

Empowering Learner Autonomy: EFL Teachers' Perspectives and Classroom Dynamics

Tarik ElFalih

Abdelmalek Essaadi University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences Tetouane, Morocco

tarik.elfalih@etu.uae.ac.ma

Latifa Lamrani-Hassani

Sidi Mohammed Ben Abdellah University, Faculty of Letters and Human Sciences

l.lamrani-hassani@ueuromed.org

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Abstract

In the last thirty years, learner autonomy (LA) has become a pivotal notion in language teaching, profoundly transforming instructional methodologies (Benson, 2011). The shift from behaviourist techniques, such as audiolingualism, to communicative methods has emphasised the importance of students taking responsibility for their learning. The viewpoints of educators, especially in public education, remain little examined, despite extensive research highlighting the advantages of Learning Analytics for language acquisition and lifetime learning. This paper examines the learning strategies utilised by English as a Foreign Language (EFL) professors in Moroccan institutions to foster language acquisition and their viewpoints on the matter. This study utilises both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The data were collected via semi-structured interviews and classroom observations done with a purposive sample of Moroccan EFL instructors. The interviews examined the obstacles instructors encounter in fostering autonomy, the importance they attribute to learner autonomy, and their understanding of learner autonomy. Classroom observations clarified the practical application of LA techniques, enabling a study that links teachers' views with their teaching methods. The study aims to provide enhancements for pedagogical methods and to elucidate how classroom dynamics influence the advancement of LA. The findings enhance the understanding of teachers' responsibilities in promoting autonomy, therefore addressing a gap in the research about teacher perspectives in language education.

1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of learner autonomy (LA) has been more important in the field of language education and instruction over the course of the past three decades (Benson, 2011). The move from behaviourist tactics, epitomised by audiolingual, to more communicative strategies in language instruction encouraged the formation of learner autonomy, which later gained buzzword status in this sector (Schwienhorst, 2008). It has been recognised as an educational goal by a number of scholars (Ouakrime, 1998; Benson, 2011; Nunan, 2003; Pawlak, 2017). The goal of education is to produce a

generation of children who are capable of taking responsibility for their own education and who are able to organise, arrange, and supervise their own educational process, regardless of whether they are attending official institutions or not. There have been a great number of research conducted on the subject of the concept of autonomy, the reason for its promotion, and the implications associated with it for the teaching and learning process. It is argued that it enhances the quality of language learning, the development of democratic societies, and the preparation of learners for education that continues throughout their lives (AlBusaidi, 2012). On the other hand, the instructors' points of view have been largely ignored in most of the study, and there is a limited grasp of the idea of learner autonomy from the standpoint of language educators. It is possible that the classroom strategies that are intended to improve LA will not be fully appreciated if one does not have a comprehension of the views of instructors. The authors Borg and Alshumaimeri (2017) suggest that the interpretations of student autonomy that instructors have will influence the degree to which they encourage it, which in turn will affect the opportunities that are accessible for students to achieve autonomy. The purpose of this research is to investigate the perspectives of student autonomy held by teachers of English as a foreign language in public high schools located in Fes, Morocco, as well as the methods that they use to encourage it. In light of this, the following questions are intended to be answered by this paper: For teachers of English as a foreign language, what is the value of learner autonomy? In what ways, according to educators, does learner autonomy make it easier for students to acquire a second language? According to the teachers, how do they feel about the possibility of fostering student autonomy and whether it is desirable? To what extent do teachers believe that their students can make their own decisions? Specifically, what strategies do educators use to encourage students to learn on their own? How can educators overcome the challenges they face while attempting to facilitate learner autonomy? This paper has been divided into three sections for your more convenient reading experience. The literature study that explores important problems that are related to learner autonomy will be the first thing I will discuss. Several subjects are explored, including the study design and processes, research objectives and questions, sample population, and strategies for data collecting. The analysis and evaluation of the data that was obtained is going to be the subject of the debate that will take place thereafter in the paper. In the last section of the article, a summary of the most significant findings is presented, additional recommendations are offered, and a discussion of the limitations of the study is held.

2. SURVEYING THE LITERATURE: THE EVOLUTION OF AUTONOMY IN LANGUAGE LEARNING

Learner autonomy has received a substantial amount of attention from scholars all over the world, which has resulted in the establishment of a solid theoretical framework within the body of literature about English language instruction (Ouakrime, 1988; Benson, 2011; Benson & Voller, 1997; Little, 1991). The important terms and concerns that are relevant to this research endeavour will be investigated during the course of this literature review. A definition of learner autonomy will be presented at the beginning of this section. After that, it will explain how learner autonomy is taught by providing an overview of Reinders' framework of learner autonomy (2010) as well as some modern pedagogical techniques that have been recently offered to improve student autonomy. Additionally, the obligations that teachers ought to take on to simplify the process of language learning will be discussed in this part. The recommended strategies for teaching learner autonomy in Moroccan English as a Foreign Language in secondary schools will be further upon in this section. The last section of this section provides a summary of previous research on the attitudes and actions of educators in

relation to learner autonomy in a variety of settings. Learner autonomy is a concept that several intellectuals and researchers have contemplated over time. The importance of learner autonomy in language acquisition increased significantly following its theoretical validation (Benson, 2011). Numerous transformations started in language education methodology, and innovative instructional strategies were proposed to foster independent learning. This section provides an overview of the emergence and evolution of the concept of learner autonomy among experts in language education. The concept of learner autonomy dates back several centuries. Since the 18th century, the notion has been a primary concern for several European liberal-democratic and liberal-humanist philosophers, including Kant, who saw it as “the foundation of human dignity” and “the source of modality” (Hill, 1991). In the domain of foreign language acquisition, autonomy was a topic that has preoccupied several experts throughout history. Benson (2001) notes that several philosophers, including Rousseau and Dewey, have highlighted the need of autonomy in education. In Rousseau’s ‘Model Learning’, children must be educated to learn autonomously and depend on their own capabilities rather than passively accepting information from their teachers. This is attainable only through fostering students’ self-realization and granting them the liberty to explore and satisfy their curiosities and desires. Dewey emphasized the significance of autonomy by stating that the initial step in fostering autonomous learning is assisting students in identifying their needs, therefore ensuring that educational objectives are determined by the learners rather than the instructors. Furthermore, Vygotsky was one of the researchers who stimulated interest in autonomous learning (1978). This constructivist posits that learners may enhance their linguistic abilities through self-regulation. He posits that this process occurs in three stages: the initial stage termed social speech, involves interaction with a knowledgeable individual possessing advanced cognitive abilities; the subsequent stage, known as egocentric speech, entails self-directed instructions for skill enhancement; and the final stage, referred to as inner speech, signifies the development of mental self-guidance, indicating the learner's complete internalization of these skills. Consequently, as evidenced by the aforementioned philosophers, the concept of learner autonomy was not relegated to the historical educational paradigm; rather, it has been a subject of regular consideration by several intellectuals.

The concept of learner autonomy was initially articulated in a foundational study by Holec (1981) at the Nancy University Language Centre (Centre de Recherches et D'Applications en Langues – CRAPEL) in 1971, pertaining to the British Council's initiative for Foreign Language Learning. In his study, Holec emphasised the social and economic circumstances underpinning learner autonomy (Benson, 2001). The connection between the Council of Europe and learner autonomy is not coincidental. Holec's report was a purposeful contribution to the Council of Europe's efforts, as the organisation seeks to enhance learner autonomy, regarded as a mechanism that empowers individuals to become active and responsible citizens in their respective societies (Holec, 1981). The "Centre de Recherches et d'Applications en Langues - CRAPEL," directed by Holec, primarily concentrated on Developing an educational framework that can augment students' autonomy, autonomous goal formulation, and self-evaluation competencies . CRAPEL specialists identify two primary conditions for fostering learner autonomy: first, unrestricted access to resource centres containing authentic materials; second, psychological training for students to improve self-organization, self-control, and self-assessment (Anikina et al., 2009).

The introduction of learner autonomy as a concept initiated a significant transformation in language pedagogy, necessitating the abandonment of traditional classrooms and the adoption of innovative teaching approaches that promote independent learning. Allwright, 1988. For instance, Dam (1995) clarified how teachers might incorporate the ideas of autonomy into secondary education

without relying on students' self-access or formal training. This inclination towards classroom applications facilitated the proposal of several key theoretical consequences in the 1990s. In his book on learner autonomy, Little (1991) posited that the most effective method to foster autonomous learning is to engage learners in interdependent processes that encompass active problem-solving. Furthermore, he contended that learner autonomy is not improved by any particular method of practice; instead, it relies on the quality of the 'pedagogical conversation' between educators and students (Little, 1995).

The efforts to enhance student autonomy have increased progressively due to the swift proliferation of self-access centres and advancements in computer-mediated teaching and learning (Allwright, 1988). Allwright (1988) proposed that language teaching pedagogy should be fundamentally rebuilt, and language instructors should embrace innovative teaching methods in response to contemporary innovations to promote independent learning. Consequently, the dismantling of conventional language learning classrooms and curricula represents the third wave of increasing interest in autonomy in recent years (Benson, 2006). The trend has shifted towards facilitating students' learning experiences beyond the classroom, resulting in novel interpretations of autonomy's role in language instruction and acquisition. In subsequent years, learner autonomy gained prominence with the advancement of learner-centred methodologies and concepts, such as resource-based learning, learner-centred methods, classroom-centred approaches, curriculum-centred approaches, and instructor-centred approaches (Benson, 2001). In this context, several educators have authored various works on student autonomy in foreign language acquisition (Barfield and Brown, 2007; Benson, 2007; Jiménez et al., 2007; Lamb & Reinders, 2007). Learner autonomy is a subject that has been explored in several ways. The literature lacks a singular definition of learner autonomy, rendering it a complex and multifaceted entity that may be systematically examined from several viewpoints (Knapp, Seidlhofer, & Widdowson 2009).

One of the earliest and most influential definitions of learner autonomy is provided by Holec (1981, as cited in Benson and Voller, 1997), which describes it as “the ability to take charge of one’s learning” by establishing objectives, defining content and progression, selecting methods and techniques, monitoring the acquisition process, and evaluating learning outcomes. Benson (2001) also asserts that “autonomy is the capacity to take control of one's own learning.” Cotterall (1995) defines learner autonomy as the degree to which learners have the capacity to employ strategies for managing their own learning. Conversely, Little (1991) enhanced these definitions by emphasising the psychological aspect, portraying the autonomous learner as an individual who possesses not only the ability to regulate their own learning but also the skill to relate the acquired knowledge to their real-world context. Consequently, “the learner will cultivate a specific psychological relationship with the process and content of learning”. Consequently, as per Little, the capacity to regulate one's own learning depends on certain psychological abilities. All the aforementioned descriptions characterize LA as the ability to learn without external limitations. Dickinson (1987) also posits that learner autonomy constitutes “a mode of learning; one in which the individual is accountable for all decisions related to his learning and executes the implementation of these decisions.” He believes that learners must independently engage in learning without reliance on a teacher or educational resources. Consequently, Dickinson's definition illustrates a significant level of autonomy, wherein the student chooses what, when, and how to study, free from the constraints of educational institutions. Crabbe (1993) presents a congruent argument to Dickinson’s definition, asserting that “the individual

possesses the right to freely exercise personal choices, akin to other domains, and should not be subjected to decisions imposed by social institutions.” Consequently, these two definitions characterise learner autonomy as a condition in which the learner possesses total flexibility to determine their learning process.

In contrast to the aforementioned definitions, other scholars contest the individualistic implications of learner autonomy that overlook the socio-interactive dimension of learning, instead highlighting the significance of interdependence as a crucial element in enhancing autonomous language learning. Benson (1996) contends that individual control over learning is unattainable; instead, it requires collaborative decision-making. In a similar vein, autonomous learners are not only individuals who operate autonomously; instead, they are individuals who engage in collaboration with educators and peers to gain greater freedom and control over their learning process. Similarly, Dam (1995) asserts that autonomy encompasses “the capacity and willingness to act independently while cooperating with others, as a socially responsible individual.” Consequently, these definitions suggest that learner autonomy encompasses not just individual competencies and actions in learning but also necessitates a collaborative learning network that enables learners to cooperate for mutual advantage and to assume collective responsibility for their own education.

Based on the diverse definitions provided by Benson (1997) and Oxford (2003), learner autonomy is conceptualized from four perspectives: technological, political, psychological, and socio-cultural. The technological aspects of autonomy highlight students' acquisition of diverse skills and methods to facilitate autonomous learning both within and outside the classroom, independent of instructor interaction. The psychological approach emphasises the necessity for independent students to possess the desire and motivation to take charge of their learning. The political approach elucidates the autonomy and regulation that learners possess in making decisions regarding their own education. The socio-cultural viewpoint views learner autonomy as a social construct formed via interactions with teachers or peers. Consequently, considering these many viewpoints, some academics (Lamb & Reinders, 2006) contend that an ultimate definition of learner autonomy is unattainable and that several interpretations of autonomy exist rather than a one authoritative definition.

2.1.The Instruction Of Learner Autonomy

The advancement of student autonomy has emerged as a significant stated objective in foreign language teaching and learning within language program courses (Benson, 2006; Lamb and Reinders, 2007). Numerous theoretical frameworks are proposed in the literature to systematically assist educators in fostering autonomy inside the classroom. This section presents a framework proposed by Reinders (2010), designed for diverse learners across various educational environments, particularly in language instruction. Subsequently, I will outline some instructional techniques recommended to enhance LA. Finally, I outline many responsibilities that educators must assume to promote independent learning.

2.1.1. Reinders' Framework for Learner Autonomy

Reinders (2010) presents a framework that enables the instructor to promote, model, and oversee various learner behaviours. The methodology consists of eight stages: needs identification, goal setting, learning planning, resource selection, learning strategy selection, practice, progress monitoring, evaluation, and revision. Consequently, each level cultivates a certain skill that autonomous learners

must acquire. Figure 3 illustrates these eight stages as a cyclical process based on students' reflection, motivation, and engagement.



Figure1: Stages in the improvement of learner autonomy (Reinders & Balcikanli 2011)

Reinders (2010) extensively proposed the implementation of these stages in classroom learning. His recommendations are concisely encapsulated in the below paragraphs:

During the first phase, students are required to articulate their requirements during the first weeks of the course, and the instructor should promote the sharing of these needs among peers. Classroom activities must be structured to address identified needs, with students encouraged to report on their effectiveness in completing them. The language and learning requirements should be documented in learning diaries or portfolios and evaluated periodically. In the second level, students should receive training on how to strategize their learning by formulating practical plans. Students ought to be motivated to create drawings independently. Decisions about classroom practices encompass the material and activities, their sequential arrangement throughout the course, and the methods by which learners are anticipated to engage and interact. In the third level, students should be instructed on how to locate real resources from external sources for use in the classroom. The roles of selecting, creating, and disseminating resources should be designated accordingly. In the fourth level, students are required to choose learning methods by determining how activities will be executed. Students want to select tactics that are effective in addressing a certain assignment. They should also be taught on the fundamental categorization of learning techniques into cognitive, metacognitive, and social-affective strategies. A suitable initial approach is to inspire students to recognize their existing strategy use and thereafter broaden their understanding of other methods.

In the fifth level, students are urged to apply their acquired knowledge in practical settings. Educators should strike a balance between granting kids' autonomy and providing them with assistance. This support may consist of meticulously designed exercises that necessitate pupils to practise the language with the teacher's assistance. Subsequently, pupils must undertake a comparable activity utilising their prior experiences and accumulated knowledge. In the sixth stage, students should be instructed on how to assess their learning progress and consistently adjust their learning goals. This is achieved by prompting students to contemplate their motivation and other social-affective aspects (challenges and achievements) that might influence their learning either favourably or unfavourably. In the concluding phase, students must be afforded opportunities to evaluate and refine their learning in addition to their accomplishments and examination results. This can be achieved through portfolios, digital tools, self-

assessment worksheets, and activities that promote students' application and evaluation of their acquired knowledge.

The aforementioned stages of autonomous learning are based on students' reflection, motivation/self-motivation, and engagement, which constitute the cognitive, emotional, and social foundations of a course designed to foster learner autonomy.

2.1.2. Contemporary Pedagogical Approaches to Foster Learner Autonomy

Various pedagogical approaches are proposed in the literature to enhance learner autonomy. These techniques encompass the instruction of learning strategies, the implementation of collaborative and individual learning activities, the integration of ICT in classrooms, the alteration of the curriculum, and the use of peer feedback. This section will provide a comprehensive explanation of each teaching technique.

2.1.3. Instructional Approaches for Enhancing Learning Abilities

Fostering learner autonomy necessitates the cultivation of learning techniques (Çalici, 2015). The latter refers to certain acts undertaken by the learner to acquire and manage the acquisition of the target language (Rubin & Wenden, 1987). Learners must adopt two sorts of methods to assume control of their own learning. These tactics encompass meta-cognitive strategies and socio-affective strategies (Rubin & Wenden, 1987).

Meta-cognitive methods denote learners' awareness of their knowledge and their ability to comprehend, regulate, and alter their cognitive processes (Çalici, 2015). These tactics involve preparation, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. To facilitate the internalisation of these tactics, he proposed many ways, which are summarised as follows:

To cultivate planning skills, educators can prompt students to establish a realistic goal and support them in selecting the necessary content, resources, and time for its attainment. Subsequently, students can be progressively encouraged to determine their learning objectives, identify helpful resources, and allocate what they deem adequate time for completing their tasks.

To enhance students' self-monitoring skills, they must evaluate their learning processes and determine suitable solutions to address their academic challenges.

Regarding self-evaluation growth, educators might urge pupils to conduct self-assessments utilising objective self-study quizzes from prior examinations or online resources. By doing so, students will be able to assess their efforts in the learning process, the approaches they employed, and the materials they require, enabling them to formulate new plans and alternatives.

Regarding the advancement of socio-emotional methods, learners are urged to employ their social skills to engage with peers and manage affective elements to facilitate their learning (Çalici, 2015). Students are encouraged to collaborate for feedback, seek clarification or assistance when necessary, and provide opportunities to practise the language with others (Oxford, 1990). Furthermore, students must recognise the significance of regulating their attitudes and emotions during the learning process, since negative emotions impede their educational progress (Çalici, 2015). Enhancing students' understanding of practices such as self-reinforcement and positive self-talk would enable learners to exert greater control over their emotions, attitudes, and motives during language acquisition (Oxford, 1993).

2.1.4. The use of activities to promote learner autonomy

A. Collaborative educational endeavours:

Encouraging students to organise learning activities is an excellent method for fostering learner autonomy (Dang, 2012). These activities may encompass collaborative endeavours such as group assignments, project initiatives, and negotiations. In Smith's (2001) longitudinal study of language learners in Japan, he demonstrated the degree to which students' everyday activities foster abilities characteristic of independent learners. He discovered that students with comparable interests in certain activities choose to gather and establish their own groups for collaborative learning. In each group, students agreed on formulating an appropriate action learning plan their favoured pursuit. Individuals who like language acquisition through topic discussions must compile a list of subjects they wish to address and outline the organisation of the group discussion. Despite encountering challenges in adapting to the collaborative learning environment, students improved their abilities in organising and monitoring their learning activities. The majority indicated a preference for small group learning and stated a desire to maintain this method of instruction in subsequent semesters. They also articulated their satisfaction with the learning outcomes achieved during the training. Group-based activities have demonstrated the capacity to cultivate essential skills for fostering learner autonomy, including the capacities to organise, monitor, and assess the learning process.

B. Personalized educational tasks:

Classroom individual learning activities are deemed beneficial in enhancing students' ability to independently manage their learning. Hart's study (2002) shown that the integration of such exercises with collaborative efforts has beneficial outcomes in fostering reactive learner autonomy. In his study, several college students are instructed to form groups, choose a certain topic, and propose several sub-topics they deem worthy of discussion. Subsequently, each student selected one of the proposed sub-topics and started the search for appropriate materials to explore it. Subsequently, students were instructed to consolidate all gathered information, deliver a presentation on the subject, and produce a poster at the conclusion of the course. In addition to these collaborative tasks, each student was tasked with delivering an oral presentation and composing a journal that articulates his critical personal reflection on his learning journey.

Their reflective diaries indicate that such activities favourably improved their attitudes towards learning and their willingness to adopt new learning practices. Consequently, research indicates that while collaborative learning activities and individual activities may appear conflicting, both positively influence the development of characteristics of learner autonomy.

2.1.5. The utilisation of ICT to foster learner autonomy

The use of ICT in educational settings is recommended as a means to promote independent learning (Dang, 2012). In a technology-rich educational environment, Christopher (2006) demonstrates that involvement with technology fosters student autonomy by allowing individuals to exert control over and customise their learning processes. He used "El Investigador en Español," a software tool for Spanish language acquisition, to facilitate various learning exercises for his pupils. The software offers pupils many themes from which they can choose one that aligns with their interests. Subsequently, students utilise the classroom computers to conduct more research on the issue; thereafter, they formulate and refine it before submitting it to their peers for evaluation. This enables students to independently explore their area of interest and actively influence the course material in which they participate. Nonetheless, it is proposed that the integration of ICT in educational settings does not consistently facilitate the enhancement of learner autonomy. Students occasionally engage

more with computers than with their friends when tasked with assignments (Blin, 2004). This influences their ability to negotiate and engage in activities that are crucial for controlling their learning processes. The issue exacerbates when students occasionally utilise pre-prepared assignments from academic websites without exerting any personal effort (Dang, 2012). This thus diminishes students' feeling of responsibility for their learning, a crucial component in the development of autonomy.

2.1.6. Adjusting the curriculum to promote learner autonomy

Another method of promoting student autonomy is altering the curriculum by updating materials or incorporating an additional component into the existing program (Dang, 2012). In a collaborative initiative in Hong Kong, students engaged in various activities beyond their standard curriculum, enhancing their skills in planning and managing their learning processes (Miller, et al., 2005). These activities entail procuring genuine resources from a self-access facility, doing supplementary tasks pertinent to the class subjects, and preparing project work. Students were prompted to establish a restaurant and assume the responsibilities of workers inside that simulated setting following a classroom discussion on the theme of 'Food.' Students indicated a preference for these sorts of activities and shown increased engagement in their learning process. They got increasingly driven to further their learning and more confident after successfully handling these procedures alone.

2.1.7. The utilisation of peer feedback to enhance learner autonomy

A proposed strategy to enhance language acquisition is the implementation of peer feedback in educational settings (Dang, 2012). Braine (2003) advocated for peer feedback among undergraduate students in China, asserting that this learner-centred approach enhances their autonomy at cognitive and behavioural levels. Despite being subjected to a teacher-centred approach since kindergarten, the pupils demonstrated a progressive advancement in their writing course during this research. They saw the technique as a valuable chance to articulate their perspectives, interact with their colleagues, and evaluate their papers. The students indicated heightened satisfaction with the course and their efforts to use new tactics for enhancing their writing. It is essential to acknowledge that their input was culturally specific. They endeavoured to evade criticism and dissent over their classmates' essays, unlike Western students (Carson & Nelson, 1996), who demonstrated a more forthright approach in peer reviews, disregarding possible conflicts.

2.2.The Role Of Educators In Promoting Learner Autonomy

In second/foreign language teaching, it is asserted that fostering student autonomy is contingent upon enhancing instructor autonomy (Horváthová, 2016). Little (1991) posits that student autonomy and teacher autonomy are interrelated; hence, educators aiming to enhance learner autonomy must begin with self-reflection on their own knowledge, practices, experiences, and expectations within the teaching and learning context. Educators must possess the autonomy to determine the content and methods of instruction, free from institutional constraints (Benson, 2000). Nevertheless, this does not imply that educators may relinquish their authority over the content they impart (Thanasoulas, 2000). Indeed, the responsibility of educators in fostering a learning environment that promotes autonomy. The engagement of learners in the learning process is essential . The subsequent table illustrates the responsibilities of other educators in fostering student autonomy within language instruction.

Authors	Teachers' role in fostering LA
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Knowles (1975)	Teachers act as facilitators, helpers or consultants.
Higgs (1988)	In order to help students learn how to learn autonomously and effectively, the teacher must play the role of a manager who creates a supportive and stimulating learning environment, who is helpful in providing resources, who challenges learners to achieve their objectives and who raises learners' awareness on institutional requirements and expectations associated with the discipline in which they are studying.
Nunan (1993)	Teachers are changing their traditional roles with new ones. They become active participants, monitors, and guides when they work closely with their students and help them adopt more effective techniques for learning the language. In addition, teachers should change also students' concepts about the traditional role of the learner in the classroom.
Ho (1995)	In promoting LA, the teachers' role is to help the learner understand that they are also responsible for developing their learning process.
Voller (1997)	The teacher's role is to initiate and support decision- making processes, respond to the ongoing needs of the learners, and provide his or her knowledge and expertise to his students whenever it is needed.
Yang (1998)	Teachers have a role in helping students adopt appropriate strategies for learning, which can facilitate the enhancement of LA. In other words, teachers must be responsible for strategy instruction.
Xu & Xu (2004)	Teachers' role is to make students encouraged and confident to learn autonomously; to guide students to draw practical plans; to aid students to find out the suitable learning strategies and put them into practice; to stimulate students to get access to the self-directed centre for further research; to encourage more communication between teachers and students via multiple channels to monitor the learning process, and finally to let students evaluate themselves.
Dickinson (1995)	Teachers' role is to enhance students' motivation since the latter is the key to help students exert more control over their learning process. It helps them also to have more sense of responsibility toward their learning and adopt more meta-cognitive strategies to reach their goals.

As shown in Table 1, teachers' roles in fostering LA are multiple and various. It is obvious that teachers who want to foster the autonomy of the language learners should change their traditional roles of teaching and move to new ones so as to put the learner at the heart of the learning process. Teachers shift their roles from information imparters to facilitators, helpers, managers, guides, monitors, advisors and supporters in their classrooms, which promote significantly students' learner autonomy. According to Reinders' framework, the proposed teaching techniques and the outlined responsibilities of instructors reveal some common insights about the implementation of learner autonomy. All of them aim to cultivate a variety of skills crucial for fostering independent learning. The capacities include planning, self-monitoring, and self-assessment. They concur that the cultivation of these capacities relies on educators who should engage with students not as authoritative figures or mere transmitters of knowledge, but as assistants, supports, guides, and facilitators of the learning process.

2.3. Autonomy of Learners in Moroccan EFL high schools

In Moroccan EFL high schools, learner autonomy is cultivated using two methods: the standards-based approach and Nunan's (1997) paradigm of autonomy. This section elaborates on how the adoption of this method and model fosters learner autonomy. The English Guidelines for Moroccan

high Schools recommend, as per the Ministry of National Education and Sports (2007), the use of a standards-based strategy for English language instruction in Moroccan schools. This methodology necessitates the use of the 5 Cs, which may be succinctly summarised as follows:

1. Communication: Learners must be instructed to cultivate interpersonal, interpretative, and presentational communication competencies. This is achieved by promoting their ability to communicate in both oral and written modes, analyse oral and written communications, comprehend cultural nuances, and convey knowledge orally and in writing to diverse audiences for many reasons.

2. Cultures: Learners should get deeper insights about their own cultures and others regarding views (e.g., values, ideas, attitudes), practices (patterns of social interactions), and products (e.g., literature, legislation, music).

3. Connections: Learners are urged to establish links with various disciplines and to utilise and get knowledge in English for their personal objectives.

4. Comparisons: Learners will develop an understanding of cross-cultural similarities and contrasts regarding language(s) and culture.

5. Communities: Learners are urged to broaden their educational experiences outside the EFL classroom by engaging in activities such as utilising the internet.

Consequently, in accordance with the rules established by the Ministry of National Education (2007), the curriculum and syllabus must be created to incorporate and enhance the aforementioned components of the standards-based approach. In accordance with these principles, learners will be instructed on how to learn, therefore becoming independent language learners (Oussou, 2020a). This learner training is advocated by The Ministry of Education recognises the agreement in the research that autonomy is a multifaceted notion with numerous aspects and components (Tassinari, 2012). Consequently, in this methodology, independent learning is incorporated and cultivated indirectly through the instruction of the English language.

Alongside the standard-based approach, the English Guidelines for Moroccan secondary schools, as proposed by the Ministry of National Education (2007), emphasise the development of learner autonomy and lifelong learning as objectives to be achieved through English language instruction in Moroccan EFL secondary schools. These standards define learner autonomy as "the freedom and ability to manage one's own affairs, which implies the right to make decisions regarding what, why, and how to learn" (ELGMSS, 2007). This term indicates that curriculum and syllabus designers intend to empower students to assume responsibility for their own learning. To do this, ELGMSS (2007) advises that educators adhere to Nunan's (1997) paradigm of autonomy. Nunan (1997) asserts that to cultivate learner autonomy, individuals should not be regarded as inherently autonomous. They should be assisted progressively (op.cit, 1997). He proposes a five-step paradigm for promoting learner autonomy: awareness, engagement, intervention, invention, and transcendence. The subsequent text delineates the five principles of Nunan's (1997) autonomy model:

Level	Learner action	Content	Process
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1	Awareness	Learners are made aware of the pedagogical goals and content of the materials they are using.	Learners identify strategy implications of pedagogical tasks and identify their own preferred learning styles.
2	Involvement	Learners are involved in selecting their own goals from a range of alternatives on offer	Learners make choices among range of options
3	Intervention	Learners are involved in modifying and adapting the goals and content of the learning programme	Learners modify/adapt tasks
4	Creation	Learners create their own goals and objectives	Learners create their own tasks
5	Transcendence	Learners go beyond the classroom and make links between the content of classroom learning and the world beyond	Learners become teachers and researchers.

Figure2: Levels of implementation of learner autonomy (Nunan, 1997)

The initial stage is to enhance learners' knowledge of the content, the educational objectives of the resources, and their own styles and tactics. The subsequent stage is to engage students in the choosing of various alternatives about the content. The third level is permitting learners to 'intervene' by altering and adjusting the content, objectives, and tasks of their learning. In the fourth stage, learners participate in decision-making over the topic to be studied and propose their own learning assignments. Ultimately, upon recognising the content, strategies, and styles, and having the opportunity to engage, intervene, and develop their own learning materials and tasks, learners are encouraged to pursue their educational endeavours beyond the classroom and to "create their own learning materials from the resources that exist in the community" (Nunan, 1997). Consequently, as seen above, this model offers a valuable index in a progressive developmental sequence of learner autonomy. In addition to Nunan's concepts of learner autonomy, ELGFSS (2007) delineated the responsibilities that teachers should assume in the classroom to enhance students' accountability for their own learning. These jobs encompass change agents, learning facilitators, language consultants, and language learners. Consequently, educators must earnestly transform their conventional responsibilities into new ones. The guidelines (2007) assert that no teacher should regard themselves as "a purveyor of knowledge or wielder of power." Consequently, the development of learner autonomy is not sidelined in the educational framework of Moroccan EFL secondary schools; rather, it is an objective pursued through the implementation of a standards-based approach and Nunan's model of autonomy.

2.4. Empirical Investigations on Educators' Perspectives and Implementations of Learner Autonomy

The study of teacher cognition has significantly advanced the comprehension of educators' beliefs and behaviours in language instruction research during the past four decades (Phipps & Borg, 2009). This section will include some research from the literature that examine language instructors' views and behaviours on learner autonomy. Shahsavari (2014) sought to ascertain instructors' beliefs and behaviours about student autonomy by utilising tools derived from the study conducted by Al-Busaidi (2012). The findings indicated that teachers perceived their students as lacking a sense of responsibility

for their learning and exhibiting no autonomous learning behaviours, attributing this to their excessive dependence on their professors during the learning process. The results indicated that students expressed dissatisfaction when teachers attempted to assign them tasks in the classroom, perceiving such teachers as inadequately qualified, which they believed was the reason for the delegation of obligations to learners. This, thus, underscores the significant influence of classroom culture on the perspectives of both educators and students. The last observation in the study indicated that several educators asserted they were prohibited from exceeding the curriculum in their instruction, and thus, to avoid complications with the administration, they adhered to directives. Al Asmari (2013) conducted research examining the ideas, practices, and prospects of learner autonomy among 60 EFL teachers at a language centre in a Saudi university. The professors exhibited low evaluations of their students' level of autonomy. The study indicated that teachers employed tactics to enhance language acquisition, including the instruction of communication skills, facilitation of group discussions, and the implementation of a learner-centred approach. The educators further regarded ongoing professional development, reflection on teaching-learning contexts, and strategic instruction as activities that may enhance the existing state of learner autonomy. Camilleri (1999) performed research examining teachers' perceptions on LA, involving educators from Malta, The Netherlands, Belarus, Poland, Estonia, and Slovenia. She employed a questionnaire of 13 items about educators' perspectives on the domains and the degree to which students should participate in decision-making processes. The study indicated that educators were driven to improve their techniques to foster learner autonomy and endorsed the inclusion of students in decision-making about content selection, classroom management, learning tactics, and styles. Nevertheless, they were reluctant to engage learners in methodological decisions or educational choices due to the limitations imposed by higher authorities.

The concluding research I present is that of Al-Busaidi (2012), who investigated the attitudes and practices of learner autonomy among 61 instructors at a university language centre in Oman. The findings indicated that, in principle, the educators maintained favourable perspectives on the significance of student autonomy in second language acquisition. However, the educators shown reluctance regarding their students' degree of autonomy. Moreover, while the educators expressed optimism regarding the value of fostering learner autonomy, they exhibited reservations concerning the practicality of cultivating such autonomy in the pupils. The researchers identified several student characteristics (e.g., lack of motivation), teacher factors (e.g., low expectations of learners), and institutional factors (e.g., curriculum overload) as significant obstacles to promoting learner autonomy in English classes within the setting.

While there is substantial literature on LA, the corpus pertaining to the concept of LA within the Moroccan setting is very limited. Prior research primarily examined topics including EFL instructors' preparedness to foster autonomy in Moroccan secondary education (Oussou, 2020a), the efficacy of EFL students' utilisation of ICT in enhancing their autonomy (Oussou, 2020b), and the impact of project-based activities on cultivating learner autonomy among students (Hebbouch, 2018). Nonetheless, there is a lack of knowledge into EFL instructors' opinions on LA and their methodologies to promote independent learning in Moroccan public secondary schools. Consequently, this study seeks to address this gap by employing a mixed-method design and adhering to the methodological framework established in Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012) research. Thus, this will enhance comprehension of the degree and methods by which learner autonomy is fostered in Moroccan English language learning environments.

3. THE METHODOLOGY

The methodological design is very important in any investigation. This section outlines the methodological approach and research methodology utilised in this study to address the primary research issues it seeks to answer. This will elucidate the research design and methodologies, objectives and enquiries, participant selection and sample technique, as well as the tools employed in this study.

3.1. Research Design and Methodology

This study employed a mixed methods methodology to get insight into instructors' perspectives and behaviours regarding learner autonomy. The purpose of this study strategy was to enhance understanding and augment quantitative data with qualitative insights. Kagan (1992) asserts that instructors' authentic perspectives may not be really articulated in questionnaire replies, since their answers might be influenced by the social desirability bias. To mitigate such risks and provide a comprehensive picture of educators' attitudes and behaviours, both qualitative and quantitative data were gathered. Furthermore, subsequent to the data collecting phase, the data were encoded and inputted into the computer utilising Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Software (SPSS) version 23. The analysis was conducted with quantitative methods via descriptive statistics.

3.2. Research Objectives and Enquiries

This study investigates the perspectives of English foreign language instructors about student autonomy and the tactics they employ to foster it in public secondary schools in Sefrou, Morocco.

This study seeks to address the following questions:

What is the significance of learner autonomy for EFL educators?

To what degree, as per the educators, does learner autonomy facilitate L2 acquisition?

3. What is the instructors' assessment of the desirability and feasibility of promoting learner autonomy?

To what degree do the educators perceive their students as autonomous?

What approaches do teachers employ to foster independent learning?

What obstacles do educators encounter in facilitating learner autonomy?

3.3. Sample Population

The study focused on EFL instructors in high schools in Fes, Morocco. The current study employed non-probability convenience sampling, utilising readily accessible subjects. Bryman (2012) asserts that this sampling method enhances participant response rates. There is a probability that the questionnaires will be returned with a favourable response rate.

4. INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

4.1. Questionnaire on Educators' Beliefs

The questionnaire was modified from the research done by Al-Busaidi in 2012. It comprises four components. Section one analyses educators' comprehensive perspectives on learner autonomy from technological, psychological, social, and political viewpoints. Section two examines educators' perspectives on the desirability and practicality of (a) including students in various course decisions and (b) enhancing certain learner capacities linked to learning autonomy. Section three addresses educators' perspectives on their students' level of learner autonomy and the strategies they employ to foster autonomous learning. Section four analyses the problems instructors encounter in promoting LA. The final portion addresses background information regarding educators and their professional experiences.

The validity of this questionnaire is underscored by the fact that its items and sections were created by experts in language acquisition and teachers' cognition, with a thorough process of draughting, critical review, and revision conducted prior to the final version's release (Al-Busaidi, 2012). Consequently, it may be asserted that the questionnaire accurately assesses its intended constructs. Benson (2016) said that "Al-Busaidi's questionnaire was based on a comprehensive review of the academic literature on autonomy, indicating its suitability for international application."

4.2.Interview

Due to the questionnaire's shortcoming in obtaining comprehensive responses from participants, interviews are further employed to gather data from EFL teachers who have completed the questionnaire. The primary themes examined in the interview were based on AlBusaidi's (2012) interview framework. The issues include (a) the instructors' conceptualisation of learner autonomy; (b) the degree of student autonomy; (c) pedagogical strategies employed to cultivate learner autonomy; (d) the desirability and practicality of encouraging learner autonomy among students; (e) the obstacles encountered in advancing learners' autonomy. The conversation also includes additional subjects, like the degree of teacher autonomy and the training teachers get regarding LA.

4.3.Observation of the Classroom

In this study, classroom observation served as a data collection method to enhance understanding of instructors' behaviours in fostering learner autonomy. Observation is crucial as it enables us to investigate many features of classroom practices within their distinct contexts, particularly the methods and techniques employed to foster learner autonomy. The observations will enhance comprehension of the preliminary findings derived from the questionnaire and interview.

4.4.Analysis and Interpretation of Data

This section summarises, examines, and interprets the obtained quantitative and qualitative data. The section comprises seven subsections. Every section addresses a specific scientific inquiry. The initial portion presents demographic information. The second section elucidates educators' comprehension of learner autonomy. The final part encompasses educators' viewpoints about the degree to which learner autonomy facilitates L2 acquisition. The fourth segment examines the instructors' perceptions of the desirability and feasibility of fostering learner autonomy. The fifth component examines educators' assessments of their students' degree of autonomy. The sixth part delineates educators' methodologies to foster Learning Autonomy (LA). The final portion addresses the obstacles educators have in fostering student autonomy.

1. Demographic Attributes

This section serves to address factual enquiries on the personal and professional backgrounds of the research participants.

Gender

Gender		Frequency	Percent
Valid	female	4	30.8%
	male	9	69.2%
	Total	13	100.0

Table 1.The frequency and percentage of respondents by gender

This table shows the frequency as well as the percentage of the females and the males that responded to the questionnaire. The total number of participants is 13 containing 4 females who made of 30.8% and 9 males who made of 69.2% of the population under study. Hence, the distribution of gender was not balanced since the study included males as the majority of the respondents.

Years of experience of EFL teachers.

1. Table 2. Teaching Experience of the Participants

Teaching Experience			
		Frequency	Percent
Valid	15-19	5	62%
	20-24	4	23%
	+25	3	8.5%
	0-4	1	6.5%
Total		13	100

The above table clearly shows that the dominant group in terms of teaching experience is the one whose range varies between 15-19 years of teaching experience with a percentage of 62%. Then follows the group with 20-25 years of teaching occupying 23% of the participants. The last two groups that vary between 0-4 years and +25 years of teaching consist of 6.5% and 8.5% participants, respectively.

RQ1: EFL Teachers' Understanding of Learner Autonomy

Considering the four basic perspectives of LA according to AlBusaidi (2012), table 1 reveals that the most supported constructs were psychological (M=4.41) and technical perspectives of learner autonomy (M=4.40), followed by social (M=4.32) and political perspectives (M=3.80).

Statement		Strongly agree	Agree	Unsure	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Mean
Psychological perspectives	1) Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	40%	40%	0%	10%	10%	4.41
	2) Learning how to learn is the key to develop LA.	70%	30%	0%	0%	0%	
	3) Motivated language learners are more likely to develop LA than learners who are not motivated.	80%	10%	10%	0%	0%	
	4) To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	60%	20%	10%	0%	10%	
	5) The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.	60%	30%	10%	0%	0%	
Technical perspectives	6) Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote LA	70%	20%	10%	0%	0%	4.40
	7) Independent study in the library is an activity which develops LA	50%	30%	10%	0%	10%	

	8) Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.	60%	30%	10%	0%	0%
	9) LA is promoted by independent work in a self-access center	70%	20%	10%	0%	0%
	10) Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher	10%	10%	10%	20%	50%
	11) Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy	40%	40%	10%	0%	10%
	12) Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.	80%	10%	0%	0%	10%
	13) Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher	10%	20%	0%	20%	50%
Social perspectives	14) Co-operative group work activities support the development of LA.	50%	30%	10%	0%	10%
	15) LA is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	60%	30%	10%	0%	0%
	16) LA is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.	70%	20%	10%	0%	0%
4.32						
Political perspectives	17) LA is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do	40%	30%	20%	0%	10%
	18) Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes LA.	30%	40%	10%	10%	10%
	19) LA is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.	40%	40%	10%	0%	10%
	20) Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	50%	20%	10%	10%	10%
	21) LA is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.	30%	20%	20%	10%	20%
3.80						

The chart above indicates that a significant percentage of instructors endorsed the psychological perspectives on learner autonomy ($M= 4.41$), which emphasise the influence of learners' mental qualities in fostering autonomy. These are evident in assertions (1), (2), (3), (4), and (5). Teachers assert that confident and motivated language learners may cultivate autonomy more readily than those without such confidence and motivation. The educators contend that for learners to achieve autonomy, they must acquire the skills to study independently and to assess and reflect on their own learning processes.

Additionally, technical viewpoints received the second highest support from the instructors ($M=4.40$). These viewpoints illustrate students' efforts to broaden their learning outside the classroom environment, but without instructor involvement. Nevertheless, despite educators' endorsement of the significance of extracurricular activities and assignments in augmenting learning autonomy, the majority rejected the notion of complete independence from instructors. For instance, as seen in the chart, 50% of educators strongly opposed the assertion: "learner autonomy necessitates complete independence from the teacher." Furthermore, the majority (50%) expressed their dissent about the notion that "learner autonomy equates to learning without a teacher." These findings align with the literature, since learner autonomy is occasionally seen as the capacity and inclination to learn freely and collaboratively (Dam et al., 1990). The aforementioned viewpoints elucidate the substantial assistance provided by instructors for the social dimensions of Learning Activities ($M=4.32$), which emphasise the significance of collaboration and classroom engagement in enhancing Learning Activities.

Teachers' replies indicated a propensity for the political perspective, with a mean of ($M=3.80$). This perspective emphasises empowering learners to select their own educational resources, evaluation methods, and types of activities.

Table1: Teachers' views towards the four perspectives on learner autonomy.

Notions	Teachers' quotations
Responsibility	For me autonomous learning means that students take responsibility for their own learning; when I say responsibility for their own learning, I mean that they should not depend on the teacher
Self-dependence	I think it means that when the learner depends on himself in his learning learner autonomy means that the learner can depend on himself and sometimes with the help of his teachers in order to proceed in his learning outside classroom activities/ learning
Learning how to learn	it's students' attempts to learn how to learn and extend his learning without the help of the teacher I think it is learning how to learn through adopting new strategies than can help in learning new things about the language

Nonetheless, quite a little fraction (30%) of educators expressed their ambivalence regarding students' autonomy in determining the assessment of their learning. Additional understanding of teachers' perspectives on learner autonomy was revealed during the interview, where, as shown in Appendix 2, an initial question prompted instructors to define their interpretation of learner autonomy. Three ideas that often appeared in the instructors' responses were "responsibility,"

"self-sufficiency," and "metacognition." The table below presents some quotations that demonstrate the predominance of these concepts in instructors' descriptions of learner autonomy.

Table 2: Teachers' Definitions of Learner Autonomy.

The recurring ideas identified are prevalent in the literature on learner autonomy, indicating that instructors' perceptions of student autonomy are consistent with those found in scholarly sources.

RQ2: Teachers' Perspectives on the Extent to Which Learner Autonomy Contributes to L2 Learning.

The responses to the questionnaire yielded that the majority of teachers hold the view that learner autonomy enhances L2 learning as table 3 illustrates:

Statement	Strongly A	Agree	Unsure	Disagree	Strongly D
1. learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner	10%	80%	0%	0%	0%
2. learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would	30%	60%	0%	10%	0%
3. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners	40%	30%	10%	10%	10%

Table 3: Teachers' opinion about the contribution of learner autonomy to L2 learning.

As demonstrated above, 80% of teachers concurred that student autonomy positively influences the language learning process, while 60% affirmed that it enables language learners to acquire knowledge more efficiently than they would otherwise. Likewise, a majority of them (40%) concurred that persons devoid of autonomy are unlikely to be proficient language learners. The teachers expressed robustly favourable opinions on the impact of student autonomy on language acquisition.

To obtain more precise insights, the questioned educators were requested to expound on their favourable perspectives regarding the effects of learner autonomy on language students. The following are emerging themes from the instructors' comments, accompanied by relevant quotations for each.

Learner autonomy enhances language competency: "An autonomous learner will undoubtedly attain greater proficiency than a learner who relies entirely on the teacher throughout the learning process." "Learner autonomy significantly influences language acquisition, as increased autonomy correlates with heightened proficiency in learning."

Learner autonomy facilitates the attainment of educational objectives.

The more the autonomy of the language learner, the more efficiently they may attain their language learning objectives.

“Autonomy encourages students to seek additional resources to achieve their learning objectives rather than relying on the teacher's guidance.”

Learner autonomy cultivates proficient researchers.

“It enables students to expand their knowledge by conducting additional research instead of solely relying on the teacher's instruction.”

“Autonomous students are more motivated to pursue additional research, as they do not confine their learning to the classroom but extend it beyond.”

Learner autonomy augments learners' motivation.

“Enhanced autonomy elevates students' motivation to pursue learning beyond the classroom.”

“Increased student autonomy correlates with heightened motivation to acquire knowledge and achieve success.”

As previously mentioned, educators demonstrated favourable views towards independent learning. This indicates their robust consensus on the claims in the tables and the numerous advantages of learner autonomy for the achievement of language learners that have been found.

RQ3: Educators' willingness and capability to foster student autonomy

The second portion of the questionnaire examined instructors' perceptions regarding the desirability and feasibility of promoting learner autonomy. This section's initial component consists of two issues. the first aspect is educators' inclination to engage students in various language course selections while the second of which pertains to educators' perspectives on the practicality of implementing such measures. The instructors' replies are depicted in charts 1 and 2.

Chart1: Teachers' desirability to involve learners in language course decisions.

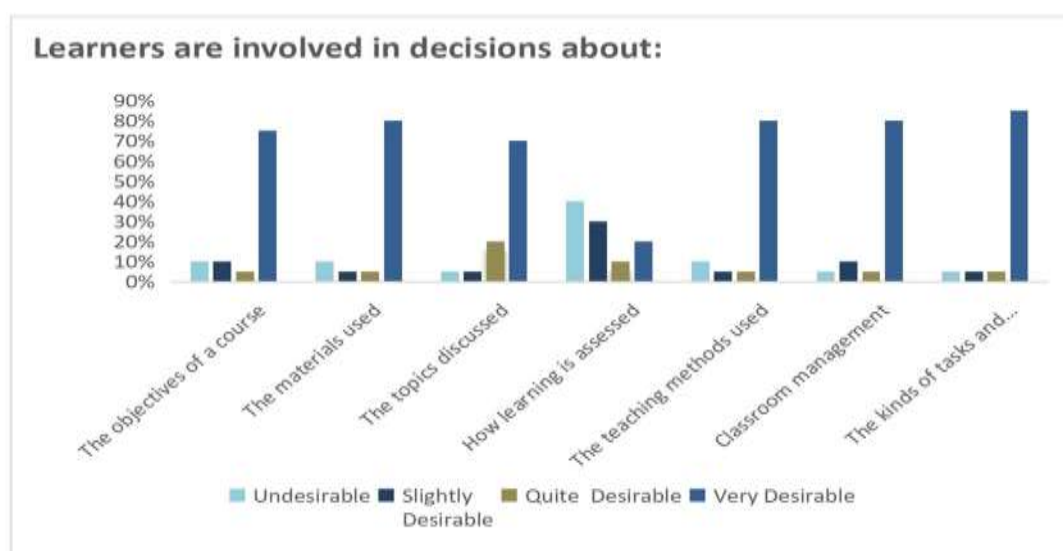
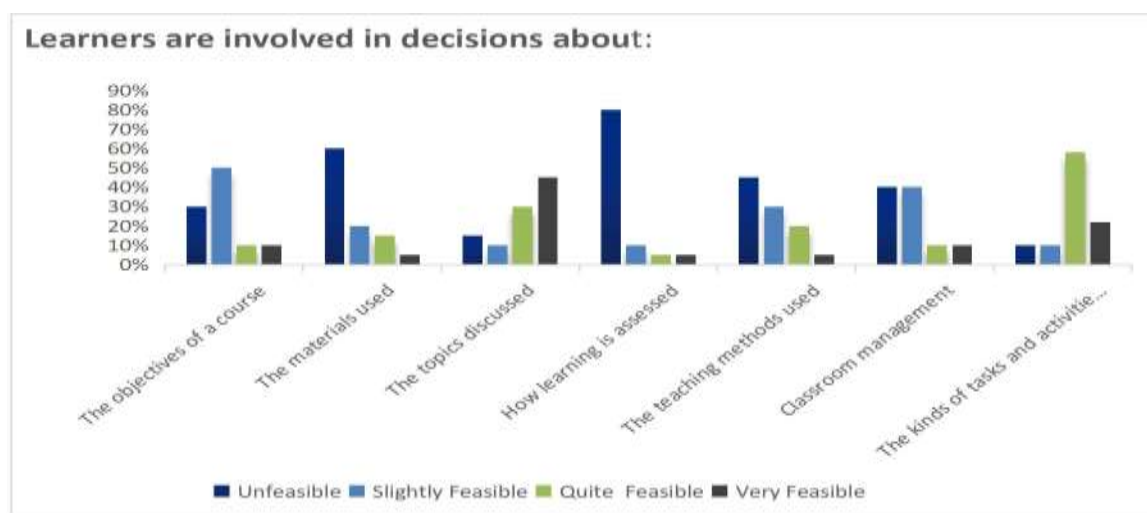


Chart 2: Teachers' feasibility in involving their students in language course decisions.

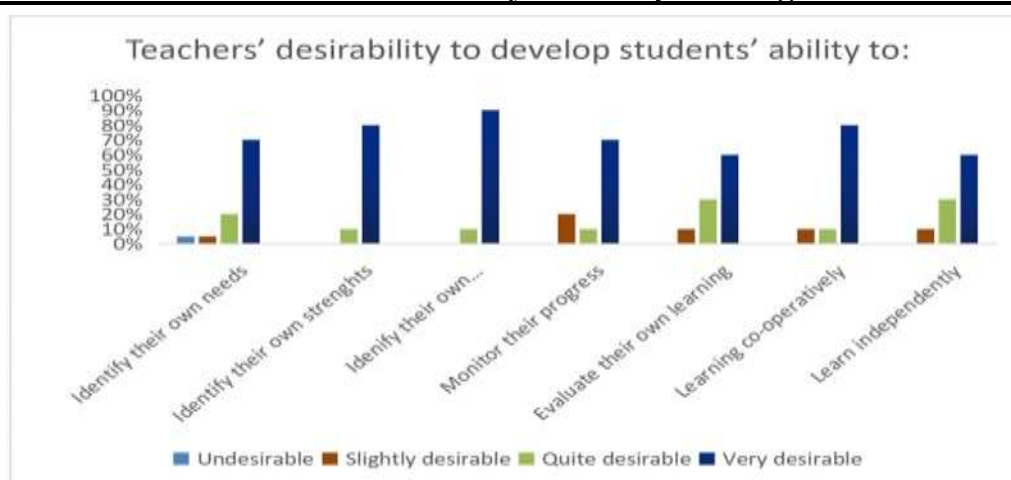


These replies indicate that instructors' willingness to involve students in language course decisions is greater than their capacity to do so. Teachers appear to be keen to include their students in decision-making about course objectives, materials, themes, teaching methodologies, classroom management, and the types of assignments and activities undertaken. Nevertheless, the majority of educators do not find judgements about 'how learning is assessed' to be favourable. Furthermore, student participation in decision-making was perceived as most practicable for educators concerning the subjects addressed and the nature of tasks and activities undertaken by students; however, it was regarded as least practicable regarding assessment methods, instructional materials, pedagogical approaches, course objectives, and classroom management. Educators rationalised their perspectives on the impracticality of engaging students in decision-making about these matters by asserting that students lack the requisite capability. A common remark is: "Students are unprepared to make decisions regarding their learning." They are only recipients at their educational institutions. We have not attained the phase in which pupils may determine their own learning.

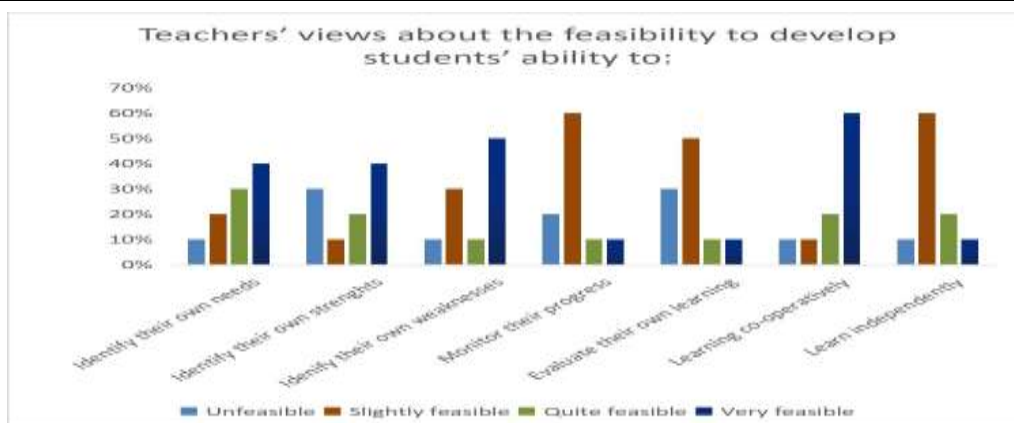
In the subsequent segment of the section, educators were enquired about their perceptions regarding the desirability and feasibility of cultivating a spectrum of competencies in their pupils that are widely recognised as indications of learner autonomy.

Charts 3 and 4 illustrate the replies of instructors on this topic.

Chart 3: Teachers' views on their desirability to develop learning to learn skills in their



Chat4: Teachers' views about the feasibility to develop learning to learn skills in their

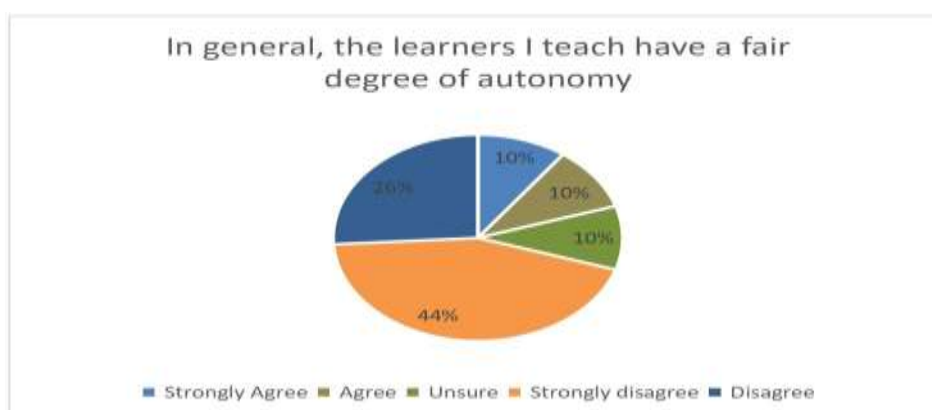


Similar to the previous part, teachers' desirability to develop learning skills in students was consistently higher than its feasibility, and in all cases, the differences between the two ratings were statistically significant. As in the first part, teachers' desirability seemed to be very high in relation to developing students' abilities to identify their own needs, strengths and weaknesses, monitor their progress, evaluate their own learning and learn cooperatively and independently. On the other hand, the skills of learning cooperatively, and identifying needs, strengths and weaknesses were perceived as the most feasible skills to be developed in learners. While the skills which were seen as the least feasible to be promoted were 'monitoring their progress', 'evaluating their own learning, and 'learning independently'. There are a number of reasons why teachers did not feel it was feasible to develop in their learners the abilities that autonomous learners must adopt. These reasons will be discussed under RQ4 and RQ6 below.

RQ4: Teachers' Perceptions about Their Learners' Level of Autonomy

In the questionnaire, teachers were asked about the extent to which they felt their students were autonomous. The following chart clarifies their answers:

Chart 5: Teachers' views about their learners' level of autonomy



As the chart above indicates, most of the teachers (44%) disagreed that their learners are autonomous, 26% showed their strong disagreement, 10% were unsure, while only 10% who revealed their agreement. This means that most of the teachers were unsatisfied with their learners' degree of autonomy. In the open-ended part of this question in the questionnaire and in the interview, the teachers were asked to comment on why they felt in the way they did. Teachers who showed their disagreement supported their views with a range of arguments which are given below with quotes for each:

- Students are lazy and not interested.

“Not that much, they are smart, clever, but they are lazy. They don’t make efforts to learn. They are not interested. When I give them homework they don’t do it all, or they try to copy it from the other students”.

“No, they are not autonomous. Sometimes, When I assign assignment I find them bringing some ready-made answers”

- Students are dependent on their teachers

“Not totally, they are still dependent on the teacher, they are not used to be independent and they are not taught to be independent”.

“Not all of them because some students depend fully on the teachers to give them everything”.

“They all of time wait for me to present the lesson and explain, they don’t take the initiative themselves”.

- Students lack responsibility

“No, they are not . It shows from the homework I give them. Most of students don’t do anything I give them. They are nor responsible. They are quite lazy. They can’t depend on the selves”.

- Students are phone addicted and lack motivation

“I don’t think so, and the reason is that they are phone addicted. They use their phones not for learning but just for entertainment. I give them some websites and videos to watch but no one cares. They are not motivated, they have many problems that are social such as family problems”.

“No, they don’t have that willingness or desire to study not only in English but also in other subjects”

“Students lack motivation. Only limited number of students who respond to my assignment and do further research”

Although many teachers expressed their views about their students’ weak level of autonomy, as noted above, 10% of teachers agreed that their learners have a fair degree of autonomy. They supported their views with the following arguments:

- Some learners are interested

“Some of them. It will be unfair to say no. Students who are autonomous are interested . Also they try to search and bring learning videos and take my opinion about them”.

- Students depend on themselves

“ when I assign a presentation, they make further research without coming to consult me since they depend on themselves. Also, they do some extra research via internet or dictionaries.”

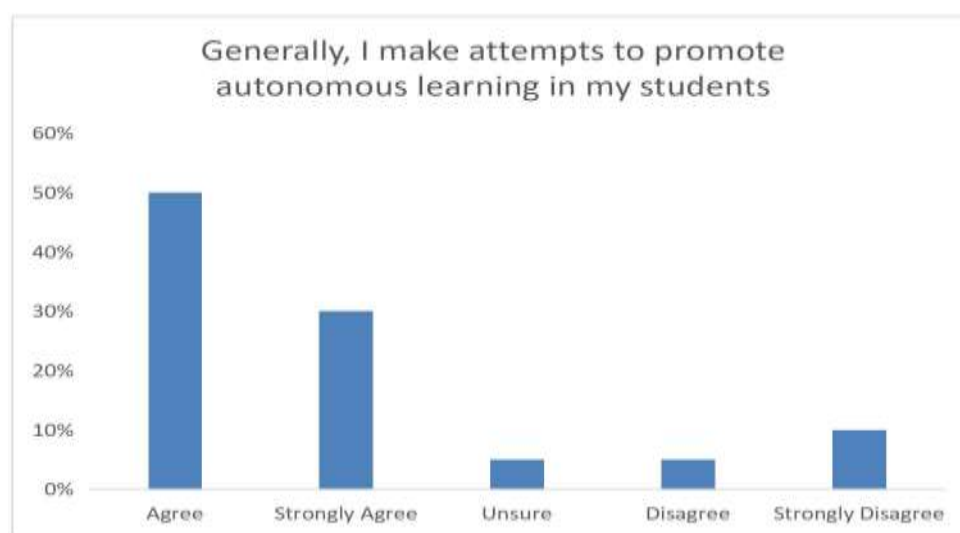
“Students who are autonomous prepare before coming to the class without asking them to prepare. Some students do presentations about the units they are studying without being asked to do so” .

Accordingly, it can be concluded from teachers’ perspectives that learners’ overall level of autonomy is very low and this is due to many factors such as students’ laziness and lack of interest, students’ over-reliance on their teachers, the lack of responsibility, phone addiction and lack of motivation. Other factors which teachers felt contributed to what they saw as a lack of autonomy in their learners will be provided in the discussion of the last research question which discusses teachers’ challenges while promoting LA.

RQ5: Teachers’ practices to Promote Autonomous Learning

In the questionnaire, teachers were asked about the extent to which they try to develop learner autonomy in their own work. Most of the teachers agreed that they make attempts to promote it as the following chart demonstrates:

Chart 6: Teachers’ views on whether they try to enhance learners’ autonomy.



The data indicates that 50% of instructors concurred that they strive to foster student autonomy, 40% expressed strong agreement, and just 10% indicated dissent. During the interview and the open-ended section of the questionnaire, educators who claimed to foster student autonomy were requested to provide examples of the tactics they employ to achieve this. A classroom observation was conducted with the same instructors to provide a comprehensive overview of their techniques aimed at enhancing language acquisition. Our thorough investigation indicated nine primary tactics employed by instructors to augment their learners' autonomy. The following are enumerated, along with a representative instructor quotation for each, along with a comprehensive explanation of the observed instructional practices:

A. Utilising collaborative work to enhance learner autonomy

I urge them to collaborate in pairs or groups to exchange ideas and learning methodologies. I also advocate for pair

-correction and self-correction. I urge kids to collaborate in pairs and groups, since this autonomy fosters their ability to tackle assigned tasks independently. I also engage in extracurricular activities, such as project-based learning and map sketching. The use of pair work was the most prevalent method employed by several educators to foster

student autonomy. In a particular session, the instructor instructed his pupils to engage in reading a discourse concerning health concerns with their partners. He subsequently requested that students compose their own dialogue, assuming the roles of a doctor and a patient, and present it to the class. This technique effectively enhances autonomous learning as it is a socio-affective strategy that encourages students to reduce their dependence on the instructor through collaborative learning and the acquisition of additional learning skills (Çalici, 2015).

B. Research-based tasks

I provide them activities that require independent investigation on certain themes, allowing them to formulate new definitions and report their findings to their peers. “Occasionally, I deliver a lesson and to enhance students’ understanding of the topic, I instruct them to conduct research on related themes outside the classroom.” Delegating assignments that need more study was frequently noticed as a prevalent teaching strategy employed by the majority of educators. For instance, during a class discussion on "brain drain," the instructor instructed her students to gather further material about the impacts of brain drain on both the country of origin and the host country before the conclusion of the session. Such exercises will undoubtedly assist pupils in acclimating to conducting more research and enhancing their learning independently.

C. Employing the scaffolding technique

“I assist them with the writing tasks initially, allowing them to complete the remainder independently at home.”

The scaffolding method was also evident in one teacher's practices. Subsequently, following an introduction to the elements of an article and potential phrases to aid their writing, the instructor instructed her pupils to compose an essay for their school magazine on the benefits and disadvantages of modern technology. The instructor urged her students to do it at home and utilise other resources available online. By employing such tactics, educators primarily assume the role of facilitators, providing assistance to students in their learning processes and fostering possibilities for independent learning. This approach enables students to transcend the confines of prescribed curricula, allowing them to enhance their education through self-directed learning activities of their choosing .

D. Project-oriented endeavours

“Prior to addressing a subject assigned in the program, I request that they prepare a project on the topic we will discuss.” For instance, when the subject pertains to scientific development, I instruct them to create a project analysing the merits and demerits of scientific advancement to motivate them to conduct research prior to attending class. Soliciting student involvement in lesson planning “Occasionally, I request their assistance with lesson planning in the classroom.” This approach instils a sense of responsibility for their own learning. Instructing pupils on effective learning strategies to enhance learning autonomy. I endeavour to instruct students in effective learning strategies, including task management and the introduction of various skills and methodologies, such as skimming and scanning. Initially, they require supervision; thereafter, they can achieve independence. I instruct them on the approach of learning. For instance, if the course focusses on vocabulary, I endeavour to instruct them on expanding their

lexicon through the utilisation of prefixes, suffixes, and word building techniques.

E. Requesting students to deliver the lesson

I request that they complete the lesson independently. Prior to that, I provide them with the regulations they must adhere to. “Occasionally, I request that they introduce the lesson, particularly with Common Core students.” Encouraging student autonomy “Occasionally, I incentivised them by awarding additional marks for conducting further research.”

F. Assigning presentations.

“Occasionally, I assign presentations to provide students with the opportunity to work independently and articulate their ideas publicly, thereby enhancing their motivation.” A minority of instructors (10%) who said that they do not endeavour to promote learners' autonomy in their instruction attributed their stance to a deficiency in student motivation. A common

remark in this context was as follows: “NO (I do not endorse LA); I attempted to promote it, but I felt disheartened as they do not embrace the concept.” I attempted several times to motivate students to engage in project-based learning pertinent to their culture; nevertheless, they subsequently lose their enthusiasm as they begin the job. I am uncertain as to the reason. Teachers employ several ways to promote independent learning among their pupils. Some are documented and seen, while others are just recounted by instructors during interviews. Nonetheless, this does not imply that the instructional approaches not witnessed are unused by the educators, since they may have been applied at times that did not align with our classroom observation.

RQ6: The Obstacles Instructors Encounter in Facilitating Learner Autonomy.

To address this study topic, educators were solicited to articulate the obstacles they perceived in their efforts to foster student autonomy. They discovered various unfavourable variables, some of which were previously indicated in RQ4. The following factors are illustrated below with corresponding quotations for each:

1. The absence of ICT

“There is an absence of electronic devices, including laptops, loudspeakers, televisions, and interactive boards, which would encourage greater student engagement in the learning process.” “There is no ICT available in classrooms that would enable me to conduct activities aimed at enhancing students' autonomy.”

2. Overcrowding

The whole setting is unhelpful. The class size surpasses 40 students, complicating my ability to engage in discourse with each individual and assist them in planning and monitoring their learning. “Overcrowding affects not only students' autonomy but also their learning process.”

3. The duration of the curriculum

“Certain elements in the curriculum can foster student autonomy; however, the challenge lies in the limited time available, as we are constrained by an extensive program that must be completed by year-end.” “We possess ten units, resulting in an extensive course.” With 10 units and 3 hours every week, you can do nothing and feel as though you are in a race against time.

4. Students' deficiency in motivation

One of the issues is student motivation. Students exhibit negligence. When I assign tasks, only two or three individuals do them. Others are only passive. The lack of motivation among students presents

a barrier, mostly attributed to unemployment. They believe that exerting effort is unnecessary, as they feel that no amount of study would get them a desirable career.

5. Learners' deficiency in autonomous learning experience

Students are used to conducting research at home; it is well acknowledged that learning activities rely on research, among other factors. They are also unaccustomed to planning lessons at home or reflecting on their own learning processes. “We have not yet succeeded in persuading our students to contemplate and reflect on their learning.” Students attend school with the perception that they are learning solely for examinations and to achieve high grades, rather than to cultivate and expand their knowledge beyond the classroom.

6. The deficiency of teacher training

Educators often adhere to the instructional methodologies acquired during their pedagogical training programs. They possess less knowledge in promoting LA, rendering the task very challenging for them. Numerous educators are unaware of the methods for instruction. They have not been instructed to be self-sufficient or to impart self-sufficiency.

7. The absence of teachers' autonomy

“We are not permitted to select an alternative book as a resource, except for the one mandated by the Ministry of Education.” We are compelled to adhere to the curriculum meticulously.

Students are prohibited from participating in decisions on course materials, and professors are also restricted. All directives are mandated and must be adhered to. Neither we as educators nor our pupils are afforded choices.

5. CONCLUSION

the primary obstacles identified by the educators are to students, the institution, and the instructors themselves. While the educators firmly believed that institutional factors (e.g., curriculum, overcrowding, etc.) impeded their ability to foster learner autonomy, most of the constraints they recognised, as previously discussed in RQ4, were attributed to perceived issues with learners' attitudes, motivation, and inexperience in autonomous learning. The findings of this study significantly enhance the literature by elucidating how EFL instructors in Moroccan public secondary schools see learner autonomy and the strategies they employ to foster more autonomy among their students. The optimal results were obtained by a mixed-method approach, adhering to the methodological framework established in Al-Busaidi's (2012) study. This study's key findings are summarised as follows: The psychological perspectives on learner autonomy garnered the highest level of support in the instructors' questionnaire replies. Many educators believe that fostering learner autonomy requires students to be motivated to understand how to learn and to effectively monitor and assess their own learning processes. This prevailing notion regarding the significance of the psychological dimension in promoting language acquisition aligns with prior research and can be regarded as what Benson termed “the consensus view in the current academic literature.”

Teachers' conceptions of learner autonomy aligned with established literature, consistently emphasising ideas such as accountability, self-sufficiency, and 'learning how to learn,' which demonstrate their comprehension of what constitutes learner autonomy. The educators had a favourable attitude towards the concept of student autonomy and its beneficial effects on language learners. The educators recognised several advantages of learner autonomy, including the enhancement

of language competence, the facilitation of goal attainment, the cultivation of effective research skills, and the augmentation of learner motivation. There was a notable disparity between instructors' perceptions of the desirability of including learners in various decisions regarding their education and their opinions about the practicality of such involvement, especially with objectives, assessment, materials, and instructional methodologies. The disparity between theory and practice corroborates findings from further research on foreign language instructors' ideas on student autonomy. There was a notable disparity between instructors' perceptions of the desirability of fostering a variety of autonomy-related skills in their pupils and their ideas regarding the practicality of achieving this goal. Most educators expressed dissatisfaction with the students' degree of autonomy. They substantiated their perspectives with several justifications, including pupils' excessive dependence on instructors, apathy and disinterest among students, a deficiency in responsibility, addiction to mobile phones, and a lack of desire. Many educators indicated that they fostered student autonomy in their instruction. Their accounts of the process, together with our classroom observations, underscored many pedagogical practices, including student involvement in lesson planning. Delegating presentations and assignments grounded on research, instructing students in effective learning strategies, employing the scaffolding technique, promoting collaborative pair work and group activities, and enhancing students' intrinsic drive for independent learning. The educators identified many obstacles that constrained their ability to foster student autonomy. The institution and educators, albeit learner-related aspects were the most frequently referenced by the teachers. These findings corroborate the conclusions of other research about the impediments and constraints of LA growth (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Haji-Othman & Wood, 2016; Nguyen, 2016). In summary, the findings reveal a cohort of highly trained and experienced English language educators that possess favourable views towards learner autonomy and are well-versed in the fundamental principles that often characterise it. In the context of their teaching environment, these educators exhibit far less optimism regarding the potential for enhancing autonomy among their students. Numerous opportunities were provided to students both in and out of the classroom to cultivate and improve their autonomy; yet, there was a consensus that the students lacked the capability and motivation to capitalise on these possibilities. Educators saw constraints due to an extensive curriculum with centrally prescribed material and several reasons that restricted their efforts to use diverse strategies for fostering learner autonomy. Nevertheless, most teachers ceased their efforts and sought different strategies to foster autonomy in their work. The cultivation of learner autonomy necessitates essential improvements within the Moroccan educational system. Moroccan educators, administrators, and teacher trainers must implement measures to cultivate an appropriate level of learner autonomy inside their institutions. The following recommendations should be proposed: Most teachers, as previously noted, did not obtain training in fostering learners' autonomy. Educators who are lacking training in fostering autonomous learning may be unable to cultivate this learning modality in their pupils. It is advisable for administrators to arrange seminars or training sessions focused on learner autonomy.

Educators must expand their comprehension of potential techniques to augment their pupils' autonomy. It is imperative that calls be made for teacher trainers to educate prospective educators with the requisite information, behaviours, techniques, and skills necessary to successfully foster learner autonomy in their classrooms. Furthermore, to cultivate learners' autonomy, educators must likewise exhibit individuality. Teachers' autonomy encompasses not just their reflection on personal knowledge and practices but also the ability to make decisions on what and how to teach, free from institutional constraints (Benson, 2000). Nevertheless, the findings indicated that the majority of instructors expressed a necessity to adhere to a predetermined syllabus, lacking the autonomy to

deviate from the required content, which leads to "control rather than support" (Behrman, Deolalikar, & Soon, 2002). It is strongly advised to provide educators the autonomy to select resources they deem suitable, without being subjected to oversight or mandated to adhere to a certain predetermined curriculum. Furthermore, student participation in decisions regarding language courses is very advisable. Students should be afforded the ability to select their learning methods and content based on their interests, as advocated by Nunan's model of learner autonomy in the English Guidelines for Moroccan secondary schools (2007). This cannot be achieved if the learning content is mandated and instructors and students are not afforded the autonomy to determine what and how to study. Moreover, while metacognitive skills (planning, self-monitoring, and self-assessment) are deemed essential for students to study independently, educators must assist their students in adopting and mastering these strategies inside the classroom. Educators should first motivate their students to establish goals and assist them in determining the necessary material, resources, and time required to achieve these objectives. Students will progressively develop the ability to formulate their own plans and select resources that will assist them in achieving their objectives. Educators must assist students in reflecting on their learning processes and determining suitable solutions to address their academic challenges. Ultimately, educators may promote self-assessment among students by utilising learning diaries, self-study exams, and self-evaluation forms. By doing so, students will be able to assess their efforts in the learning process, analyse the tactics employed, and formulate new strategies and alternatives. Furthermore, the study found that the absence of ICT and the student enrolment numbers are significant hurdles instructors have in promoting LA. It is strongly advised that school administrators provide classrooms with essential technologies, including projectors, computers, and Internet access, as these tools enhance students' ability to manage, customise their learning experiences, and increase their engagement (Dang, 2012). School administrators should reduce class sizes to enable instructors to engage in discourse with each student and assist them in planning and monitoring their learning. Another concern to address is pupils' over reliance on their professors. The fundamental cause for this may be attributed to pupils' accustomed reliance on spoon-feeding or rote learning throughout basic education. It is recommended that professors refrain from imparting all necessary knowledge and abilities to their pupils, allowing them to independently seek information with minimal assistance and direction. Learner autonomy is a culture that should be instilled in pupils from a young age. This approach will enable pupils to learn independently as they go to subsequent levels of schooling. Another issue that requires resolution is pupils' intrinsic motivation. The survey revealed that most teachers identified the absence of student enthusiasm as a significant obstacle to the advancement of LA. The majority of educators indicated that familial issues are the primary causes of this lack of drive. In this regard, it is exceedingly advisable for administrators to provide access to certain consultants within schools. These advisers can provide students with guidance to mitigate the impact of familial issues. They can assist in strategizing for future academic positions, therefore enhancing their psychological well-being. Moreover, students' deficiency in motivation may also stem from their inadequate learning practices. Consequently, enhancing students' understanding of diverse learning tactics that favourably influence the learner's motivational or affective state.

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