outside of classroom environment and interactive programs have enabled students to work on language at their own pace and the time of their choosing. There are several CALL-based software and programs that can facilitate learning for those who desire autonomous learning. For example, Web 2.0 has provided opportunities for the learners to develop their own learning materials and interactively cooperate with others in second language learning. The procedural knowledge of implementing such technological developments in language teaching can significantly contribute to the promotion of learner autonomy.

4. Last but not least, the importance of teacher education and autonomy is an inseparable part of bringing learner autonomy into language teaching practice. Language teachers are first required to become autonomous teachers by reflecting on their teaching practices. They need to identify the elements hindering the promotion of autonomy and find solutions to overcome the existing obstacles. Then, they can plan for the improvement of their teaching and evaluate their work in relation to the progress that they have made in achieving autonomy. It can be concluded that reflective teaching is the prerequisite for the implementation of learner autonomy (Vieira, 2009).

5.4. Pedagogical Implications

The success in the promotion of learner autonomy is highly depended on the teachers' role in implementing its principles adequately. The findings of this study emphasized the importance of teacher education due to the fact that the participants seemed to be unfamiliar with the pedagogical aspects of learner autonomy. Thus, the following implications are presented as the ways to foster autonomous learning in educational contexts concerning the fact that it can positively affect foreign language learning.

1. Proper teacher preparation courses could be developed to raise teachers' awareness of prevailing principles of autonomous learning. Teacher training courses (TTCs) held in Iran usually include teaching methodologies and classroom related issues

to improve teachers' practical skills. However, they are less likely to raise the teachers' awareness of different approaches that could be employed to teach students to take responsibility for their own learning. Therefore, there must be some modifications in the organization and planning of such training courses. Teaching students how to learn and encouraging them to pursue learning outside of classroom environment require a set of specific skills that can be included in TTC programs.

2. It is suggested for the language teachers to consider reflective teaching as an influential method of teacher development which, in turn, leads to the promotion of learner autonomy. It should be noted that the key principles of teacher education are collaboration and on-going self-reflection that can be achieved by action research. More importantly, there is a need for shared commitment to autonomy amongst the teachers who are willing to promote autonomous learning.

3. Autonomous learning can make a distinctly positive impact on the way in which students perceive foreign language learning. This is encouraging to foreign language educators, who seek to implement principles of learner autonomy in their teaching. Several factors play a role in the learners' receptiveness to this approach: the learners' and teachers' need for structure, the constraints imposed by the particular setting or institution, and the need to address each part of language learning in a sufficient way. Any application of the principles of autonomous learning, therefore, needs to heed to these factors.

4. Metacognitive awareness and management are of a significant importance in any educational program. Thus, EFL teacher should note that there is a need for the integration and teaching of these skills in the language classrooms since most students cannot acquire them without teachers' mediation. Teachers should encourage learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses and provide them with different strategies and resources for them to take control of their learning experiences. Moreover, they should be taught how to plan for their learning, how to monitor their learning process, and how to evaluate their learning progress.

5. Despite the time limitations and institutional policies, classrooms are great places where students can learn how to become autonomous learners. Classroom activates and tasks should be tailored in a way that teaches students how to take responsibility in language learning. The freedom of choice in choosing learning materials and learning goals has proved to be influential in increasing students' motivation towards learning. It is therefore advisable for foreign language educators to design their classes in a way that allows for learner autonomy through choices about the way in which the students want to learn the language. Learner autonomy can focus on choices related to the topics or the format of activities and projects, for example through a work cycle structure. By making choices, students are able to incorporate their strengths and interests and thus make the most of the learning experience. For the teacher, it can be very rewarding to see the variety of topics and the creativity the students bring into the classroom. It is impressive to see how passionate students can be about the topics they choose to work on and how much they desire for their fellow students to know about their topic of interest. Ultimately, the autonomous learning framework is successful because it allows students to highlight and build on what they know rather than focus on what they do not know.

6. The application of technology in language classrooms in promoting learner autonomy requires an up-to-date knowledge of its current developments. Therefore, language teachers are advised to improve their familiarity with new technologies that can be employed into foster autonomous learning. Especially, in an age when younger generation spends most of their time dealing with technology, its implementation for learning purposes can highly motivate language learners towards independent learning.

7. The findings of this study indicated that EFL teachers and learners seem to have no control over the learning curriculum and course syllabus in the educational context of Iran. Thus, the curriculum developers and course designers are suggested to account for the students/teachers' needs and leave some room for their contribution in planning and developing educational programs.

5.5. Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

The present study was limited due to several factors which are suggested to be further investigated. First, despite having inter-coder reliability, the analysis of data was done through a coding scheme which is subjected to impressionistic judgments, therefore, the generalizability of the results might be under question. So, it is suggested for other researchers to investigate teachers' actual practice in the promotion of learner autonomy through mixed-method designs and more objective methods.

Second, since the data collection was conducted through multiple interviews, the number of participants was rather small. As a result, further studies can employ surveys and questionnaires to obtain data from a larger population and increase the external validity of the research.

Third, the only instrument used for the purposes of the present study was semi-structured interviews which were conducted at different times with the participants. It is suggested to employ multiple procedures for data collection and triangulation in order to efficiently explore the inquiry in the future.

Finally, there seems to be a need for the conduction of studies that focus on teachers' development and its impact on the promotion of learner autonomy. There are many unanswered questions about the promotion of learner autonomy in Iran and researchers can separately take each of the approaches into account and investigate the ways through which learner autonomy can best be fostered.

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چکیده:

دشواری یادگیری زبان دوم و یا یک زبان خارجه، نبود وقت کافی و همچنین افزایش هزینه های یادگیری زبان ما را بر آن داشت تا موثرترین تکنیک های تقویت استقلال در یادگیری را مورد بررسی قرار دهیم. اگرچه برخی از تکنیک ها در مطالعات پیشین به کرات مورد بررسی قرار گرفته اند اما هیچ کدام به صورت تجربی از دیدگاه معلمان ایرانی نبوده اند. هدف این تحقیق بررسی تکنیک های استفاده شده توسط معلمان در تقویت استقلال زبان آموزان می باشد. ما با استفاده از روش گروند تئوری به صورت نظری مفاهیم را از طریق مصاحبه با حداقل ۱۶ معلم با تجربه در مدارس دولتی و همچنین موسسات خصوصی نمونه برداری کردیم. تمام مصاحبه ها ضبط شد و سپس به تحریر در آمد و مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفت که با توجه به روش کدگذاری باز، انتخابی و محوری بود. جمع آوری و آنالیز داده ها به صورت سیکلی و چرخشی انجام شد و ما به موثر بودن تکنیک های تقویت استقلال زبان آموزان پی بردیم تا زبان آموزان را هم در داخل و هم در خارج از کلاس به سمت استقلال در یادگیری سوق دهیم. در نهایت برخی از تکنیک های استخراج شده با توجه به ادبیات پیشین جدید و موثر بوده و قابلیت اعمال واجرا در نظام آموزشی، مدارس خصوصی و دولتی، زبان آموزان زبان های خارجه و معلمان زبان در ایران را دارند.

کلمات کلیدی: استقلال در یادگیری، تقویت استقلال درسی، تکنیک های موثر در مستقل شدن، استراتژی های معلمان در تقویت استقلال یادگیری

گروه زبان انگلیسی

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نگارنده:

حسین مهرآشیان

استاد راهنما:

دکتر سید علی استوار نامقی

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