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INTRODUCTION

One of the main aims of an educational program is to produce talented, knowledgeable and creative students, whose desire is to educate further or specialise themselves and enjoy employability, leadership, entrepreneurial and ethical attributes. Researchers proved that teacher-centred classroom is not a successful experience anymore to enable the learners to use whatever they learn in their own life. Students can learn and use what they learn in a real situation if they participate actively in the process of learning. The need for the change within the traditional education appeared in the twentieth century, when it was realized that in the out-of-date educational atmosphere students become passive, apathetic and bored. As one response to the difficulties the concept of student-centred point of view, independence, learner autonomy and autonomous learning practices have emerged, which brought a lot of innovations, teaching and learning theories, approaches, learning styles and strategies into educational systems throughout the world.

Concomitant with responsibility there are a number of features that characterise learners who wish to become autonomous: risk taking, self-reflection, self-awareness, creativity, flexibility and the ability to think critically and analytically which are examined in this thesis. Autonomy depends on other factors as well as on the needs of the learners, their motivation, their learning strategies and their language awareness. As a result, we can say that autonomy is an attribute of learners, rather than a learning situation. With possessing these attributes learners engage in a process that gradually leads to autonomy. In this process, learners' readiness interacts with skills taught through educational interventions and experience sharing. Perceived as such, learner autonomy is a partly acquired and partly innate outcome. This is, in fact, what Little refers to in his definition of autonomy as a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision making, and independent action [31].

As it was mentioned above the students are required to be responsible for their learning. Nevertheless, setting an autonomous classroom requires responsibility from the teacher as well, because he/she has to be aware of the learners' willingness, abilities and readiness for autonomous learning. This problem creates the basis of the research question which aim is to reveal the learners' readiness for autonomous learning. The research question is investigated from both the learners' and teachers' points of view. Besides this, the respondents' familiarity with the term, the learners' autonomous activities and the teachers' attitude towards autonomy are examined as well.

The *importance* of this thesis lies in the significance of investigating the learners' ability and preparedness for autonomous learning. It is known that students learn the most effectively

when the teaching method is appropriate for their age, features, interests, weaknesses and strengths. The present paper tries to emphasize the criteria and conditions of autonomous learning.

The *subject matter* of this paper is autonomous learning and the learners' readiness for adopting this approach to learning. Moreover, this thesis investigates the attitudes of teachers and learners towards autonomy.

The *objects* of the present paper are 5 teachers and 95 students from three Transcarpathian secondary schools with Hungarian language of instruction.

The *aim* of the present paper is to get an overall picture of autonomous learning, the advantages and disadvantages of this approach, autonomous learning strategies and the necessary characteristics of an autonomous learner. Moreover, the author of the paper tries to examine the given teachers' attitude towards learner autonomy, and the students' preparedness for autonomous learning.

This study reviews a considerable amount of literature starting from the first scholars of autonomy to other researchers' discoveries throughout the world. The general and critical viewpoints towards autonomous learning possessed by the researchers and the author of this paper give the *theoretical value* of the thesis.

The *practical value* of this thesis is that the empirical research tries to investigate the effectiveness of autonomous learning in the Transcarpathian area under the known circumstances, the conditions and the teachers' attitude towards adopting this kind of teaching, in particular, the learners' preparedness to take control of their own learning. The study tries to give some useful suggestions to increase learner autonomy as well.

The *methods* of the thesis include the analysis and synthesis of the academic literature and the classification of the linguists' definitions and opinions on autonomy. The questionnaires as research instruments and the investigation and comparison of teachers' and students' answers also belong to the methods used in the third part of the thesis.

The first definition of learner autonomy emerged from the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project, which was led to the publication of Holec's seminal report. He is called the father of autonomous learning [23]. Besides Holec, a large and growing body of literature has investigated the given topic. The following leading scholars have broadened this area to a great extent: Candy [16] and Wenden [53] who gave overall views on the idea of autonomous learning; David Gardner [45] and Leni Dam [30] who dealt with how to create an autonomous classroom; Leslie Dickinson [15], David Little [31] and Phil Benson who gave an introduction to the theory and practice of autonomy, James and Garrett [48] discussed on the autonomous strategies and Frank Lacey [17] defined the principles of learner autonomy. In Holec's report autonomy was

defined as the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning [1, 3, 23]. His definition, which is most widely cited in the literature and has inspired a number of variations, remains remarkably robust.

The present thesis is divided into an introduction, three parts, a conclusion, a summary in English and Ukrainian, and appendices.

The first part gives a brief overview of the understandings of the term 'autonomy' and the history of autonomous learning. It investigates student-centred approaches which possess autonomy, the differences between the teacher-centred and student-centred methods highlighting the reasons for the shift. The benefits and the critiques are also examined in this part, and the areas where this approach can be challenged.

The second part presents the characteristics, features and criteria which have to exist within a student to become autonomous. There are certain conditions of autonomous learning, which contain the attitudes of the teacher, character traits within students, and the role of parents in the process. Specific actions taken by the learners make the learning more effective and more transferable to autonomy. Here belong the cognitive, metacognitive, social, control and independence strategies which are discussed in the second part of the thesis. The importance of evaluation is also highlighted, due to the assessment of autonomy is essential for its development.

The third part analyses the efficiency of autonomous learning on the basis of the results of the questionnaires completed by learners and teachers in three secondary schools in Transcarpathia. It investigates English language teachers' opinion on the concept of autonomous learning, their usage of it, their students' readiness for autonomous learning and their autonomy level. The experimental research shows that due to the majority of the respondent pupils do not possess several necessary traits and some required criteria are not given, the investigated classes are not ready to learn autonomously.

The rapid changes of technology and the new requirements of the modern world cause serious changes in foreign language teaching and learning. The differing needs and fields of interest of students are rapidly changing in the same way. These conditions give more pressure on learners and students and require more efforts. The autonomous learning method is one of the consequences of the new modern ideologies, which have to be adopted by teachers if the necessary conditions are suitable and adequate.

AUTONOMOUS LANGUAGE LEARNING

Learner autonomy in foreign language teaching and learning has been a popular topic for a long time. Since the beginning of the millennium year, many new approaches and innovations have been used to develop learner autonomy in foreign language education. This term focuses on the fact that one as a learner plans, implements, and evaluates his/her learning. It is becoming to be accepted, but not used widely, due to the teacher assumes the greatest part of the responsibility for learning and the learners simply follow their instructions. There have been lots of studies which found that the autonomous learning appears to be an effective approach and develops better study skills and understanding; however are the learners ready for autonomous learning? If a teacher adopts the autonomous approach, it is inevitable to investigate the learners' readiness, because it requires assuming full responsibility for learning.

In this part of the thesis different understandings of the definition of autonomy and the history of this approach are presented. It is determined that autonomous learning is more widely accepted nowadays, especially in the western countries. According to the results of the variable researches many approaches are differentiated in which autonomous learning is adaptable. The benefits and the disadvantages of the autonomous approach are discussed as well, and however this approach is not without critiques, several studies ensure that autonomous learning provides skills for life, creates independent learners and responds to the changing and differing needs of individual students.

1.1 Definitions of Autonomous Learning

For many years now, *autonomy* has been a key theme and a popular focus for discussion in foreign language teaching. This popularity is not surprising, since the concept accords well with several of the central pedagogical preoccupations, notably the view that language learning requires the active involvement of learners; the attempts to introduce learner-centred methods; and the goal of helping learners to become independent from their teachers in their learning and use of language. It is also supported from outside language teaching by a general educational concern to help students become more independent in how they think, learn and behave [22].

According to Holec the *autonomous learning* is the ability to take charge of one's learning, noting that this ability is not inborn but must be acquired either by "natural" means or by formal learning, in a "systematic, deliberate way", and pointing out that "to take charge of

one's learning is to have the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning" [1, 3, 23].

Benson and Voller related the word of autonomy to five different concepts:

- Situation in which students study on their own.
- An inborn capacity which is supported by institutional situation.
- Student responsibility for their own learning.
- The right of learner to determine the direction of learning.
- A set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning.

However, *learner autonomy* is a problematic term because it is widely confused with self-instruction, "self-access", "self-study", "out-of-class learning" or "distance learning". Benson asserts that these terms basically describe various ways and degrees of learning by one's self, whereas autonomy refers to the abilities and attitudes. He states that not only there is not necessary condition between autonomy and self-instruction but also self-instruction may hinder autonomy. He emphasizes on the presence and contribution of teacher toward the smooth progress of the process while preceding control to the learners [8]. The rapidly expanding literature has debated, whether learner autonomy should be thought of as capacity or behaviour; whether it is characterised by learner responsibility or learner control; whether it is a psychological phenomenon with political implications or a political right with psychological implications; and whether the development of learner autonomy depends on a complementary teacher autonomy [30].

The more recent literature has begun to use the term *self-directed learning* together with the concept of learner autonomy in the context of institutional education. No matter what the term is used, both concepts are concerned with teaching students how to think, how to learn and to take control over their own learning. The only distinction between autonomy and self-directed learning is clearly emphasized by Dickinson who says that in self-direction learners accept responsibility for all the decisions but not necessarily implement those decisions; on the other hand, in autonomous learning the learners are entirely responsible for all the decisions concerned with their learning and also the implementation of these decisions [15, 3].

It goes without saying, of course, that this shift of responsibility from teachers to learners does not exist in a vacuum, but is the result of a concatenation of changes to the curriculum itself towards a more *learner-centred learning*. What is more, this reshaping of teacher and learner roles has been conducive to a radical change in the age-old distribution of power and authority that used to plague the traditional classroom [48]. It is inevitable to state, that learner autonomy does not mean that the teacher becomes redundant, abdicating his control over what is transpiring in the language learning process [31].

There is nevertheless broad agreement that *autonomous learners* understand the purpose of their learning programme, share in the setting of learning goals, take initiatives in planning and executing learning activities in an independent way, and regularly review their learning and evaluate its effectiveness [23]. *Independent learners* have the capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action [31]. In other words, there is a consensus that the practice of learner autonomy requires insight, a positive attitude, ability for reflection, and a readiness to be proactive in self-management and in interaction with others. This working definition captures the challenge of learner autonomy: a holistic view of the learner that requires the teachers to engage with the cognitive, metacognitive, affective and social dimensions of language learning and to worry about how they interact with one another [15].

1.2 Brief History of Autonomous Learning

Second language acquisition predates institutionalised language learning by many centuries. Even in the modern world millions of individuals continue to learn languages without the aid of formal instruction. Although there is much that one can learn from their efforts, the theory of autonomy in language learning has been essentially concerned with the organisation of formal education. As such, it has a history of approximately four decades [53] and it is considered to start with the work done in the Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL) in France in the 1970's [37].

CRAPEL was created as a result of the Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project. After the death of the original leader Yves Châlon, Henri Holec became the leader of the CRAPEL institute and he still remains as one of the central figures in the field of autonomous language learning today [8].

Interest in the concept of autonomy within the field of language education was in part a response to ideals and expectations aroused by the political turmoil in Europe in the late 1960's [20]. Holec began his report to the Council of Europe with a description of the social and ideological context within which ideas of autonomy in learning emerged. The end of the 1960's saw the development in all industrially advanced western countries of a socio-political tendency characterized by a definition of social progress, no longer in terms of increasing material well-being through an increase in consumer goods and services. However, in terms of an improvement in the "quality of life" – an expression that did not become a slogan until some years later – based on the development of a respect for the individual in society [23].

The Council of Europe's Modern Languages Project aimed to provide learners with opportunities for lifelong learning and the approach developed at CRAPEL was influenced by

proposals from the emerging field of self-directed learning which insisted “on the need to develop the individual’s freedom by developing those abilities which will enable him to act more responsibly in running the affairs of the society in which he lives”. This connection between education, individual freedom and social responsibility also reflected prevailing views of personal autonomy in European and North American political philosophy at the time.

Autonomy, or the capacity to take charge of one’s own learning, was seen as a natural product of the practice of self-directed learning, or learning in which the objectives, progress and evaluation of learning are determined by the learners themselves. Among the key innovations in the CRAPEL approach to the provision of opportunities and support for self-directed language learning were the self-access resource centre and the idea of learner training. In its early days, the theory and practice of autonomy in language learning also enjoyed an uneasy association with ideas of “individualisation” in language instruction [53].

Through peer-to-peer interaction, collaborative thinking can lead to an abundance of knowledge. In placing a teacher closer to a peer level, knowledge and learning is enhanced, benefitting the student and classroom overall. Vygotsky has offered relevant points to the field of autonomy, especially with the idea of the zone of proximal development. The students typically learn vicariously through one another. Scaffolding is important when fostering independent thinking skills. Vygotsky proclaims, that learning which is oriented toward developmental levels that have already been reached is ineffective from the viewpoint of the child’s overall development. It does not aim for a new stage of the developmental process but rather lags behind this process [49].

Little argues that the zone of proximal development not only entails the features of autonomous learning and teaching (the importance of expert guiding, that learning comes from doing and doing things for oneself, independent problem solving), but that it also defines the importance of autonomy especially in language learning. Little mentions how the target language needs to be used in order to find the zone of proximal development, giving language learner autonomy one of its “essential characteristic” [31].

In addition to developments in the academic field, there were also social changes taking place, which created a society where autonomous language learning could and needed to develop. Gremmo and Riley list these developments. However, as stated by Gremmo and Riley that by no means is this listing the absolute truth about the development leading to autonomous language learning. According to them, it would be extremely foolhardy to try to trace these concepts back to any single source or date of origin, especially a recent one, since they have complex relationships with developments in philosophy, political science, psychology and sociology, stretching back many centuries in some cases [20].

Benson writes about the four main areas that have influenced the concept of autonomous language learning beyond the field of language learning. These are the psychology of learning, educational reform, adult education and the philosophy of personal autonomy. According to Benson in the field of psychology of learning autonomous language learning is based on mainly constructivism. As he stated: “If knowledge is constructed uniquely within each individual through social interaction, it follows that learning will be most effective when learners are fully involved in decisions about the content and process of learning” [8].

The history of autonomy is not based on single ideology or political view. Naturally, autonomous language learning, especially in the context of this thesis is concerned with pedagogical context, but this larger context helps to see the ideology behind the idea. Benson summarizes how the understanding of the larger background is an important part of the concept of autonomous language learning. In the context of language education, the more convincing arguments for autonomy are likely to be pedagogical rather than political or philosophical. Yet we should also recognise that pedagogical decisions in respect to autonomy are often based upon underlying philosophical assumptions [3, 8].

Holec continued to emphasise that autonomy should be used to describe a capacity of the learner, but others began to use it to refer to situations in which learners worked under their own direction outside the conventional language-teaching classroom [1, 23]. Riley and Zoppis, for example, described learners working in a self-access centre as working in “semi-autonomy” or “complete autonomy” [38]. Dickinson defined autonomy as “the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions”. He also used the term “full autonomy” to describe the situation in which the learner is entirely independent of teachers, institutions or specially prepared materials. Although there is now consensus within the field that autonomy best refers to the capacity to control or take charge of one’s learning, the term “autonomous learning” is still used to refer to the situation of studying without the direct presence of a teacher, especially in the literature on learning beyond the classroom [15].

Researchers on autonomy were aware that in order to develop a capacity to take control of their learning, learners needed to be freed from the direction and control of others. At the same time, they were well aware that learners who chose, or were forced by circumstances, to study languages in isolation from teachers and other learners, would not necessarily develop this capacity. However, the argument that the opportunity to exercise autonomy through self-directed learning was a necessary precondition for the development of autonomy was interpreted by critics as an argument that it was a sufficient condition. Moreover, the theory and practice of autonomy had, in a sense, become framed within the practice of individualised self-directed

learning, and was seen by many as being irrelevant to classroom learning. The use of the term independence as a synonym for autonomy by some researchers also led critics to view the field of autonomy as one in which crucial questions concerning the social character of learning are avoided [53].

Benson mentions that the amount of publications released in the 21st century already exceed the number of publications done in the previous 25 years [8].

Some of the most significant researchers, as Holec, Little, Benson and Dickinson were already mentioned above. But besides them several investigators also have broadened this area in a large way, for example: Philip Candy [16], James & Garrett [48], Leni Dam [36], David Gardner [45], Richard Smith [44], Frank Lacey [17], Hayo Reinders [12], Sara Cotterall [16], Barbara Sinclair [27], Dimitrios Thanasoulas [48]. Moreover, Little notes that although increased interest has been raised towards autonomous language learning, it still is not a general feature among language learners on a larger scale or among mainstream education. None of this means, of course, that autonomy is now a defining characteristic of language learners around the world; on the contrary, the practical realisation of language learner autonomy remains elusive. Finding practical realisations of autonomous language learning is one the biggest interests in the field today [31].

Twenty-first century learning must be relevant, engaging, effective and learner-centric. It is therefore essential to replace outmoded closed classroom models of teaching and learning, which emphasize delivery of information by an instructor and/or from a textbook, with new more learner-centric models. Tailoring learning pathways to the characteristics and aspirations of individual learners will undoubtedly demand significant organizational changes in schools [19]. Other critical changes include a greater emphasis on learners taking responsibility for their own learning and the development of education systems that nurture such responsibility. Research has shown that learners' attitudes, ownership of learning and level of independence are all affected when they take responsibility for their learning. Adapting education to the needs of the twenty-first century learner means adopting a flexible curriculum and provides learning that is individualized and self-regulated. This places additional demands on learners to make the right choices and on teachers to facilitate learner autonomy and independence. Teachers must become comfortable with managing new forms of classroom dynamics and supporting multiple teams of students working independently, as they explore and gain new understandings and skills to prepare them for 21st century life [40].

1.3 Different Approaches and Studies

The theoretical standing of autonomous learning, also called student-centred learning is often surprisingly absent in the literature. However, it appears to relate primarily to the constructivist view of learning in the importance it places on activity, discovery and independent learning. Cognitive theory also highlights activity but in a different form than that supported by the constructivists. The cognitive view supports the idea that the activity of learning is computed in the head, or as often described in the mind. The constructivist view of activity is related more to performing physical activities, for example, projects, practical tasks [4, 36].

Autonomous learning relates to the change in focus in the classroom from the teacher to the student or from the teaching to the learning. This is also based on a constructivist theory of learning, whereby each individual student constructs their own understanding based on their prior knowledge and current learning experiences [44]. It emphasises activity and the importance of communities of practice and others in the learning process [36].

1.3.1 Teacher-Centred versus Student-Centred Learning

Autonomous learning is not a widely used and excepted approach of learning and teaching yet. This approach is not without difficulties and dangers of individuality in the concept of the social learner and this can lead in a seemingly contradictory way to disempowerment [36].

In student-centred learning students develop their ability to use the language and teacher use and facilitates students' development of language skill. Learner-centred teaching style is responsive, collaborative, problem-centred, and democratic in which both students and the instructor decide how, what, and when learning occurs. On the other hand, teacher-centred teaching style is considered as a style of instruction that is formal controlled, and autocratic in which the instructor directs how, what, and when students learn [43].

A more useful presentation of student-centred learning is to see these terms as either end of a continuum, using the three concepts regularly used to describe student-centred learning.

Figure 1.3.1 Differences between Teacher and Student-Centred Learning [36]

Teacher-centred learning

Student-centred learning

Low level of student choice

High level of student choice

Student passive

Student active

Power is primarily with teacher

Power is primarily with the student

In examining how the teacher might look at this in practice, it is worth thinking how far up the continuum he is able to move within the contextual barriers in his teaching situation [36]. This includes a consideration of the learners' subject-discipline, classroom size, institutional infrastructure and institutional traditions, among other things [7].

There are other outstanding differences between the teacher-centred and students-centred approaches. Teacher-centred approach views the teacher as active and students as fundamentally passive. However, in students-centred approach, both students and teacher are active participants who share responsibility for the students' learning. In teacher-centred approach, the student works alone, on the contrary, in students-centred approach, students work in pairs or in group depending on the purpose of the activity. After that, the next difference is the situation of the classroom. In teacher-centred approach, the situation of the class is quiet. Because of the teacher's responsibility to transmit all the information to the students, teacher will talk and the students just listen and absorb (or take a nap). On the other hand, in students-centred approach, the situation of the class is often noisy and busy and the teacher must be comfortable with the idea that the students may make mistakes that are not heard and corrected [43].

1.3.2 Student-Centred Learning Approaches

One student-centred approach to curriculum design, the *problem-based learning*, allows for some choice within a programme of areas that students may study. It allows students to set some of their own learning objectives/outcomes, dependent on prior knowledge. Problem-based learning encourages the students to develop their own learning goals, fill the gaps in their knowledge or understanding. This element of choice or control is referred to in many of the definitions of student-centred learning. Problem-based learning is above the student choice aspect of the autonomous learning in Figure 1.3.1, than the usual problem-solving or problem-oriented exercises performed in a lecture. These approaches are more controlled by the teacher and lecturer. However, they are useful in addressing the active learning aspect of student-centred learning. Other approaches to curriculum design also support the idea of student choice and activity in learning, for example, the resource-based learning [36]. *Resource-based learning* is a view which gives prominence to the role of resources in the teaching and learning process. It is concerned with the nature of the activities which learners will be carrying out, whether students will be working individually or in groups, the nature of the support students can get and the ways

in which learning will be assessed. In this approach students needed to learn how to learn languages rather than be told what to learn [30].

Project-based learning belongs to the student-centred pedagogy [55]. It involves a dynamic classroom approach in which it is believed that students acquire a deeper knowledge, and students gain knowledge and skills by working for an extended period of time to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging and complex question, problem, or challenge [51]. Educationalists state that it involves groups of learners working together to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product. It is based on the idea that learning is a naturally social act. Learning occurs through active engagement among peers, either face-to-face or online [41].

The *cooperative language learning* can be mentioned here as well, which is the instructional use of small groups. The students work together to maximize their own and each other's learning. In the ideal classroom, all students would learn how to work cooperatively with others, compete for gaiety and enjoyment, and work autonomously on their own. The teacher decides which goal structure to implement within each lesson [26].

It is important to integrate and consider these approaches when the goal is to design for student-centred learning [41].

1.4 Benefits of Becoming Autonomous

The use of autonomous learning appears to be reflective of today's society where choice and democracy are important concepts. However, is it an effective approach to learning? A six-year study in Helsinki, which compared traditional and activating instruction, found that the activating group developed better study skills and understanding, but were slower in their study initially. Students in a United Kingdom University elaborated on the impact of student-centred learning on them, i.e. they felt there was more respect for the student in this approach, that it was more interesting, exciting, and it boosted their confidence [36].

Perhaps one of the principal goals of education is to alter learners' beliefs about themselves by showing them that their putative failures or shortcomings can be ascribed to a lack of effective strategies rather than to a lack of potential. After all, learning is an internalised form of a formerly social activity, and a learner can realize the potential interactively - through the guidance of supportive other persons such as parents, teachers, and peers. The role of diaries and evaluation sheets, which offer students the possibility to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning, identifying any problems they run into and suggesting solutions [33].

The benefits of autonomous learning for the students involved are many and varied. Coming into an academic community possibly for the first time can shape the way students think

for the rest of their lives. Autonomous learning provides skills for life, creates independent learners and responds to the changing and differing needs of individual students. Below is a list of what such benefits can include:

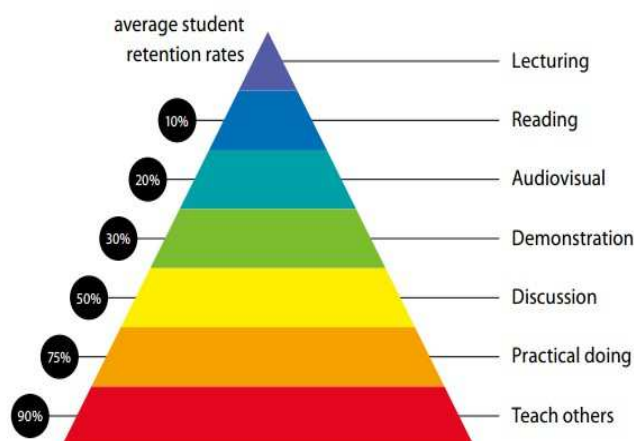
- Making students an integral part of the academic community

Students are said to be part of the academic community, but in practice this can be difficult to achieve due to varied practices of rigid teaching structures. Via autonomous learning, students can become part of that community much earlier, given that the teacher acts as a facilitator, rather than an instructor. In encouraging students to think for themselves, analytical skills and critical thinking are gained earlier on. In this context, research-led teaching becomes all the more possible. Teachers are able to discuss their research and hear the views of students on the matter. Increased cooperation and a feeling of having one's views valued can further increase the interaction and engagement of students.

- An increased motivation to learn

Autonomous learning can encourage deeper learning, as shown in the Learning Pyramid below. Knowledge retention differs depending on the way in which material is learned, but all types of active learning show a higher retention rate than traditional forms of learning. The student is also often more motivated to learn through autonomous learning, because the tasks set require original thought and increase interest in the subject-matter. As the Learning Pyramid below suggests, students retain more of the information they learn where there is an aspect of active learning and active participation [7].

Figure 1.4.1 Learning Pyramid [7]



Research from the psychological sciences confirms that the providing students with choice stimulate natural curiosity and motivation to learn. The teachers can focus on to turn around negative motivational patterns and enhance students' natural motivation to learn [2, 33].

- Independence and responsibility in learning

Within autonomous learning, students are in control of their learning. This makes the student more independent and adaptable to life after higher education [7]. Autonomous learning can influence students' sense of self-efficacy or sense of confidence in their ability to be successful learners in different classrooms and different subjects [33].

The independence of students enables them to learn more effectively and to gain other skills such as teamwork, effective written and verbal communication, prioritisation of tasks and critical analysis. In turn, students can develop transferable skills and would be able to work more effectively in their careers and lives in general.

Massification of higher education has had the effect of diversifying the student body. Inevitably students have differing needs that are wider than ever before. Autonomous learning can enable students to study in a flexible manner, through the use of part-time study, distance learning and e-learning. The autonomous learning approach demonstrates that learning is not limited to a given time or place in the way that traditional learning has been. Different learning needs of students can also be met because students can engage with materials in different ways. For example, some students engage more with audio visual materials whereas others prefer reading. Furthermore, by experiencing a range of teaching methods students are further challenged academically [7].

1.5 Disadvantages and Critics

Autonomous learning, despite its popularity, is not without its critics [36]. The majority of teachers, it can be said, are still sceptical of whether the approach can really enhance student quality. Much worse, teachers are uncertain of how and what they should do to implement the approach. A number of questions regarding the feasibility, viability and applicability of this teaching model are raised widely in the teaching community [14].

The main critique of autonomous learning is its focus on the individual learner. One reason many teachers hesitate to embrace a student-centred classroom is that a completely student-centred classroom goes too far. Students often do not know what they do not know. And though it seems well to think that teachers can have students completely construct knowledge on their own, teachers need to teach them the things that they know, for they are experts in their field [9]. In addition, there are still some difficulties in its implementation.

Autonomous learning in the school system can be in danger of focusing completely on the individual learner and taken to its extreme does not take into account the needs of the whole class. If each child is unique, and each requires a specific pedagogical approach appropriate to him or her and to no other, the construction of an all embracing pedagogy or general principles of teaching become impossibility [12].

Due to the autonomous learning the exaggerated heterogeneous classrooms' rate is increasing. Students who are naturally more motivated and studious are much more likely to take advantage of suggestions for extra work outside class or working alone, than students who have less energy or are going through a period of feeling hopeless about their level of English improving. This can then increase the difference in level between those two types of students, affecting their confidence further and leading to a virtuous circle for the students with weaker abilities. Alternatively, the keen student could get bored in a class that has a level they are rapidly leaving behind and also lose motivation to attend [14].

Bruno stated that teaching methods typically considered 'student-centred' together represent a 'pedagogy of privilege'; such methods might be good – or at least good enough – for relatively strong students, but they often do not meet the needs of students with weaker skills [11]. The distance between the teacher and the learner is bigger, and it can be alienating when it means waiting for communication from teachers. Any form of helplessness is frustrating and this shows how important it is that course providers respond promptly, be it to questions, sending materials or providing feedback to students [48].

In empowering an individual there is a potential danger of "a person's physical isolation from other learners". The importance of the social context of learning and the value of interaction with peers is emphasised in the socio-cultural view of learning. Meeting individual learner needs: power, subject, subjection. The concept of being an independent learner choosing his own route of learning, may in fact drive some of the sociability out of the learning process if care is not taken to emphasise the importance of peers [36].

It is also conceivable, that the students create bad learning habits without a teacher's guiding. Although the teacher's aim in getting students to choose their own self-study materials and learn how to fit them in with their lives and use that language is to improve their study skills. However, when they start to read a book of themselves, there is a strong chance that they will look up every unknown word with their dictionaries. This could theoretically make them lose all skimming and scanning skills, and without the common experience of literature reading and word guessing, they will not become effective language learners [14].

Another critique for the autonomous learning is the students' lack of familiarity with the term. It is difficult to assess according to traditional methods of growth because the students

study varying types of content. Thus, the impact of the model's effectiveness is difficult to determine without a series of longitudinal and retrospective studies [56].

According to Fűredi, the learner-centred education is not any good for learners [24]. He believes some teachers accept it merely because it sounds good and sounds progressive. The notion has a very corrosive impact on education, because education is its own focus. Education in its own right and for its own sake is what is really important, and the moment education becomes focused on an object external to itself – whether it is the child, the teacher, the economy, nation, religion or whatever – it tends to be at the expense of imparting knowledge and preparing children for their independence [18].

In conclusion, autonomous learning is the learning method when a learner plans, implements and evaluates his learning, takes charge of his learning, has the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning. There has been a remarkable growth of interest in the theory and practice of autonomy in language teaching in the last four decades. It started with Holec, who was the father of autonomous learning and established the CRAPEL [23]. The short but rich history of autonomy contains several mentionable names. There are differentiated teaching methods, in which it is recommended to integrate the autonomous learning. Mentionable student-centred approaches are the problem-based approach, resource-based learning, project-based learning and cooperative language learning. With the regard of the autonomous learning, the student-centred method is compared with the teacher-centred method. The main difference between them is the teacher-centred teaching style is considered as a style of instruction that is formal controlled, while in learner-centred teaching both students and the instructor decide how, what, and when learning occurs.

The results, as the benefits of autonomy in language learning are independent students, who are becoming an integral part of the academic community, having an increased motivation to learn, responsibility in learning and readiness for the life. There is a critical evaluation of this approach, which contain the learners' different needs for teaching, their isolation from the teacher and the peers, and the emerging destructive learning strategies.

PART 2

READINESS FOR AUTONOMOUS LEARNING

Applying the autonomous learning method in a classroom is not the teacher's absolutistic authority, the learners are required to be ready for this change. The learning autonomy reduces the role of the teacher to that of a facilitator and it puts students in charge of their own learning, expects from them more participation and demands having independence and willingness.

After determining the definition, the history and the related approaches of autonomy in language learning are investigated.

This part focuses on and discusses the characteristics of an autonomous learner and how to become autonomous. As it could be seen, an autonomous learner is independent, creative, persistent and responsible, ready for the change, self-directed, reflective and disciplined. There are certain criteria of autonomous education as the teacher's attitude and several expectations from the learners' behaviour. Autonomous learning starts with the teacher, for this reason the appropriate role of the teacher is one of the most important conditions.

This part presents some essential learning strategies of this method and the assessment of the learners as well, which influence the decisions students make about how, as well as what they learn.

2.1 Characteristics of Autonomous Learners

Autonomy is a gradual, individual and never ending process of *self-discovery*. It is a process which a person gradually discovers what autonomy is. An autonomous learner acts independently and in cooperation with others, he interprets new information according to his background knowledge, he knows exactly how to learn and how to reflect critically on the process of learning [31].

Autonomous language learning is not merely a cognitive task. Learners do not only reflect on their learning in terms of the language input to which they are exposed, or the optimal strategies they need in order to achieve the goals they set. Rather, the success of a learning activity is, to some extent, contingent upon learners' stance towards the world and the learning activity in particular, their sense of self, and their desire to learn [48]. Candy states, the characteristics of autonomous learners are as follows: methodical and disciplined; logical and analytical; reflective and self-aware; curious, open and highly motivated; flexible, interdependent and interpersonally competent; persistent and responsible; venturesome and

creative; self-sufficient, information seekers, knowledgeable and skilful about learning process and critical thinkers [16].

The overall approach a learner adopts will significantly influence the shape of his learning outcomes. In other words, language learning - as well as learning, in general - has also an affective component. Meeting and interiorising the grammar of a foreign language is not simply an intelligent, cognitive act. It is a highly affective one too [48].

Gardner and Macintyre define affective variables as the emotionally relevant characteristics of the individual that influence how the student will respond to any situation. Other scholars attach less importance to learners' emotions, claiming that social and psychological factors give a more suitable description for students' reactions to the learning process. Amongst the social and affective variables at work, *self-esteem and desire to learn* are deemed to be the most crucial factors in the learner's ability to *overcome occasional setbacks or minor mistakes* in the process of learning a second or foreign language [45]. In this light, it is necessary to shed some light on learner attitudes and motivation. According to Dickinson, although quite a lot of learners actually do not know what is going on in their classes, autonomous learners are able to *identify what has been taught*. They are able to *formulate their own learning objectives* in collaboration with teacher, or as something that is in addition to what the teacher is doing. In addition, autonomous learners can select and implement appropriate learning strategies consciously, and they can monitor their own use of learning strategies. Moreover, autonomous learners should monitor their own learning and self-assessment.

Also, they can establish a link between what is to be learned, how to learn, and the resources available. They develop a capacity that enables them to define the content and progression of their learning, *select* methods and techniques to be used, *monitor* the procedures of acquisition and *evaluate* what has been acquired. Additionally, learners, first and foremost, become willing and *ready for the change* learner autonomy requires. However, in non-western cultures, because most of the learners are already traditionally and culturally conditioned, they cannot be expected to become willingly and ready for change. In addition, learners are provided with time to experience their strengths, the *individual's sense of identity*, and *independence*. In other words, as a prerequisite, learners have the capacity that enables them to detach, monitor, think critically, evaluate and reflect their own learning process independently and cooperatively. The capacity learner autonomy necessitates may be innate or may be learned afterwards. The capacity whether it is innate or learned afterwards may grow with practice or it may be lost if it is not used.

Another prerequisite for the promotion of learner autonomy on the part of learner is *awareness*. Language awareness can be defined as explicit theoretical knowledge about the

nature of the language, and consciousness, perception and sensitivity in language learning, language teaching and language use [16].

An independent learner will tend to be *self-directed and self-reliant*. They are aware of their own strengths as learners and areas of weakness. They connect the learning within the classroom to the real world and can set their own goals. They tend to be intrinsically motivated by making progress in learning and can reflect on their own progress.

Teachers occasionally use the phrase “spoon feeding” to characterize the heavy reliance students place on teachers. Autonomous learners have to become *independent learners*. Dependent students may find it difficult to take responsibility for their own learning. They lack confidence and need to be given opportunities to develop the skills of an independent learner. One way of looking at independent learning is as a continuum spanning from dependence to independence, many of our students sit somewhere in the middle of this continuum [34].

Table 2.1 Differences between Dependent and Independent Learners [34]

Dependent learners	Independent learners
Rely heavily on the teacher	Are self-reliant
Cannot make decisions about their learning	Can make informed decisions about their learning
Do not know their own strengths and weaknesses	Are aware of their strengths and weaknesses
Do not connect classroom learning with the real world	Connect classroom learning with the real world
Think that the teacher is wholly responsible for their learning	Take responsibility for their own learning: Know about different strategies
Do not know the best way to learn something	Plan their learning and set goals
Do not set learning goals: will only work when extrinsic motivators such as grades or rewards are offered	Are intrinsically motivated by making progress in learning
Do not reflect on how well they are learning and the reasons	Often reflect on the learning process and their own progress

2.2 Main Criteria of Being Autonomous

Students do not become autonomous; they only work towards autonomy. In view of the belief, which regards the autonomy with this aspect, there are some criteria for the development of learner autonomy [28].

- Motivation

Motivation is an integral component of all learning [32], and plays a key role in the learners' readiness for autonomous learning. Most scholars seem to agree that motivation determines the degree of effort learners put into foreign language learning. In other words, the more motivation they have, the more effort they tend to put into learning the language. It leads to success in language learning. From this point of view, it is very important to motivate learners to learn a foreign language [28].

Autonomous learners are motivated by setting internal goals to achieve. They are driven by their own personal achievement. It is intrinsic motivation, which far surpasses any prize or reward system [51]. In fact, students will act as self-determined learners rather than controlled, if they are provided with such support [28].

- Self-esteem

Closely related to the motivation is the concept of self-esteem, that is, the evaluation the learners make of themselves with regard to the target language or learning in general. Self-esteem is a personal judgement of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that the individual holds towards himself [48]. Students with high self-esteem and at a comfortable level with academic performance are more likely become independent learners [51]. Their relationship to themselves as learners is unlikely to be marred by any negative assessments by the teacher [48]. Those who struggle with esteem issues or have chronic poor performance are less likely to convert to independent learning [51]. Moreover, a lack of self-esteem is likely to lead to negative attitudes towards his capability as a learner, and to deterioration in cognitive performance, thus confirming his view of himself as incapable of learning [48]. It all starts inside the mind of the student with a positive attitude and true self-belief [51].

- Responsibility

Responsibility means knowing what you have to do and doing it without anyone telling you to. The sooner a student becomes responsible for consequences, the less dependent he will be outside sources for discipline or motivation [51].

According to Holec ability to take charge of one's own learning pertains to a wide range of capacities of someone to exercise control over his learning process such as determining the objectives, choosing the content materials to study, selecting strategies and methods of study, monitoring and evaluation of one's learning. This implies full autonomy that comes with full

responsibility on the shoulders of learners [23]. Independent or autonomous learners take full responsibility for their own learning [51].

Responsibility consists of the development and conscious awareness of a body of specific meta-cognitive knowledge about one's self as a learner; one's learning context; the subject matter to be learnt; the processes of learning [23].

- Teachers' attitude

The implementation of student-centred learning and teaching is also a main criterion for autonomous learning. A very significant factor is the teachers have to respect and attend to the diversity of students and their needs, and enabling flexible learning paths. They have to be creative, consider and use different modes of delivery, where appropriate. The flexibility is also an important factor – flexibly uses a variety of pedagogical methods. Teachers should regularly evaluate and adjust the modes of delivery and pedagogical methods, encourage a sense of autonomy in the learner, while ensuring adequate guidance and support from the teacher, promote mutual respect within the learner-teacher relationship, have appropriate procedures for dealing with students' complaints [39].

Here are examined some of the factors that may enhance the learners' willingness to take charge of their own learning and their confidence in their ability as learners, it is of consequence to consider possible ways of promoting learner autonomy. To say, though, that learner autonomy can be fostered is not to reduce it to a set of skills that need to be acquired. Rather, it is taken to mean that the teacher and the learner can work towards autonomy by creating a friendly atmosphere characterised by low threat, unconditional positive regard, honest and open feedback, respect for the ideas and opinions of others, approval of self-improvement as a goal, collaboration rather than competition [48].

2.3 Conditions of Improving Autonomous Learning

Anyone who has attempted to learn a new language knows that language learning takes a relatively long time, and a learner may not want to, or be able to enrol in a teaching programme for such a long duration [17]. People often assume that independent learning means that a student needs to work alone. Working alone does not automatically develop independent learning skills in students [34]. To achieve the goal, the language acquisition, the learner needs supporting attitude from the teacher and the parents as well. Moreover, the student has to be supportive and constructive him/herself.

2.3.1 The Role of the Teachers

In traditional language teaching, teachers play more important roles than students in education. In the 1960's and 1970's, there was much reflection in educational writing in western cultures on traditional teacher-directed, examination-oriented and grammar-and-vocabulary-based approaches. The evaluation of a teacher had depended on the amount of knowledge he crammed into the students' head: the more, the better. The teacher is an unquestionable knowledge-giver. The teacher acts as the model of language, the lesson planner, the controller of learner practice and the assessor of learner's performance, the organizers in the teaching program in terms of knowledge of grammar, the planners of the course [42]. The teacher decided what to teach, what the students need to learn and the way or methodology to practice. The students are just the receptors of the knowledge [27].

In these phases, the teachers are definitely the centre of teaching, controlling in the whole performance. They control not only the teaching material but also the learning steps of their learners. What is more, teachers are also assessors of the learners' knowledge and performance. In one word, teachers hold the dominant status of teaching and there is no doubt that the teacher is a complete authority and learners appear to follow passively what is taught in a traditional language teaching. This will naturally lead to poor teacher-student interactive relation and unsatisfactory effect of language teaching [43].

Nowadays, this role has been changing. The teacher needs to keep updated in new ways of teaching and learning, and planning with the students the activities for developing in the classroom according to the desires and students' needs. At present, students need to be encouraged to develop their own learning strategies and the teacher needs to let them hear their voices, reflecting on their learning and in that way start a process of becoming autonomous learners. At this time the role of the teacher will change from authoritarian to guider or adviser [27]. Autonomy requires the understanding of new roles between teachers and learners. The promotion of autonomy is dependent greatly on how teachers are aware of their new roles [43].

In order to foster students' leaning autonomy, teachers need to adapt to perform a variety of roles. There is a classification of the roles of teachers into the following categories: teacher as manager and organizer; teacher as facilitator. The third role is the teacher as a counsellor.

- Teacher's role as a manager and organizer

In a learner-centred system the teacher should take the responsibilities of organizing various kinds of activities and games which are appropriate, effective and relevant to the

classroom teaching and which will best meet the students' needs and expectations. The ultimate goal is to respond to the students' interests and abilities so that they will be highly motivated to perform in each stage of classroom activities. But the teacher should bear in mind that he or she should give clear instructions as to what is to be done because the success of many activities, no matter whether it is a specific role-play or a group discussion, depends on good organization and on the students' knowing exactly what they are expected to do. Otherwise, it is impossible for the two parts of teaching-learning process to achieve their objective. Teacher's role as manager and organizer is considered to be the first and foremost role teacher has to play in class [43]. Teachers should participate in the games and different activities, they are recommended to act as learners themselves. One of the key aspects for the teacher to be able to foster autonomous learning is an explicit awareness of the teacher's own self as a learner. Clearly, if teachers don't participate in student's learning, they would find it difficult to understand student's learning characteristics. Moreover, the awareness of teachers as learners also helps teachers to determine when they are able to act autonomously and when they are not able to do so. If teachers themselves are non-autonomous, they would find it challenging to help their students to learn autonomously. Hence, if teachers are also autonomous, they will more deeply understand the learner's style, strengths and weaknesses [12].

- Teacher's role as a facilitator

In order to make the progress more flexible and successful, it is necessary for teachers to serve as a facilitator. In focusing on the role of teacher as a facilitator in autonomous learning, this part makes clear that autonomous English learning does not mean learners simply learn on their own. Learners in the process of becoming autonomous need a teacher to support them in order to reach the highest possible achievement. As facilitators, teachers need to do all the efforts to help make the learning easier and motivate learners to play to the best of their potentials, which includes: helping the learners to plan and carry out their independent language learning; helping learners to acquire the knowledge and skills and motivate learner to learn actively and autonomously. In the process of facilitating, it involves teachers' encouragement and assist. Teachers encourage learners' commitment, helping them to get rid of the uncertainty and anxiety and overcome the obstacles [43]. Teachers have to encourage the learners to develop their own learning strategies and needs to evaluate their learning and in that way start a process of becoming autonomous learners [27].

During the participation in classroom activities, the teacher is expected to be the language resource. It is obvious that the teacher is responsible to ensure necessary language input and to offer help whenever it is needed. During this process, the teacher's first role is to motivate learners to produce their own language and to advisably correct students' errors so as to help

students develop their own learning strategies and techniques. As a guide to resource, teachers could also introduce some learning materials as: English magazines and newspapers, some useful websites to learners. In order to motivate learners, teachers should be capable to select the materials which can be used to arouse learners' interest and cater to their learning level so that this ensures the learners' satisfaction and confidence. And thirdly, when the students had difficulty in learning, teachers would get ready to provide information [43].

Nowadays the encouragement of positive attitudes towards taking on more responsibility is expected from the teachers and the development of greater metacognitive awareness. This implies an important supporting role for the teacher, the learning consultant/counsellor, the distance learning tutor and the self-access facilitator [27].

It is generally believed that it is another major part of a teacher's job to assess the students' work. Teachers should focus on students' success or progress so that a success-oriented learning atmosphere could be created. At the same time the students will be more confident in autonomous learning [43].

- Teacher's role as counsellor

The teacher-counsellor is expected to exemplify an effective communicator seeking to maximize the meshing of speaker intention and hearer interpretation, through the use of paraphrase, confirmation, and feedback [43].

Teacher as counsellor is to give advice and help learners so that they can achieve more efficient learning. This kind of role can be realized by means of helping learners to become more self-monitoring, fulfil learners' aims and needs, as well as give feedback and support learners towards the target of autonomous learning [27].

The teacher should promote reflection on learning for applying some learning strategies such as: let the students decide what homework they want to do or to encourage them to write journals to suggest activities to develop in class; or get the students to make their own dialogues with new language, how dictionaries work and then learn how to use them [43].

2.3.2 The Role of the Learners

Autonomous learning is achieved when certain conditions obtain: cognitive and metacognitive strategies on the part of the learner, motivation, attitudes, and knowledge about language learning, a kind of metalanguage. To acknowledge, however, that learners have to follow certain paths to attain autonomy is tantamount to asserting that there has to be a teacher on whom it will be incumbent to show the way. In other words, autonomous learning is by no means "teacher-less learning" [48].

Results from studies employing experimental, correlational and qualitative methods have converged on the finding that when students engage in academic tasks out of intrinsic reasons such as interest, enjoyment, and the purpose to learn and understand, they engage more meaningfully, regulate their learning, achieve higher grades, retain the material, and manifest higher well-being than when they engage in academic tasks out of more extrinsic reasons such as a desire to please others, to demonstrate ability, to avoid feeling incapable, or to avoid punishment [25]. For the learners, they would set their own learning goals, select the learning strategies that suit them best and which are appropriate to their own contexts, and evaluate their progress so that they may become more effective learners and take more responsibility for their own learning. For some teachers, there might be a misunderstanding that learner autonomy would lead to the redundancy of teaching staff because learners are able to do the jobs which formerly belong to their teachers. But in teachers to the learners, teachers' responsibility should be reinforced rather than reduced. Actually, autonomous learning is not necessarily learning alone, nor is it necessarily learning without a teacher [43].

2.3.3 The Role of the Parents

The findings regarding the relations of parental involvement and student outcomes, generally and in homework, may suggest that rather than the level of parental involvement, it is the quality or the type of involvement that would influence students' outcomes. Theory and research on parenting suggest that different types of parental involvement produce different types of parent-child interactions and hence different emotional outcomes. Different parenting styles were associated with different motivational emphases to children and with different achievement goal orientations. Authoritative parenting style, which combines high expectations and demands with high warmth and support, was associated with mastery goals - the orientation to learn and understand. In contrast, authoritarian and permissive parenting styles, which are characterized by high demands with no warmth and by low demands and high warmth, respectively, were associated with performance goals - the orientation to demonstrate competence or avoid demonstrating incompetence [21].

2.4 Learning Strategies

Learning strategies are specific actions taken by the learner to make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, self-directed, effective and more transferable to new situations. In other words, learning strategies refer to characteristics teachers want to stimulate in students to enable them to

become more proficient language learners [16]. To a greater or lesser degree, the strategies and learning styles that someone adopts may partly reflect personal preference rather than innate endowment [48]. There are two major reasons why teachers integrate learning strategies into the instruction of academic language and content. The first is the theoretical consistency of learning strategies with the cognitive view of learning which underlies CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning Approach). The second is the impressive amount of research that supports using learning strategies with academic language and content information [50].

- Cognitive strategies

Cognitive strategies operate directly on incoming information, manipulating it in ways that enhance learning. Learners may use the repetition, as a cognitive strategy when imitating others' speech. Resourcing is another strategy, to have the recourse to dictionaries and other materials. The note-taking, deduction and inferencing also belong to this list. The translation, that is, using their mother tongue as a basis for understanding and/or producing the target language, is one of the main cognitive strategies. Teachers list here the contextualisation, when embedding a word or phrase in a meaningful sequence; the transfer uses knowledge acquired in the first language to remember and understand facts and sequences in the second language and question for clarification, when asking the teacher to explain [48].

- Metacognitive strategies

Metacognition, in a narrower sense, includes metacognitive awareness of one's beliefs and knowledge and meta-strategic control in selecting and applying strategies in processing information. Developing metacognitive skills is an important educational objective, and it is essential for higher-order thinking such as scientific reasoning and problem-solving, and self-regulated learning, awareness and controlling of one's own thinking and learning processes [35], discovering the nature of language learning, organizing to learn, establishing aims, considering task purposes, planning tasks and looking for chances to practice. Learners will undoubtedly become better prepared to make conscious decisions about what they can do to improve their learning with the help of this strategy. By monitoring their use of learning strategies, students are better able to keep themselves on track to meet their learning goals. Once they have selected and begun to implement specific strategies, they need to ask themselves periodically whether or not they are still using those strategies as intended. Finally, at the implementation of the evaluation stage, language learners attempt to evaluate whether what they are doing is effective [6].

- Social strategies

Social strategies are very important in learning a language because language is used in communication and communication occurs between people. Three sets of strategies are included in this group: asking questions, cooperating with others, and empathizing with others. Among the

three, cooperation with others eliminates competition and in its place brings group spirit. Studies show that cooperative learning results in higher self-esteem, increased confidence, and rapid achievement. Learners do not naturally apply cooperative strategies because of strong emphasis put on competition by educational institutions. Sometimes competition brings a strong wish to perform better than others, but it often results in anxiety and fear of failure. It is important to help learners change their attitudes from confrontation and competition to cooperation. Empathy is very important in communication. Empathy means to put oneself in someone else's situation to understand that person's point of view. Learners can use social strategies to develop cultural understanding and become aware of feelings of others in and outside of the classroom [16].

- Control and independence strategies

Student independence is seen as a clear indicator of academic quality. In spite of that it is unable to involve academics letting go of a degree of control in learning and teaching – something which may prove difficult to defend in a quality culture.

Table 2.4 Problem Areas and Their Strategies [17]

Problem areas	Control strategies	Independent strategies
1. Courses lack clear aims and objectives	Use of objectives	Use of learning contracts
	Highly structured courses	Problem-based learning
2. Students lack knowledge about their progress	Objective testing	Development of students judgement
	Programmed instruction and computer-aided learning	Self-assessment
3. Students lack advice on how to improve	Assignment attachment forms	Peer feedback and peer assessment
	Automated tutorial feedback	
4. Library resources cannot support wide reading	Use of set books	Development of students research skills
	Use of learning packages	More varied assessments
5. Tutors are unable to support independent study	Structured projects	Group work
	Lab guides	Learning teams
6. Students lack the opportunity for discussion	Structured lectures	Student-led seminars
	Structures seminars and workshops	Team assignments
7. Tutors are unable to cope with the variety of students	Pre-tests plus remedial material	Variety of support mechanisms

	Self-paced study	Negotiated goals
8. Tutors are unable to motivate students	Frequent testing High failure rates	Learning contracts, problem solving, group work

2.5 Assessing Learner Autonomy

In the literature there is no consensus on the question of whether the assessment of learner autonomy is possible or not. Every autonomous learning process should begin with an assessment of the learner's disposition for and capacities of learner autonomy, in the form of, for example, an interview or a questionnaire. However, this raises questions as to what kind of assessment can take place, which criteria should be taken into account, and how it might be possible to assess learner autonomy from an external perspective [48].

Autonomy is a capacity which the student may or may not choose to exercise. If the teacher does not bring it into an assessment programme, the majority of students will not see its importance. Assessment influences the decisions student make about how as well as what they learn, it means assessing autonomy may be essential for its development in an institutional context [13].

Student assessment practices need to reflect, encourage and reward the student-centred learning. Teachers need to be aware of any discrepancies between what they are asking students and what they really want them to know.

This does not mean that student assessment is incongruent with the autonomous approach. Rather, it needs to be tailored to reflect the philosophy and goals of autonomous learning. In autonomous learning, in the same way that teaching methodologies used need to be designed to give feedback to students on the learning process in view of the desired learning outcomes, the best forms of assessment need to be aligned with set learning goals. Thus forms of assessment need to be used that show evidence of student achievement of the set learning outcomes. Otherwise students will not take such goals seriously. In addition, students should be clearly informed about the assessment strategy being used for their programme, what examinations or other assessment methods they will be subjected to, what will be expected of them and the criteria that will be applied to the assessment of their performance. Examples of good practice in terms of assessment methods compatible with the autonomous learning approach include:

- Formative assessment

Formative assessment emphasises the need to give feedback to students on their learning thus making students' learning experience more authentic and providing a focus for students by highlighting their learning gaps and areas that they can develop. This can take a number of forms including: diaries, logs and journals, portfolios, peer- or self-assessment, learning contracts and negotiated assessment, projects, group work, profiling and identification of own skills and competencies.

- Criterion-referenced assessment

This measures students against the learning criteria in their course, unlike norm-based assessment which measures students against other students. One of the benefits of this type of assessment is that both teachers and students can more easily see where students are succeeding and where they are not. This can be invaluable in improving the course for future students [7].

- Peer and self-assessment

Both give some control and responsibility back to the student, emphasising an increased sense of autonomy in the learner. Learning contracts/negotiated contracts are goals set by the student, depending on their learning gaps, which are in turn negotiated with the lecturer. The contract can also highlight the manner in which the student would like to be assessed in order to demonstrate that they have reached the goals. This can add choice in what to study and, in addition, choice in how the student will be assessed. Choice is one of the key terms in relation to student-centred learning. The concept of negotiation of learning also addresses the unique change in relationship between lecturer and student in their definition of student-centred learning [36].

In order to assess learning outcomes which are not reliant on short-term memorising, a range of assessment methods can be used by teachers with clear objectives in mind.

Choice is one of the key terms in the student-centred approach. In assessment, choice is in relation to the criteria and standards to be used, the judgements that are made and by whom such judgements are made. It is not easy for teachers to actually provide students with autonomy and decision-making influence in an area such as assessment, especially in view of the manner in which assessment has traditionally taken place. The following are a few ideas of how this can be done, with respect to two key stages – when the task is set and after the task is completed.

Table 2.5 Areas for Involving Students in Assessment [36]

Involving students at the stage when task is set: Choosing the assessment task

Setting the assessment task

Discussion the assessment criteria

	Setting the assessment criteria
Involving students at the stage after the task is completed:	Making self-assessment comments
	Making peer-assessment feedback comments
	Suggesting self-assessment grades/marks
	Negotiated self-assessment grades/marks
	Assigning self-assessment grades/marks
	Assigning peer-assessment grades/marks

Teachers might consider moving assessment practices slightly up the teacher/student-centred continuum with small but significant changes, for instance by providing a choice of topics and questions as a manageable starting point. It is important to remember that as long as learners are properly prepared for assessment, they will adjust to various forms of use [36].

Learners' readiness in adapting autonomous learning is one of the crucial expectations among several attributes. There are several characteristics and abilities to be possessed, for example they have to be able to become aware of their strength, to overcome the obstacles, to formulate their own learning objectives, to become willing and ready for change. The presence of main criteria is required both from students and teachers. The motivation, self-esteem and responsibility are essentials for the development of learner autonomy. To become and remain an independent, self-aware, creative and persistent learner, one needs the supporting attitude from the teacher and the parents as well. Teachers change their roles during autonomous learning which requires new plans, methods, approaches and strategies. Their roles appear to be teacher as manager and organizer, teacher as facilitator; teacher as counsellor. Considering cognitive, metacognitive, social and independent strategies help achieve a more autonomous classroom. After setting the main criteria, essential conditions and appropriate strategies, the learners need to reflect, encourage and reward the autonomous approach. Some are fit and ready learning autonomously, some are not. The very first and most essential step of this progress is to measure the learners' readiness.

PART 3

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

3.1 Introduction

Learners' readiness for autonomous learning refers to how likely they are to seek out knowledge autonomously, participate in behaviour change and take charge of their own learning. It requires student-centred point of view, patience, promoting attitude from the teacher and several specific characteristics as taking responsibility and independence. More recently, literature has emerged that offers contradictory findings about autonomous learning, raising the question whether students are ready or not to control their own learning process. However, the rapid changes of technology and the new requirements of the modern world are having a serious effect on foreign language teaching and learning giving more pressure on both sides and requiring more efforts.

Besides analysing a considerable amount of literature, the main purpose of the present research is to obtain relevant information about learning the English language autonomously, to gain insights into whether English teachers use student-centred approach or not and how conscious and motivated the learners are. It is also assumed that the findings would reveal differences between the learners' and teachers' attitude towards this kind of learning and about whose responsibility is the learners' activeness, diligence and motivation.

From the point of view of the researcher, it is the teachers' responsibility to make a learner autonomous, but it is the learners' responsibility to remain an autonomous learner. However, the zero hypothesis is that learners are not ready for taking charge of their own learning.

While investigating the given topic, the following questions were formulated:

- are the learners aware of the main characteristics of becoming autonomous?
- are the learners ready for autonomous learning?
- what are the main roles of a teacher in a classroom?
- whose responsibility are the students' effectiveness and success during the lessons and outside the classroom?
- would learner autonomy allow the students to learn more effectively?

3.2 Participants

This study targeted three secondary schools with Hungarian language of instruction in Transcarpathia. The reason for the choice is that in these schools learners study English as a foreign language besides the state language (Ukrainian) and German. These are ordinary,

unstrained secondary schools in which the learners are educated from all levels of society. The objects of the research are the teachers (5 of them, between the ages of 32-45) of English as a foreign language who are from the same secondary schools as the learners and they teach in the upper classes as well, and their learners who are in the 10th and 11th form. This age is appropriate to measure learners' readiness, because they are old and mature enough to do independent and separate activities in English. 54 learners from the 10th form and 41 from the 11th form (between the ages of 15 and 17) participated in the research. All of the 95 pupils have been learning English since the 1st grade.

3.3 Instruments

For this study, two sets of questionnaires were designed. The first questionnaire was distributed to English language teachers. It contains 11 questions. Six of these are open-ended questions because they require more thought and more than a simple one-word answer, and five are multiple choice ones as these questions are effective and efficient to assess teaching and learning outcomes. The aim of the questionnaire for the teachers is to map out the teachers' views about autonomy in teaching English in the given secondary schools of Transcarpathia, what are their experiences about the learners' readiness, their opinion about the teachers' role in promoting language autonomy, the challenges and features in becoming an autonomous learner, and their concept about the learners' out of school activities (see Appendix A).

The second set of questionnaire was distributed to students. It contains 11 questions, and all of these are multiple choice questions with the extension of the first question. Students have similar questions and statements like their teachers in order find out their views about the definition of autonomous learning, their level of motivation and readiness towards autonomous learning, their learning characteristics whether they are able to take in charge or not, and their concept of class activities in English. The language of the questionnaire was written in Hungarian to avoid misunderstandings and to achieve the aims, and to eliminate the anxiety factor in responding the questions (see Appendix B).

In deliberating the questions the researcher had resources from specialist literature. The following works served as help for assembling: 'A Dissertation on Students' Readiness for Autonomous learning of English as a Foreign Language' by Omer Tamer [44]; 'A Study on Learners' Readiness for Autonomous Learning of English as a Foreign Language' by Ayfer Kocak [28]; 'Autonomy Strategies: A Way to Reach Bilingualism' in Boyacá by Julio Edgar Mesa Arismendy [27]; 'Autonomous Language Learning in EFL-classrooms in Finland' by

Johanna Riihimäki [37]; and the study of ‘Autonomy in Language Teaching and Learning Process’ by Dilek Çakici [16].

3.4 Procedure of the Research

The research was carried out at the end of April. First the schools with Hungarian language of instruction were visited at the beginning of the month. After having the permission to visit the schools again and enter into the English classes, the appointments were arranged. The procedure was simple. Before handing out the questionnaires to the learners, they were not introduced with the term of autonomous learning and the main aim of the questionnaire. They were assured that the questionnaire is anonymous. Completing the questionnaires took 20 minutes. While the learners were answering the questions, the teacher and the researcher were observing the process. The learners did not ask anything connected to the questions or statements of the questionnaire, they were only curious about the aim and the reason of the process. After filling out the questionnaires the lesson continued.

The teachers completed the questionnaire after their last lesson in the school on the same day. For the teachers, it took 25-30 minutes to conclude the questionnaire. Some of the teachers asked for anonymity of the school.

3.5 Findings

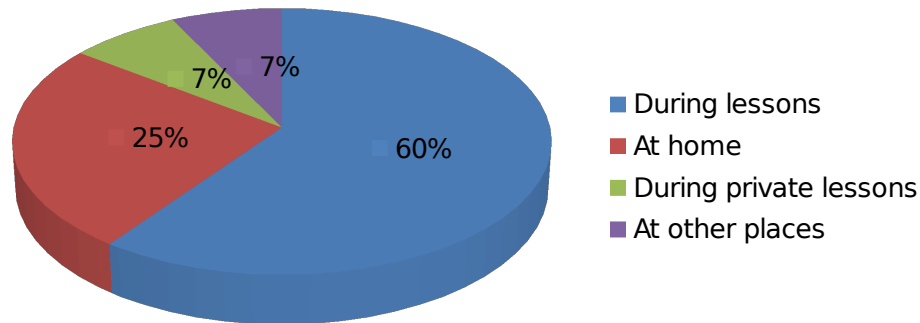
The questionnaires intended to reveal the learners’ and teachers’ attitude toward autonomous learning, their experiences and conceptions of becoming autonomous. After collecting the questionnaires, the following data were obtained.

3.5.1 Findings of the Learner’s Questionnaire

In the first questions, they were asked about their aims in learning English. The most answers contain the following statements: “*It will be necessary in my future; to understand the language; more opportunities to work abroad; because English is the world language; to educate oneself further; because it is obligatory.*” 15% of the learners left the gaps empty, and 5% of them answered that their learning has no aim. Considering these answers it can be concluded that the broader possibilities as to get well-paid jobs or to work abroad are their biggest motivation in learning English. Unfortunately, only a few of the learners learn English because they are interested in the language itself.

The second question is the following: ‘Where do you learn the most?’ According to the results 57 learners learn the most in the lessons, 24 at home, 7 learners during private lessons and 7 learn at other places.

Figure 3.1 Places of Obtaining Knowledge



In percentage it means, that 60% of the participants gain the most amount of knowledge during the lessons. It means that most of them insist on the past role of the teacher, where he/she controlled the lesson and was the authoritarian centre of teaching. This fact increases the teachers’ responsibilities because they have to be able to select the materials to raise learners’ interest, maintain their learning needs during the lessons, and provide useful and effective ways of teaching. It indicates that the teacher has to act as the facilitator between the language and the learner, it is his/her duty to make the learners want to know the language and to learn it at home as well. A quarter of the participants answered that they gain the biggest amount of knowledge at home. By this result it can be supposed that these learners study the most during doing their homework. Doing the homework also requires a level of autonomy from the learner. In the ‘At other places’ option, learners could specify their answers, which were the followings: *“I learn more from books, series and movies; or practise the language on different surfaces.”* Two learners wrote that they learn the most with the help of family members. It means that they require somebody’s leading.

Nowadays, in our area mainly those attend private English lessons, whose plan is to continue their studies and they want to pass the English test of External Independent Evaluation (ZNO) or a language exam. 7,5% of the respondents learn the most during their private lessons.

The next question dealt with the definition of autonomous learning. At this question more answers were possible and 160 responses were received. The results are the following (see Figure 3.2):

Figure 3.2 Learners' Concept about the Term of Autonomous Learning



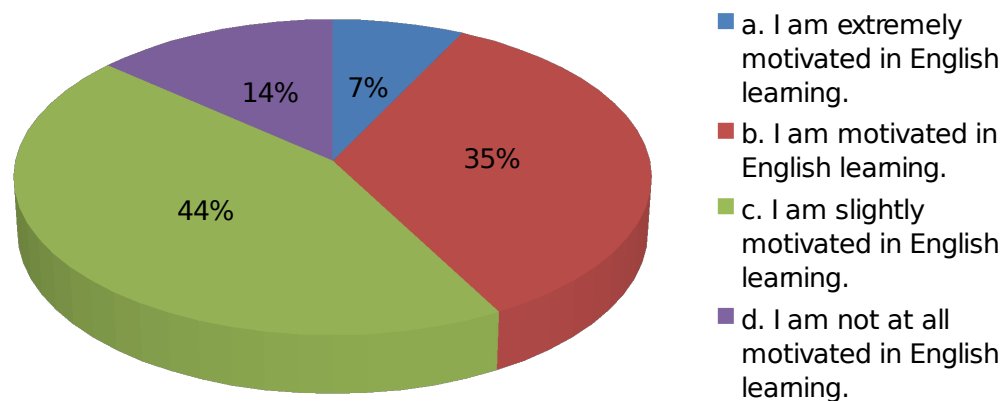
From Figure 3.2 it can be seen that the most of the students are familiar with the term of autonomous learning. 23 choices did not have the sense of the term, because the autonomous learning is not about having good abilities or about the phenomenon when somebody receives and processes more information.

The fourth question is connected to the previous one, because without the knowledge of the meaning of autonomous learning one cannot state whether he is an autonomous learner or not. The question is the following: 'Are you an autonomous learner?' The students could decide between four answers, and the results are the followings: 36 of 95 learners marked that they are autonomous learners, 15 marked that they are not. According to 40 learners their autonomous level depends on the subject, and only 4% of them admitted that they are not enlightened about the term of autonomy. From the percentages, it can be deduced that students' autonomy depends the most on the subject they learn. Obviously, it can be concluded that the learners are more autonomous in subjects that belong to their field of interest. If they are not independent in learning English, it does not mean that they are not independent in reading literature, solving Maths problems or playing an instrument to a certain extent. The 38 % of the respondents marked that they are autonomous learners; it can indicate that they are learning consciously without taking into account the subject. 16 % of the learners marked that they are not autonomous learners. It does not mean that they are not motivated and eager at all to learn in

general or to learn English, but they need help in understanding the tasks, setting, achieving goals, organizing their time, selecting the topics and materials. In spite of that, an autonomous learner has to be in every account motivated, as Candy stated [16].

The next question deals with motivation. The results show that 42 of 95 learners stated that they are slightly motivated in learning English, and 33 learners marked that they are motivated. Only 7 of the respondents stated that they are extremely motivated and the rest, 13 of them are not at all motivated in learning English.

Figure 3.3 Learners' Motivation level in EFL learning



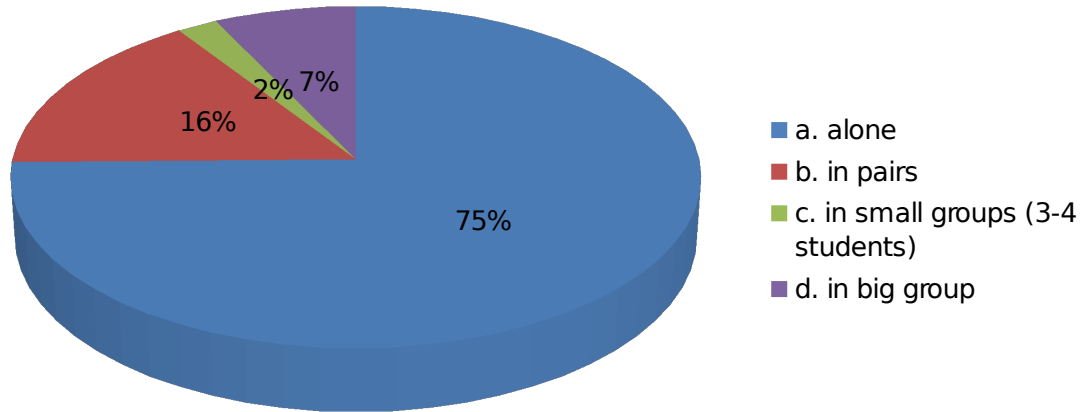
Most scholars seem to be agreed that motivation determines the degree of effort learners put into foreign language learning. Motivation is one of the first steps on the pathway toward autonomy, and without it teachers cannot gain effective student-centred approach of teaching. In the light of this, autonomy cannot be expected from unmotivated learners. The results are disappointing, because altogether 58 % of the learners tend to be slightly or not at all motivated. It implies to the fact that autonomy in language learning cannot be a wide-spread phenomenon in general in these schools.

Autonomous learning requires independence, ability to solve a task alone, following one's own choices and aims; it also requires the capability to work in cooperation with others, in pairs or in small groups, where they may support each other and discuss the processes, tasks or methods. The fifth question deals with the question of how they like to learn mostly. The three-quarter of the respondent learners stated that the most effective learning method for them is learning individually. Only 9% like learning in small or big groups, and 16% prefer pair-exercises. Individual work requires autonomy, because the learners have to take charge for their own learning, and be responsible for decisions concerning all aspects of learning, as it was stated by Holec [23]. However, if the learners are not motivated enough, and do not tend to be

autonomous, the individual work will not be as effective as it would be with teacher's managing and leading.

The results can be seen in the following diagram:

Figure 3.4 Learners' Preferred Working Style



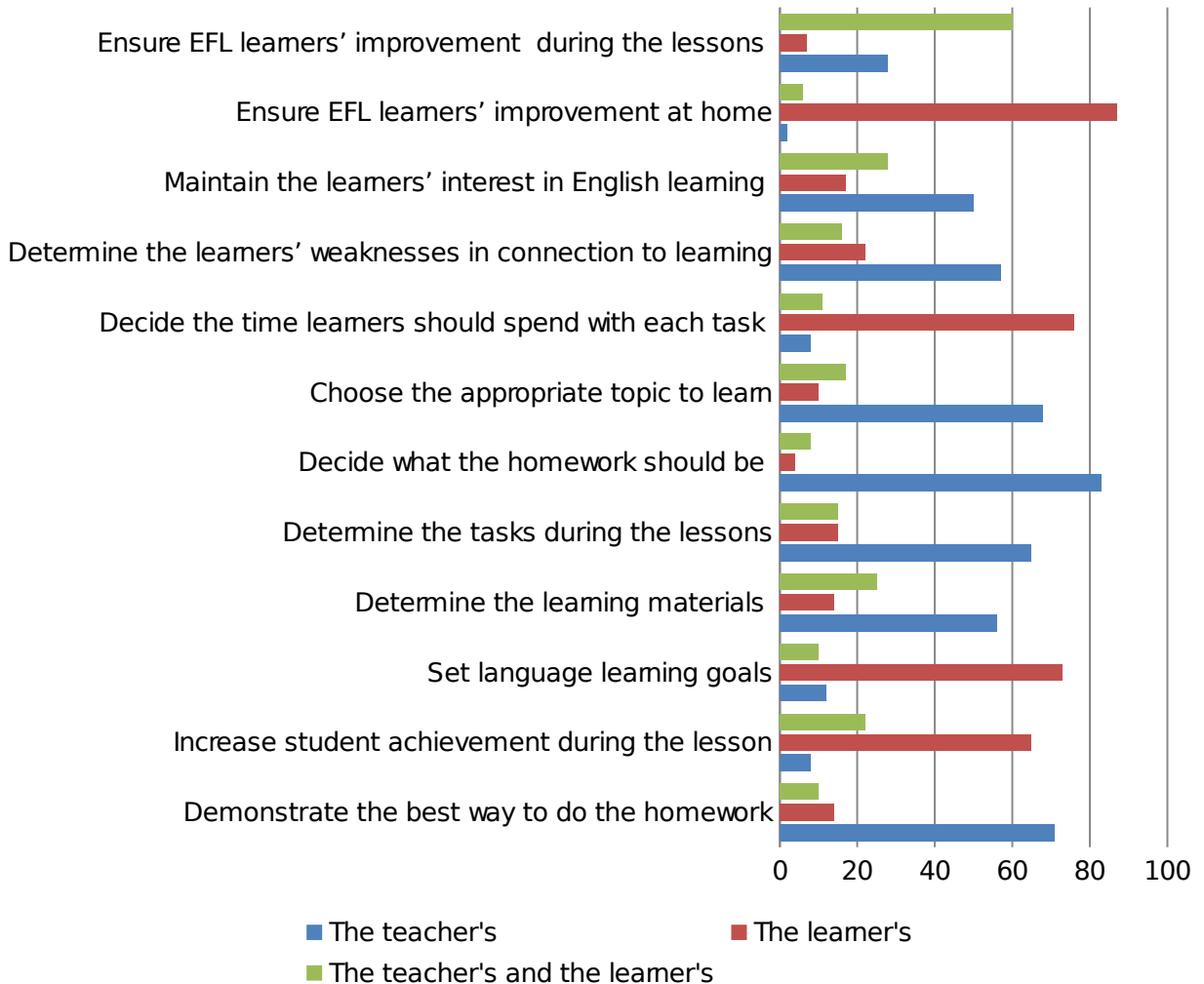
Considering the usefulness and effectiveness of autonomous learning there are required characteristics learners have to possess. The next question in the questionnaire aims to uncover whether the learners have the required character traits and the willingness to control and oversee their own learning.

The students have to decide to what extent the given traits are true about themselves in a scale from 1 (not at all) to 5 (to a great extent). According to the totalized answers, 65% have intense curiosity and 68% of them possess interest about EFL learning; these factors are also important to create an autonomous class. More than half of the learners consider themselves responsible and creative. To become autonomous, one needs to possess persistence to overcome the obstacles, needs to plan and select learning methods and to remain motivated even in cases of occurring failures. These are very significant attributes of an autonomous learner. Although, from the results it can be concluded that half of the learners ranked that they lack the following traits: planning, persistence and motivation. However, it cannot be deduced that due to these low tendencies the damaging attributes would dominate their attitude. For instance, the indifference is typical at 35% and repulsiveness is at 36% of the respondents.

The next set of questions in the questionnaire examines the matter of responsibility. A list containing 12 statements was designed to the teachers and learners, their task was to decide whose responsibility the given statement is. According to 60 respondents to ensure the learners' improvement during the lessons is both the learner's and teacher's responsibility, and 28 learners stated that it is only the teachers' responsibility. An effective education requires promoting attitude from the teacher and recommends specific features of the learner, which were discussed

in the previous set of questions. In spite of those low results about motivation or planning, 87 of 95 respondents stated that to ensure EFL learners' improvement out of class is the learners' responsibility. It implies independence and self-reliance.

Figure 3.5 Learners' and Teachers' Concept about Responsibility



Being autonomous also means that the learner is responsible for his/her time, and from the chart above it is revealed that the learners are aware of their responsibility. It can be seen in the results that 76 of 95 learners marked that time organizing is the learners' responsibility. From the statements where the 'teachers' responsibility' answer dominates it can be deduced that the teacher has to take charge for the learning context, the subject matter, and the process of learning. This attitude may be owing to the traditional education system based on teacher domination and spoon feeding starting from early education. However, it is shown that to set knowledge goals and achieve higher accomplishments is the learners' responsibility it follows that the learners are aware of their part of fulfilment, and aware of the importance of their decision in determining the aim of learning. Consequently, in the cases of the other questions it can be understood, that the teacher is the complete authority and learners appear to follow

passively what is taught. As a result, the answer to the research question is negative from the perspective of taking own responsibility for learners' own learning.

The next set of questions contains statements which aim to investigate the respondents' autonomy. The learners could define to what extent their claims are true about themselves. It can be seen that the most of them have high hopes in relation to language knowledge, 65% of the respondents answered that they would like to learn until they acquire the proficiency level. In spite of that, 52% of the students marked that they would like to learn out of class and 43% answered that they would accomplish well without high expectations. An autonomous learner possesses the ability to assess himself/herself and selects the best learning methods alone. According to the results the respondents do not perform well in this part of autonomy, nor would they be able to determine the homework or check on the unexplained topics independently. Teacher-centred approach means that the teacher possesses the whole authority, defines the topics, materials and the homework. The results which can be concluded from this set of questions show that the learners prefer if the teacher has control over them in some regards. For instance, the teacher determines the homework (according to 70%) and gives feedback (according to 67%). 73% of the respondents marked that they prefer to learn about only that topic they are interested in. Their independence can be seen that they consider themselves to be able to organize time, to select between opportunities what the teacher sets up and to choose the appropriate topic to learn.

The learners' autonomy appears in out of class activities and during the lessons as well. In the questionnaires, the autonomous activities were assessed among the respondents in the last two sets of questions. Autonomous learning is more relevant at home, because there the learners do not get help or leading.

According to the results, 78% of the respondents listen to music in English, 75% translate if they are interested in for example the meaning of a word and 73% use the Internet in English as well. On the basis of their responses they have higher motivation and enthusiasm about that topic in which they are interested in. More than half of the learners practise English with classmates and watch English movies and series. Grammar practicing and communicating in English with foreigners got the lowest values (33%). Taking into account the results in relation to autonomy during the lessons it can be said that 62 % of the learners ask the teacher if they do not understand something, and it can be the result of their low self-confidence or lack of knowledge, which was investigated in the question about the necessary characteristics above. This lack of self-confidence can be the reason of the absence of discussion about their learning problems with the teacher and the absence of suggestions to them.

3.5.2 Findings of the Teacher's Questionnaire

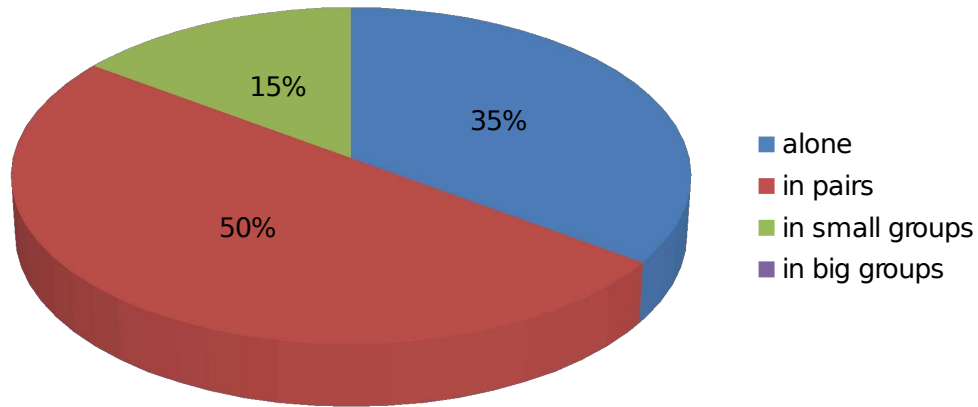
The teachers' questionnaire was constructed to investigate the respondents' concept of the term of autonomy, the challenges faced by their learners to become autonomous, their students' diligence and readiness for autonomous learning.

The first set of questions concentrates on the main tasks of the teacher and the student in the classroom. The answers about the roles of a teacher present, that the teachers' view of teaching does not vary in the concept of modern student-centred approach. According to the respondents the teachers' role is to motivate, to support, to teach to learn, to guide, to organize and allow the learners to improve their knowledge alone. According to the teachers' answers the students' tasks are not only to learn well, to be disciplined and to pay attention, but to express their opinion on the material, participate actively in the learning process and ask and answer questions.

The respondent teachers were familiar with the term 'autonomy in language learning'. Their definitions contain the following statements: "*autonomous learners set goals on their own; seek opportunities to practice outside the classroom; select and learn materials without the teacher; do not rely on the teacher so much because they learn independently*". Taking into account the responses about promoting learner autonomy, it can be said that the teachers' task is to improve students' skills, make them more confident, motivate them to achieve their goals and give guidelines for autonomous learning. With one exception, all of the teachers stated that learner autonomy would allow the students to learn more effectively, because an autonomous learner is motivated to gain knowledge and not only fulfil the requirements of the subject.

Autonomy requires independence and ability to cooperate with classmates without the teachers' leading while they work alone or in pairs during a task. The following chart shows what kind of teaching method the teachers prefer to use in their lessons:

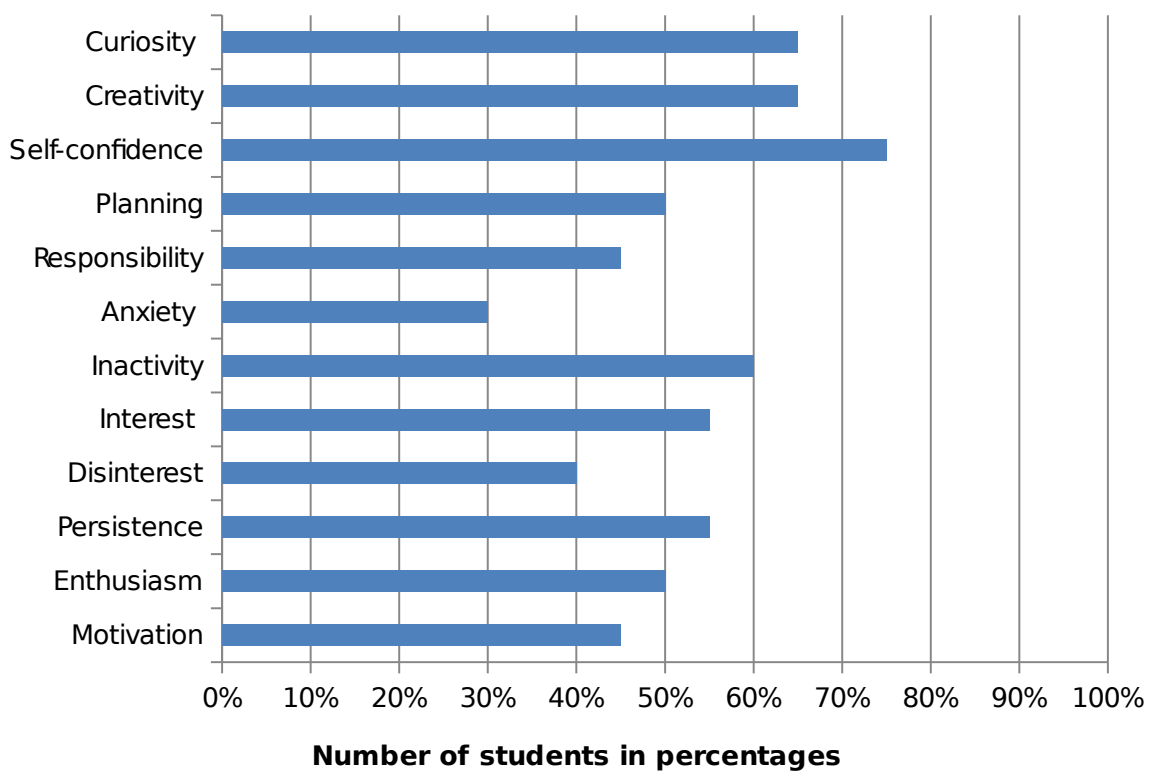
Figure 3.6 Teachers' Preferred Working Style



As it is seen in the chart above half of the respondent teachers prefer getting their students done the activities in pairs and 35% of them make them do it alone. Working in big groups is not used by them due to the hiding possibility of the timid and shy learners.

The next set of questions discusses the teachers' concept about their students' characteristics which can promote or hinder learner autonomy.

Figure 3.7 Teachers' Concept about their Learners' Characteristics



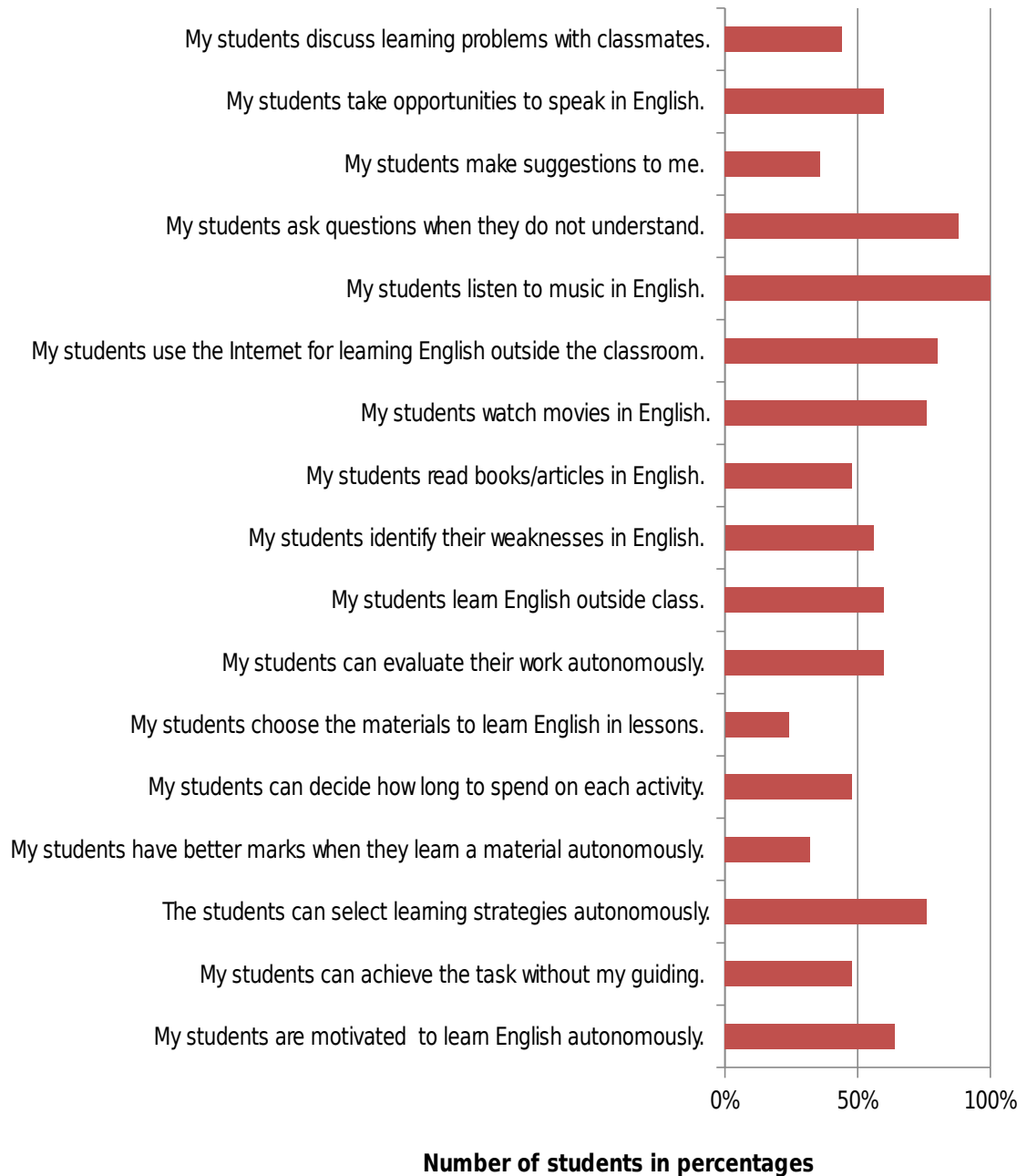
Taking into account the results it can be said that 75% and 65% of the pupils have self-confidence and creativity according to their teachers. These are useful features of gaining autonomy. Only the minority of the students possess other necessary characteristics, as their teachers observed. For instance, 45% possess responsibility and motivation, although these are

two significant pillars of autonomy. Regarding the teachers' opinion, half of the students lack other important traits, as planning and persistence. Under these circumstances it has to be stated that these students are not ready for autonomous learning.

In the next set of questions the teachers had to determine whether they agree or disagree with the statements connected to autonomy. According to the responses, the teachers agree with the importance of self-evaluation, the necessary supporting attitude, and the use of the Internet to promote learner autonomy. Some of them cannot say whether learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would do. It is still a present question, but it can be laid down that the effectiveness of learner autonomy depends on the character, field of interests and also on social background. The respondent teachers educate in heterogeneous classes and in schools where the learners are taught from all levels of society, and for this reason, they may come across learners of different abilities, learning styles, personality. It means that in their classes there can be pupils with less supportive background, pupils with lower ambition or learners may have a significant difference within their English knowledge. From this it can be stated that autonomous learning is not effective in all cases.

As the learners, the teachers were also asked about their concept on the students' autonomous language learning activities completed out of class and during the lessons.

Figure 3.8 Students' Autonomous Activities by the Teachers



It is outstanding that the teachers in 88% of the cases receive questions if the pupils do not understand something, but only in 36% do they receive suggestions related to problem-solving strategies. The results also present that the students can select the best learning strategies in 76 % of the cases and evaluate their own learning autonomously in 60 % of the cases. The respondent teachers consider that the students have better marks when they learn a material autonomously in 32 % of the cases. It can be explained with two hypotheses: the first is that the teachers do not believe in learner autonomy yet; the second is that the learners are not ready for autonomous learning.

3.6 Discussion and Interpretation of the Results

Considering the teachers' and the learners' responses several conclusions can be drawn. According to the results, the majority of the students think themselves to be autonomous. To the same question the teachers' answers reject this statement, because three of the five respondent teachers marked that their learners have low autonomy level, and two of them stated their learners have moderate autonomy level. According to them, the results for this can be that learning is easier for the students by following the teacher's explanation than doing it alone. In connection with the students' motivation level, the respondent learners see themselves more realistically than about the level of autonomy. Totalizing, 42% of the learners claimed that they have motivation to learn English. The teachers' experiences confirmed this extent. In the question where they had to rank the learners' characteristics, the totalized percent of motivation is only 45%; and in the last question they marked that their students are motivated in 44% in each case.

Taking into account the results of the learners' preferred working styles during the lessons, it can be seen that they favour to work mostly alone. In spite of that, all of the respondent teachers get their students done the activities mostly in pairs. The difference can be explainable with the facts that problem solving and task completion individually are easier and more proper for learners, while they have difficulties with cooperative work. From the aspect of autonomous learning, both are useful because individual and pair-works also require autonomy.

Some criteria for the development of learner autonomy were examined from the students' and teachers' views as well. For instance, according to the students they possess intense responsibility, while the teachers do not regard them responsible. Curiosity is also an inevitable attribute; the results show that 65% of the students consider themselves curious and the teachers completely agree with this statement.

The teachers were asked about the challenges their students face to become autonomous, and they mentioned the following problems: "*the pupils' lack of understanding about autonomous learning, decreasing perseverance, troubles with organizing and planning their learning, gathering data, evaluating themselves, monitoring their learning*". Planning, persistence and independence are a case in point. From the results it is clear that these criteria do not characterize the learners particularly. Self-esteem and self-assurance are closely related to each other and to autonomy as well. From the Figure 3.7 it is seen that the 75% of the learners possess high self-confidence. The lack of their negative attributes confirms it, because 30% of them is anxious and 40 % is disinterested, which means the majority of them feel relaxed and confident during the lessons.

In conclusion, it can be affirmed that learners are not repulsive towards learning English independently, they translate and learn if they are interested in or curious about any aspects of the foreign language; in spite of that, they do not possess several inevitable characteristics. It means that the majority of the respondent learners do not have the required traits and willingness to learn autonomously.

More information on learner autonomy would help to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter. It would be interesting to examine the different aspects of autonomy in more schools.

3.7 Pedagogical Implication

Several studies have rejected that learning is successful only within the context of the traditional classroom where the teacher directs, instructs and manages the learning activity and the students must follow the teacher's steps. In the twentieth century new approaches, aspects and points of views appeared with a considerable amount of effective and useful models of education.

Autonomous learning prepares the students for life as they are going to plan, formulate, select, choose, organize and distinguish not only in the area of education but in all aspects of their future life. Yet to achieve the desired aim, the learners have to be prepared for autonomous learning. They have to possess the ability to judge the appropriateness of learning materials, value choices, be responsible, overcome the obstacles and have several personal characteristics for measuring readiness.

The research can serve as a useful guideline not just for novice but for experienced teachers as well. The very first consequence which can be stated, that the teacher has to measure the learners' abilities, needs, traits, strengths before choosing the teaching method(s). As it is seen from the current example, not all of the pupils are ready to learn autonomously. If a teacher aims to adapt the autonomous learning method, he/she has to make sure of the existence of the necessary conditions.

According to the students, during the lessons the teachers have the most responsibility. If a teacher wants to promote learner autonomy, he/she has to give suggestions to the students of how they can take charge of their own learning.

In spite of the fact, that it seems that autonomous teachers express and instruct less than ordinary teachers do during the lessons, they have to devote time and energy to be well-prepared and create the conditions. Moreover, developing learner autonomy poses challenges to the teachers; they have to be ready to depart from their comfort zone, advocate autonomy and to be psychologically prepared.

The present study offers several ways to take up the challenges of autonomous learning.

On the whole, using this approach is worth considering because it can be more effective in many regards; anyway, it is inevitable to take into account the learners' readiness for autonomous learning.

CONCLUSION

Autonomy is a situation where learners make their own decisions and have the opportunity for independent actions during the process of learning. Autonomous learners participate actively in social processes of their learning, interpret new information according to their background knowledge; they know exactly how to learn and how to reflect critically on the progression of learning and in what way to develop this knowledge for real life situation.

As it was investigated in the present thesis, several studies ensure that autonomous learning provides skills for life, creates independent learners and responds to the changing and to differing needs of individual students. However, several teachers are still sceptical whether the approach can really enhance student quality, and they are dubious about the learners' ability to adopt this approach to learning. It presents challenges to the learners because autonomous approaches have reshaped the roles of teachers and learners, mainly their power and authorities, and then EFL learners take greater responsibility for their own learning; they are active participants in the lessons and can choose among several options. These are the outstanding differences between the teacher-centred and student-centred approaches.

Autonomy requires the understanding of new roles from both sides. The promotion of autonomy is dependent greatly on how teachers are aware of their different roles. Teachers who foster learner autonomy should create a supportive environment in which they address the need for new and diverse assessment procedures in the learning process. To become autonomous learners, the teachers integrate learning strategies into their instruction to enable them to become more proficient language learners. These strategies were examined by the author of the thesis, which are the followings: cognitive, metacognitive, social, control and independence strategies.

The present paper aimed to describe eminent researchers' concept about autonomous learning, their points of view and attitudes towards autonomy. The advantages and disadvantages of learner autonomy in language learning are also demonstrated. Among the benefits it can be listed that autonomy alters learners' beliefs about themselves and prepares them for real life, generating responsibility and independence. By autonomous learning students may become an integral part of the academic society and possess an increased motivation to learn. Autonomous learning, despite its popularity, is not without its critics. Due to the autonomous learning the exaggerated heterogeneous classrooms' rate is increasing, because autonomy requires certain features from the learners, which are not possessed by all of them. There are still some difficulties in its implementation within learning and teaching as well. The opponents say, that the distance between the teacher and the learner is bigger, it can be alienating, and the learners physically isolate from each other.

Students' capacity to learn without teacher-interaction is a crucial question of autonomous learning. In the thesis certain clues are presented about how to support the development of learner autonomy in the language learning process and what are the characteristics of an autonomous learner. Without possessing the majority of the necessary traits one cannot become autonomous. This hypothesis was proved by the empirical research. 95 learners from three secondary schools filled out a questionnaire. The questions were constructed to investigate their willingness to become autonomous, their attitude towards English learning and their autonomous language learning activities during the lessons and out of class. The obtained data showed that 86% of them are enlightened about the term 'autonomous learning', but the majority of them do not possess some of the characteristics necessary for autonomy, for instance, motivation (42%), planning (48%) and persistence (50%). Their autonomous activities extend only to the fields of their interest during the lessons, even out of classes. More information on learner autonomy would help to establish a greater degree of accuracy on this matter.

Nevertheless, autonomy is a critical area not only for students, even for teachers. If teachers want to be kept updated about new ways of teaching and learning and plan their lessons, class activities with the students for developing a more autonomous environment according to the desires and needs of their students, they have to change radically their traditional role, to be ready to depart from their comfort zone and to be psychologically prepared. Within an autonomous classroom, the teacher is not the high and mighty who directs, instructs and manages the learning activity and the students do not have to follow his/her steps. First, teachers from time to time have to encourage learners to develop their own learning strategies, let them decide the homework they want to do or the topic they want to learn, select the materials which can be used to arouse learners' interest, ensure the learners' satisfaction and confidence, let them hear their voices, reflect on their learning and in that way start a process of becoming autonomous learners.

The teachers' attitudes were also examined towards autonomous teaching in the three given secondary schools. It should be stated, that in our territory the autonomous teaching approach is not wide-spread among educators. The study has found that for teachers the traditional teaching approaches are less risky and even less dependent on students, and they consider that the students have better marks when they learn a material autonomously in 32 % of the cases. However, it can be concluded that the respondent teachers do not give an adverse opinion about autonomous learning, but due to the heterogeneous classes and students with weaker abilities they do not use the autonomous teaching method entirely, just they occasionally apply some components of it.

One of the research questions was to examine the learners' preparedness, diligence and willingness for autonomous learning. This study has shown that students prefer structured and organised learning where they follow clear instructions. According to Dickinson in autonomous learning the learners are entirely responsible for all the decisions concerned with their learning and also the implementation of these decisions [3, 15]. In spite of the students' positive image about themselves, the teachers regard only the 45% of them responsible and motivated enough to be independent. It means the lack of charge of their own learning, fewer plans about goals and fewer reflections on learning progress. Learners would feel safe and monitored rather than engaging in learning experiences for which they are not prepared.

The following final conclusions can be drawn from the present study: using this approach is worth considering, the advantages are clearly supported by the findings of the thesis, but this decision requires certain conditions. The topic of the research which is the learners' readiness for autonomous learning is one of the crucial points in the field of autonomy. Returning to the hypothesis posed at the beginning of this study, it is now possible to state that the learners are not ready to take charge of their own learning. In order to make a change and bring this approach closer to our area, attitude changes are also required within learners and teachers.

The limitations of the study are the low number of the respondent teachers and students. In the continuation of the research they should be asked about their advised strategies and own experiences using not only the questionnaire method, but also classroom observations and interviews. Another limitation is that the questionnaire was filled out only in three secondary schools. It would be interesting to examine the different aspects of autonomy on a larger sample.

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Автономією являється така ситуація, коли учні можуть зробити власні рішення та мають можливість для самостійних вчинків у процесі навчання. Автономні учні активно беруть участь у соціальному процесі навчання, на основі своїх попередніх знань інтерпретують нову інформацію, точно знають, як потрібно критично відноситися до процесів навчання та яким чином потрібно втілити здобуті знання у повсякденне життя.

У роботі ми проаналізували те, що було доведено і в багатьох працях, що автономне навчання створює життєві навички, формує самостійних учнів та служить відповіддю на зміни та потреби учнів. Хоча багато вчителів досить скептично ставиться до того, що це дійсно позитивно впливає на навчальні можливості та до того, що учні взагалі можуть використовувати цю навчальну форму. Це створює перешкоди учням, тому що автономне навчання надає нову суть ролі учнів та вчителів, і тому учні, які вивчають мови беруть на себе більшу відповідальність за своє навчання, стають активними учасниками уроків і можуть вибирати між багатьма опціями. Це являється найбільшою різницею між освітою, центром якої являється вчитель і учні.

Метою нашої роботи являється проаналізувати точку зору та думку визначних дослідників про автономію. Переваги та недоліки автономії також продемонстровані. До переваг можна віднести те, що автономія змінює уявлення про себе, готує їх до життя, створює відповідальність та самостійність. За допомогою автономного навчання учні стають активними членами наукового суспільства і здобувають більшу мотивацію до навчання. Незважаючи на популярність автономного навчання, вона також має свої недоліки. Із-за автономного методу навчання різко піднімається кількість гетерогенних класів, тому що автономія потребує певні характеристики від учнів, якими не можуть всі оволодіти. Досі спостерігається складність в розумінні автономії у викладанні та навчанні. Також існує факт, що відстань між вчителем та учнем стає настільки великим і може статися таке, що учні самостійно ізолюють себе один від одного.

Одним з вирішальних питань автономного навчання являється можливість учня навчитись без взаємодії з вчителем. У роботі наведено багато пунктів, як потрібно сприяти розвитку автономного навчання і якими характеристиками має володіти учень. Без володіння більшістю названих рисів учень не зможе стати автономним. Ця гіпотеза була доведена у нашому емпіричному дослідженні. 95 учнів з трьох шкіл заповнили анкети. Метою опитування було те, щоб проаналізувати схильність учнів до автономії, ставлення до навчання англійської мови та автономній діяльності учнів у класній та позакласній роботі. За результатами 86% обізнані з поняттям автономного навчання, але більша

частина не володіє потрібними здібностями, як мотивація (42%), планування (48%) та витривалість (50%). Автономна діяльність поширюється тільки на їхній зацікавленості.

Автономія являється критичною територією як для учнів, так і для вчителів. Якщо вчителі хочуть встигати за сучасними методами навчання, повинні радикально змінити свою роль. В автономному класі вчитель не являється головною персоною. У першу чергу, вчитель має підбадьорювати учнів, щоб вони дотримувалися вибраної навчальної стратегії, потрібно надати можливості для вибору домашнього завдання та вибору теми для засвоєння. Так потрібно вибрати допоміжну літературу, щоб вони зацікавили учнів та щоб вони реагували на навчальний процес.

Також було проаналізовано відношення вчителів названих трьох шкіл до автономного навчання. Можемо сказати, що автономне навчання являється непоширеною діяльністю на нашій території. Дослідження виявило, що вчителі надають перевагу традиційному навчанню, тому що вона являється більш безпечною. Воно менш залежне від учнів і тільки 32% вважає, що учні могли б здобути кращі оцінки при автономному навчанні матеріалу. Незважаючи на це, можемо сказати, що опитані вчителі усвідомлені про переваги автономного навчання, але із-за менш здібних учнів гетерогенних класів вони рідко можуть його використати.

Метою одного з питань була оцінка готовності, старанності та придатності до автономного навчання. Результати показали, що учні надають перевагу структурованому та організованому навчанню, де можуть виконувати установки вчителів. На думку Діксона, при автономному навчанні учні повністю відповідальні за всі свої вибори щодо навчання [3, 15], але тільки 45% опитаних дітей вважає себе відповідальним та мотивованим для цієї самостійності.

У підсумку можемо сказати, що використання даного методу може принести свої плоди, якщо результати можуть підтвердити їхню перевагу, але такий вибір потребує рішучих умов. Темою дослідження являється готовність учнів до автономного навчання, і це може стати вирішальною точкою в області автономії. Вертаючись до гіпотез, які були висловлені на початку роботи, вже можемо сказати, що учні не можуть дбати про своє навчання. Для здійснення змін потрібно змінити як ставлення вчителів так і учнів до названого методу навчання.

APPENDIX A

TEACHER'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Gender: Male

Female

How long have you been teaching?.....

In which forms do you teach?.....

1 Describe with a few words the main roles of a teacher in a classroom.....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

2 Describe with a few words the main tasks of a student in a classroom.....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

3 If you are familiar with the term 'autonomy in language learning' what is your understanding of the term? Please, briefly describe it.....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4 What role do you think the teacher plays in promoting learner autonomy?.....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5 How do you get your students done the activities during the classes mostly?

- A) alone
- B) in pairs
- C) in small groups (3-4 students)
- D) in big group

6. Do you believe that learner autonomy would allow the students to learn more effectively? If yes, how?.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7 To what extent do your students have these characteristics from the following list? (1 – not at all, 5 – to a great extent)

	1	2	3	4	5
Curiosity					
Creativity					
Self-confidence					
Planning					
Responsibility					
Anxiety					
Inactivity					
	1	2	3	4	5
Interest					
Disinterest					
Persistence					
Enthusiasm					
Motivation					

8.....What do you think, what are the challenges faced by your students to become autonomous?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

9.....According to your experience, how would you describe the level of autonomous learning of your students?

- A) high
- B) moderate
- C) low
- D) none

If your answer is 'C' or 'D,' what are the reasons?.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

10.....Please answer the following statements whether you agree/disagree or cannot say.

	Agree	Disagree	Cannot say
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Autonomy means that learners can make choices about their learning.			
Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.			
There is no enough time and resource for the autonomous learning.			
Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.			
It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.			
Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choices in the kinds of activities they do.			
It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.			
Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy.			
The teacher has an important role in supporting learner autonomy.			
To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.			

11.....Please answer how often: (1 - never, 5 - always)

	1	2	3	4	5
My students are motivated enough to learn English autonomously.					
My students can achieve the task without my guiding.					
The students can select learning strategies autonomously.					
My students have better marks when they learn a material autonomously.					
My students can decide how long to spend on each activity.					
My students choose what materials to use to learn English in English lesson.					
My students can evaluate their work autonomously.					
My students learn English outside class.					
My students identify their weaknesses in English.					
My students read books/articles in English.					
My students watch movies in English.					
My students use the Internet for learning English outside the classroom.					
My students listen to music in English.					
My students ask questions when they do not understand.					
My students make suggestions to me.					
My students take opportunities to speak in English.					
My students discuss learning problems with classmates.					

Thank you for your help!

APPENDIX B

STUDENT'S QUESTIONNAIRE

Nemed: Lány Fiú

Osztály:

1 Milyen céllal tanulsz az angol nyelvet?.....
.....
.....

2 Hol tanulsz a legtöbbet?

- a) a tanórák alatt
- b) otthon
- c) különórák során
- d) máshol

3 Szerinted mit jelent az, hogy autonóm tanulás? (többet is bejelölhetsz)

- a) Azt jelenti, hogy jó képességeim vannak.
- b) Azt jelenti, hogy képes vagyok célokat kitűzni és elérni őket.
- c) Azt jelenti, hogy képes vagyok egyedül tanulni mások segítségével nélkül.
- d) Azt jelenti, hogy valaki a saját stratégiái és módszerei szerint tanul.
- e) Azt jelenti, hogy képes valaki több információt befogadni és feldolgozni.
- f) Azt jelenti, hogy eldönthetem, hogy mit akarok tanulni tanár vagy szülő segítségével nélkül.

4 Szerinted te egy autonóm tanuló vagy?

- a) igen
- b) nem
- c) a tantárgytól függ
- d) nem tudom, hogy mit jelent

5 Hogyan jellemeznéd magad?

- a) Erősen motivált vagyok az angol tanulásban.
- b) Motivált vagyok az angol tanulásban.
- c) Alig vagyok motivált az angol tanulásban.
- d) Egyáltalán nem vagyok motivált abban, hogy angolt tanuljak.

6 Hogyan szeretsz a leginkább tanulni?

- a) egyedül
- b) párban
- c) kis csoportban (3- 4 fő)
- d) nagy csoportban

7 Milyen mértékben jellemeznék téged az alábbi melléknevek az angol órákkal és angol tanulással kapcsolatban? (1 – egyáltalán nem, 5- teljes mértékben)

	1	2	3	4	5
Kíváncsi					
Motivált					
Kitartó					
Kreatív					

Magabiztos					
	7	2	3	4	5
Tervező					
Felelősségteljes					
Nem túl aktív, bátortalan					
Nemtörődöm					
Érdeklődő					
Elutasító					
Nyugtalankodó, feszült					

8 Kinek a felelőssége? (kérlek, jelezd a választásodat X-szel)

	A tanáré	A diáké	A tanáré és a diáké
Biztosítani, hogy haladjak az angol tanulással az órán.			
Biztosítani, hogy haladjak az angol tanulással otthon.			
Fenntartani az érdeklődésemet az angol tanulással szemben.			
Meghatározni a gyengeségeimet a tanulás kapcsán.			
Eldönteni, hogy mennyi időt szánok a feladatokra.			
Kiválasztani a témát, amiről tanulunk.			
Eldönteni, hogy mi legyen a házi feladat.			
Meghatározni a feladatokat, amiket órán végzek.			
Meghatározni a tanulói segédanyagokat.			
Célokat kitűzni a nyelvtudásommal kapcsolatban.			
Elérni, hogy jól teljesítsek az órán.			
Irányt mutatni a házi feladat elvégzése kapcsán.			

9 Mennyire igazak rád az alábbi állítások? (1- egyáltalán nem, 5 – teljes mértékben)

	1	2	3	4	5
Az angoltanulás számomra élvezetes.					
Szívesen tanulnék angolt iskolán kívül is.					
Ha nem is lenne az angol órákon nagy az elvárás, én akkor is magasan teljesítenék.					
Addig szeretnék angolt tanulni, míg el nem sajátítom teljesen.					
Az órákon a tanárnak kell a legtöbbet beszélnie.					
Egyedül is képes vagyok reálisan értékelni az eredményeimet.					
Egyedül is képes lennék kiválasztani a leghatékonyabb módszereket.					

Képes vagyok felfedezni az erősségeimet és a gyengeségeimet a nyelvtanulással kapcsolatban.					
Angoltanulás közben egyedül osztom be az időmet.					
	7	2	3	4	5
Ha elérek egy bizonyos célt, szükségem van pozitív megerősítésre, dicséretre.					
Szeretem, ha a tanár több alternatívát állít elém, és választhatok.					
Csak olyan témáról szeretek tanulni, ami érdekel.					
Ha a tanár nem magyaráz el valamit, önként is utánanézek.					
Szeretem én eldönteni, hogy melyik feladatra mennyi időt szánok.					
Szeretném meghatározni a témát, amiről tanulunk az angol órán.					
Meg tudnám határozni a házi feladatot a tanár nélkül is.					

10 Milyen gyakran végzed az alábbi tevékenységeket iskolán kívül? (1- soha, 5 – mindig)

	1	2	3	4	5
Házi feladaton kívül is gyakorolom a nyelvtant.					
Házi feladaton kívül is tanulok új szavakat.					
Angolul használom az internetet.					
Angolul nézek filmeket, TV-s műsorokat, sorozatokat.					
Angol zenét hallgatok.					
Angolul is olvasok könyvet.					
Idegen ajkúakkal angolul beszélek.					
Osztálytársaimmal, barátaimmal gyakorolom az angol társalgást.					
Önként is szoktam fordítani, ha kíváncsi vagyok valaminek a jelentésére.					

11 Milyen gyakran végzed az alábbi tevékenységeket a tanóra folyamán? (1- soha, 5 – mindig)

	1	2	3	4	5
Ha nem értek valamit, a tanárnak teszem fel a kérdést.					
Az információkat önállóan lejegyzem, a tanár vezetése nélkül is.					
Javaslatot teszek a tanárnak.					
Megragadom a lehetőséget, hogy angolul beszéljek.					
Megbeszélem a tanulási problémákat az osztálytársaimmal.					
Megbeszélem a tanulási problémákat a					

tanárral.					
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Köszönöm a segítséget!

NYILATKOZAT

Alulírott, Baranyi Eszter angol szakos hallgató, kijelentem, hogy a dolgozatomat a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskolán, a Filológia tanszéken készítettem, angol nyelv és irodalom tanári diploma megszerzése végett.

Kijelentem, hogy a dolgozatot más szakon korábban nem védtem meg, saját munkám eredménye, és csak a hivatkozott forrásokat (szakirodalom, eszközök stb.) használtam fel.

Tudomásul veszem, hogy dolgozatomat a II. Rákóczi Ferenc Kárpátaljai Magyar Főiskola könyvtárának Kézirattárában helyezik el.