Research and Innovation in Applied Linguistics [RIAL]
http://jurnal.poliupg.ac.id/index.php/RIAL-EJ/index
rial_ej@poliupg.ac.id
Jl. Perintis Kemerdekaan KM 10, Tamalanrea, 90245
e-ISSN: 2964-5344
Volume 3, Issue 2, (2025)
Page 117-132

ISSN 2964-5344

Research Article

Developing Learner Autonomy: Moroccan University EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices

Said OUSSOU[1*] **Hajare BOUALI** [3]
Abdelhak ELBOUZIANY[2]

Corresponding author: *s.oussou@umi.ac.ma*
DOI: https://doi.org/10.31963/rial.v3i2.5370
Received: 25/02/2025 Revised: 13/04/2025 Accepted: 02/05/2025

ABSTRACT

Learner autonomy has been a topic of interest for decades, and its importance has been widely acknowledged. However, there remains a lack of clarity regarding teachers' perceptions of this concept and their willingness to promote it. Accordingly, this paper investigates the views of twenty-one university professors concerning their understanding of learner autonomy and the principles that underpin it. The study employed a mixed-methods approach to provide a rigorous analysis of the professors' responses. Data were collected through a questionnaire, followed by semi-structured interviews with ten selected professors to gain deeper insights—adhering to an explanatory sequential design. The findings indicated that the professors demonstrated an understanding of the fundamental characteristics of learner autonomy. While all four orientations were represented, the technical orientation was the most strongly supported, followed by the psychological orientation—a pattern reinforced by the qualitative data, which frequently referenced concepts such as "motivation," "metacognitive strategies," and "decision-making." In contrast, socially driven views were notably less prominent. This study offers several implications for both theory and practice, particularly for EFL teachers in this context and similar educational settings.

Keywords: *Decision-making, EFL teachers, Learner autonomy, Out-of-class learning, Teachers' beliefs*

To cite this article: Oussou, S., Elboziany, A., Bouali, H. (2025). Developing Learner Autonomy: Moroccan university EFL teachers' perceptions and practices. *Research and Innovation in Applied Linguistics [RIAL]*, Vol 3 (2), 117-132. https://doi.org/10.31963/rial.v3i2.5370

[1] Moulay Ismail University, Meknes, Morocco. Email: s.oussou@umi.ac.ma
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8836-0136
[2] Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University, Fes, Morocco. Email: abdelhak.elbouziani@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6457-8205
[3] Chouaib Doukkali Univeristy, El Jadida, Morocco. Email: boualihajare@gmail.com
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0006-3742-5688

This is an open access article under the CC-BY-SA international license.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of autonomy was first discussed in the fields of politics and philosophy. In the field of education, it gained prominence in the 1980s following the publication of Holec's (1981) seminal work, *Autonomy in foreign language learning*. Along with his colleagues at the 'Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pedagogiques en Langues' (CRAPEL), University of Nancy, France, he conceptualized learner autonomy in such a way that it would answer the need for a term to describe learners' ability to take charge of their learning (Smith, 2008). Since then, numerous academic publications have explored the concept in greater depth (e.g., Benson, 1997; Dam, 2018; Little, 1991; Littlewood, 1996; Nunan, 1997; Pennycook, 1997; Sheerin, 1997). These scholars played a crucial role in establishing and refining the concept of learner autonomy within the field of education.

> *"Fostering learner autonomy ignites learners' confidence, elevates their performance, and inspires lifelong success habits"*

Being well-documented in the literature, learner autonomy is seen as an important educational goal (Benson, 2011; Little, 1991). This goal has been described as "cross-culturally valid" (Smith, 2008). Indeed, the university model needs to equip learners with the necessary skills and tactics that will eventually set them up for taking more control over their learning and therefore compete in this world of dynamism. This makes the role of the teacher in promoting learner autonomy a crucial need; in addition to teaching their learners foundational knowledge, teachers should also teach them to be strategic and self-directed learners. The fact that the Moroccan official documents (National Charter of Education and Training, Strategic Vision, 2015-2030; Framework Law 51-17) seem to stress the need for autonomy does not translate into the fact that the concept is researched in the Moroccan real-life setting. That is, although learner autonomy has been officially recognized as one of the essential goals of education, the concept remains oft-researched, especially in regard to what teachers think about it and whether they actually help their learners take control over their learning. Also, the statement that "little is actually known about what learner autonomy means to language teachers" (Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012b) is another motive for researching this particular topic in this particular context.

In this regard, it is worthwhile noting that without an understanding of the teachers' beliefs concerning the promotion of autonomy, any attempt of studying the motivations or otherwise the barriers to implementing autonomy would not be fully understood. Therefore, the present research seeks to partially bridge this gap by investigating the Moroccan university EFL professors' beliefs about what learner autonomy entails. Accordingly, this study seeks to answer the following main questions:

(1) What does learner autonomy mean to Moroccan university EFL professors?

(2) How do they perceive the constraints of learner autonomy?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner autonomy is now universally considered an essential goal of language education. However, the term was mired in a superficial understanding. That is, when the term was first introduced in the field of education, some thought that it would not be appropriate in the Eastern contexts and it would only be more welcomed in the Western cultures. This view led Little (1991) to warn that autonomy must not be assumed to be a product of individualism. From this perspective, exercising and promoting autonomy as an important educational goal is deemed a valid attempt across cultures (Smith, 2008). Thanks to these illuminations that autonomy now is not a product of any specific culture, but a shared and universal pursuit. In fact, the tantalizing question is whether learners possess autonomy or not because while they have the moral right to exercise autonomy (Benson, 2011), they may not necessarily be autonomous, at least not all. Essentially, they are required that they take initiatives in their learning both in and out of class environments, for this is how Benson (2011) conceptualizes autonomy from the technical perspective.

Defining the concept

Defining autonomy is challenging, as it is a multifaceted construct. In one sense, it may be simply 'independence', but definitions in the specialist literature on ELT (Benson, 2011; Cotterall, 1999; Little, 1991; Littlewood, 1996; Macaro, 1997; Ouakrime, 1988) tend to emphasize more specific aspects to better understand what it entails. Indeed, the concept has been described as a multidimensional construct (Benson, 2011) and "a construct of constructs" (Tassinari, 2012, p. 28). For Benson (1997), autonomy takes place when the rights of the learners, within education, are recognized. Technically, he defines it as the 'act' of out-of-class language learning without any sort of teacher's interference. Psychologically, following Little (1991), he sees it as a capacity, allowing the learner to assume more responsibility for what he/she learns. Politically, he adds, the concept is defined in terms of learners' "control over the processes and content of learning" (Benson, 1997, p. 19). These versions of autonomy (the technical, the psychological and the political) serve as the basis for a better understanding of how autonomy in language learning is related to knowledge and learning theories. Other researchers (Cotterall, 1995; Macaro, 2008; Sinclaire, 2008) have defined autonomy in terms of the extent to which learners display the ability to deploy tactics and strategies to cope with the demands of their learning.

These definitions show a serious thought that began to be given to autonomy by these researchers. Their efforts are related to the general development of models that would help promote autonomous learning, exemplified in a number of researchers' contributions (Benson, 1997; Littlewood, 1996; Oxford, 2003; Nunan, 1997; Tassinari, 2018), and to the considerations with respect to avoiding misconceptions outlined by Little (1991). Developing autonomy has thus been an important educational goal worldwide, thereby leading to the need for teachers to retrain to develop the necessary skills to promote this pedagogical goal.

While the theoretical discussions acknowledged the importance of autonomy, teachers may have some perceptions that may not be in harmony with those depictions of

autonomy. In fact, Palfreyman (2003) concedes that there may exist a gap between theory and actual teachers' thoughts about autonomy. Although research on teachers' beliefs in general has been substantial, how Moroccan EFL professors perceive learner autonomy is largely understudied. In fact, no single study can be found on this matter.

Conceptualizing teachers' beliefs

The concept of 'belief', which has been described as a rather ambiguous term with respect to its usage (Borg, 2001), has acquired eminence among researchers from different backgrounds and disciplines, including ELT. However, before proceeding to discuss the term with regard to autonomy, it is worth defining the concept first. Indeed, in language teaching, the term 'beliefs' has been described as those assumptions teachers and learners hold about themselves, teaching and learning. Specifically, teachers' beliefs are referred to as certain ideas held by teachers that appear to be stable and "may be resistant to change even in the face of strong evidence" (Munby, 1982, as cited in Borg, 2006, p. 15). According to Richards and Schmidt (2010), these beliefs are "derived from their experience, observations, training and other sources" which make up a kind of foundation to which they return as they encounter new approaches or practices. These researchers further argue that the sort of beliefs teachers may have may sometimes hinder the embracement of those new practices. In this respect, Borg (2001) highlighted four common features that appear to make beliefs system seem to be a clearer construct:

(1) The truth element: within this feature, a belief is defined as a mental state by which an individual holds a proposition that he/she accepts as being true, although this person "may recognize that alternative beliefs may be held by others".
(2) The relationship between beliefs and behavior: this level summarizes the majority of the definitions of belief, which suggest that beliefs "guide people's thinking and action".
(3) Conscious versus unconscious beliefs: opposing views stood out between those who argue that "consciousness is inherent in the definition of belief and those who maintain that an individual may be conscious of some beliefs and unconscious of others".
(4) Beliefs as value commitments: this means that there is an evaluative aspect and emotive commitment to the concept.

In brief, a belief is either a conscious or unconscious proposition that is accepted to be true by an individual who may, at the same time, admits the existence of other beliefs held by others. Moreover, beliefs are held with an emotive commitment in such a way that it disposes people's thinking orientations and behaviors.

Previous Research on Teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy

How teachers teach and behave in the classroom significantly impact student learning. Their instructional practices are important constraints on, for instance, supporting autonomous learning. These instructional practices are often influenced by teachers' beliefs brought to the classroom setting. In other words, what learner autonomy implies for teachers will most likely have a significant impact on the extent to which and how teachers enhance it (Borg & Alshumaimeri, 2017).

There is a noticeable dearth of studies on teachers' beliefs about the development of learner autonomy in the Moroccan context. For this reason, the following review includes studies that have been carried out in other EFL/ ESL settings. Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012a) study in a university language center in Oman marked a particularly important contribution to the empirical research on teachers' readiness and perceptions of learner autonomy. In fact, they argued that research of this kind is characterized by dearth. The teachers who were involved in their study articulated their beliefs on autonomy as well as their practices which reflected a range of ways in which they viewed autonomy, though they conceptualized the concept more in terms of individual learning strategies. The teachers' views on the factors that hindered the promotion of autonomy included those related to the teacher, the student and the institution, namely attributes such as lack of teacher autonomy, lack of motivation and the issue of fixed curricula, respectively. Inspired by Borg and Al-Busaidi' (2012a; 2012b), a number of studies followed to occupy the empirical research space.

In a Thai context, Duong (2014) carried out a study on EFL teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy and found out that teachers understood the concept of learner autonomy but found it challenging to apply the strategies to promote autonomy in their students. Also, Chang (2020) investigated learner autonomy beliefs and practices among Taiwanese EFL teachers and the results revealed that teachers alluded to the importance of learner autonomy, emphasizing the idea that fostering autonomy is one of the major pursuits of both teachers and learners. In the Philippines, Rañosa-Madrunio et al. (2016) concluded that there was skepticism, though embracing its potential in learners' learning, towards learner autonomy among teachers.

METHOD

The Research design and context

This study employed a mixed-method approach as outlined by Creswell and Clark (2018), adopting explanatory sequential design to explore the teachers' views on learners' autonomy and principles that underpin it. Following Creswell and Clark (2018), the chosen design is appropriate because it allows for ample data, thereby addressing the research objectives more rigorously. Data collection methods include questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the subject matter. In general, in researching applied linguistics related topics such as this one, Dornyei (2007) encourages the use of both quantitative and qualitative strands since each depicts the "reality in a different, yet complementary, way". In fact, researching teachers' beliefs is a topic that requires more careful and rigorous investigation, which this study aims to address.

The research was conducted at the university context, involving professors. Participants were selected through non-random sampling. The institutional context is characterized by an organizational culture in which the curriculum is, to some extent, fixed, although there are occasions when professors can still partially adapt it to students' needs. The latter, however, do not have the authority to suggest what to teach and how to be assessed. The study is carried out in the spring term of 2023, allowing sufficient time for data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations are strictly observed, which insured

participants' consent, confidentiality, and anonymity. Measures are taken to minimize bias and enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. By providing a clear research design and contextual background, this section ensures transparency and credibility in the study's methodology.

Participants

A sample of twenty-one EFL university professors volunteered to participate in the study. They provided oral consent and expressed their willingness to take part without any coercion. All of these professors taught at the university level, with most teaching undergraduate courses and some also teaching postgraduate courses. Both male and female participants were included, with teaching experience ranging from 1 to over 15 years. These demographics were not analyzed here, as no significant differences had been identified in the literature and they did not constitute a variable in the present study.

Data collection instruments and procedures

The present study involved the teacher participants in voicing their perceptions of learner autonomy by employing an adapted version of Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012b) baseline questionnaire. For one thing, the scale was chosen as it was believed to be highly relevant to the present investigation. For another thing, the scale designed by these researchers followed the mainstream literature that, equally, this study was framed within. Mainly, the participants responded to the five point-Likert scale items varying from 1 to 5, where strongly disagree equals 1, disagree = 2, neutral =3, agree = 4, and strongly agree = 5. Since the questionnaire was slightly modified, its internal consistency was measured through Cronbach's Alpha, a common statistical test of reliability (Perry, 2005; Rasinger, 2010; Loewen & Plonsky, 2016), and was shown to be, which is, according to Bryman (2012) and Dornyei and Taguchi (2010) an acceptable level.

Moreover, ten professors were invited for a semi-structured interview to gain more insights into various aspects of learner autonomy. The advantage of the interview is that it allows for keeping a record of "how things are experienced" (Leavy, 2017). Thus, it provided details into teachers' actual conceptualizations and practices of learner autonomy. The sample size is usually limited in the qualitative forms of investigation and is usually determined by what came to be called 'saturation' (Boddy, 2016; Denscombe, 2010). In what concerns the ethical issues of the present study, special attention was paid to ensure that all the teachers' anonymity and to use their responses for research purposes only.

Data analysis procedures

After it had been collected, the quantitative data was submitted to 'SPSS version 23' for analysis. In accordance with the research questions, scale item analysis was run. That is, their frequencies and corresponding means were calculated for each single item in the questionnaire. For the interview, some questions necessitated the generation of themes, while others were directly answered. Given the fact that one interpretation of a reality is "only one of several 'right ways'" (Auerbach & Silverstein, 2003), selected extracts from teachers' responses were cited. In fact, in this way, other researchers will have the

opportunity to see how the present study's data was made sense of, thereby adding to its transparency and credibility, which in turn make up the trustworthiness of the analysis in the qualitative research.

FINDINGS

This section presents the results of the questionnaire on what learner autonomy means to teachers. To gain insights into the teachers' views, they were provided with a scale ranging from 1, indicating strong disagreement with a statement, to 5, indicating strong agreement. The following tables display the dimensions of learner autonomy along with their respective mean scores. To answer the first research question, the teachers' tendency to favor any of the four orientations of learner autonomy (technical, psychological, social, and political) was examined (Table 1). Additionally, the nature of their responses to other items—representing the relationships between learner autonomy and factors such as L2 proficiency level, effective language learning, age, teaching approach, and teacher role—was analyzed (Table 2). The interview data further enriches the findings by providing a more in-depth understanding of teachers' conceptualizations and practices of learner autonomy. The semi-structured interviews allowed participants to elaborate on their views, offering qualitative insights that complement the quantitative findings. These interview responses were analyzed to identify recurring themes and patterns related to learner autonomy, which are presented alongside the questionnaire results.

RQ1: Autonomy according to Moroccan university EFL professors

The following table provides an analysis of the professors' views of what autonomy entails. It outlines the four views of autonomy, including the technical, the psychological, the social and the political views.

Table 1
Teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy

Items	M (SD)
The Technical View	
1. Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.	4.19 (.74)
2. Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy	4.14 (.65)
The Psychological View	
3. Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	4.00 (1.14)
4. Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.	4.14 (.79)
5. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	4.03 (.85)
6. To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	4.02 (.89)
The Social View	
7. Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	3.85 (.91)
8. Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner	3.76 (1.09)

autonomy.	
The Political View	
9. Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	4.02 (.97)
10. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	3.95 (1.11)
11. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	4.01 (.74)

Table 1 is composed of four dimensions of promoting learner autonomy. While each of the above orientations were supported, the most supported was the technical orientation (M= 4.16, SD= .69). The psychological orientation was the second most supported (M= 4.04, SD= .91), followed by the political (M= 3.98, SD= .91) and finally the social (3.80, SD= 1). Technically, the majority of the teachers agreed (42.9%) or strongly agreed (38.1%) that giving learners opportunities allows for the development of their autonomy. Also, a large number of them agreed (57.1%) or strongly agreed (28.6%) that learners' independent study in the library supports their autonomy.

Psychologically, teachers' conceptions of learner autonomy were also strongly associated with this orientation, particularly with learner strategies manifested in item 4 'learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy' with which, jointly, 76.2% of the teachers agreed. The role of motivation, confidence, and self-evaluation were also believed to be highly positively supported.

From the political perspective, over two thirds of the teachers agreed (23.8%) or strongly agreed (42.9%) that learner autonomy can be promoted when learners can make choices about how they learn. A quite similar number of them advocated learner choice in the type of activities they do as one way to develop learner autonomy. Also, the majority of the teachers agreed (57.1%) or strongly agreed (28.6%) that student involvement in decision making enhances their autonomy. Lastly, the teachers' views were less in line with the social view of learner autonomy. Less than two thirds of the teachers agreed (33.3%) or strongly agreed (28.6%) that learners' learning from each other enhances their autonomy. Just over half of them agreed (23.8%) or strongly agreed (33.3%) that opportunities for cooperative group activities develop earner autonomy.

Further understanding of the teachers' views about learner autonomy was gained through follow up interviews where teachers were invited to elaborate on what the concept meant to them. In the teachers' view of learner autonomy, concepts related to the technical, psychological, and political notions recurred. It was observed that their views were far less socially driven. The following excerpts mark their actual conceptions:

> "Learner autonomy means taking control of one's learning and developing a set of metacognitive and cognitive strategies". (T1)

> "Learner autonomy is when learners learn without anyone's help". (T7)

> "Learner autonomy is the ability to make decisions about what and how to learn. It involves setting goals and evaluating one's progress". (T2)

> "Learner autonomy means the bearing of responsibility and the ability to make independent decisions for one's learning". (T9)

> "Learner autonomy entails giving agency to learners to extend their learning out of the classroom. It also means learners are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses". (T4)

A related question was addressed to the professors to speak more about the characteristics of an autonomous learner. The analysis showed that more than half of the respondents stressed the psychological characteristics. Five teachers (T1, T3, T5, T7 and T8) mentioned motivation as what should characterize an autonomous learner. For example, T8 said "the autonomous learner should have some qualities like being very motivated, has a clear goal, and being able to face learning challenges". The other teachers emphasized that an autonomous learner is one who is responsible, strategic, decision maker, and self-disciplined.

RQ2: Constraints of learner autonomy according to Moroccan university EFL professors

Having discussed the professors' orientations in relation to where autonomy fits and what it entails according to them, another related set of factors constraining learner autonomy (LA) was subject to exploration. Table 2 displays the results of these related factors.

Table 2
Teachers' beliefs about LA and the related factors

Items	M (SD)
LA-Age	
1. Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.	4.28 (.84)
LA-Culture	
2. Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.	4.14 (.91)
3. Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.	1.71 (.71)
LA-Effective Language Learning	
4. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.	4.01 (1.19)
5. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	4.04 (.80)
LA-Teaching Approach	
6. Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.	3.81 (1.23)
LA-Proficiency	
7. Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.	3.28 (1.18)
8. The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.	3.38 (1.16)
LA-Teacher Role	
9. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	2.28 (1)
10. The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	3.80 (1.12)

Table 2 shows that, overall, teachers' perceptions of the relationships between learner autonomy and the above factors were positive. However, some factors were more supported than others with the relationships between LA and age and effective language

learning being the most supported. As indicated, the majority of the teachers agreed (23.8%) or strongly agreed (52.4%) that learners can develop autonomy irrespective of their age. Also, teachers believed in the ability of learners of any cultural background to develop autonomy. Concerning LA and effective language learning, more than half of them agreed (42.9%) or strongly agreed (23.8%) that learners who are not autonomous are not likely to be effective language learners, and that is because most of them believed that developing autonomy contributes to effective language learning. Regarding the relationship between LA and the teaching approach, over two thirds of the teachers agreed (33.3%) or strongly agreed (38.1%) that learner-centeredness is a good condition for learner autonomy. With regard to LA and learner proficiency levels, quite lower percentages were shown. The majority of the teachers were generally unsure about the relationship. The last relationship revealed that most of the teachers disagreed (61.9%) or strongly disagreed (14.3%) that learner autonomy means learning without a teacher, a view which is congruent with their belief that the teacher has an important role to play in promoting learner autonomy.

DISCUSSION

The findings showed that the Moroccan EFL teachers' general understanding of the concept of learner autonomy was in line with the general mainstream conceptualizations of the concept in the related literature (Benson, 2011; Murase, 2015). Like many EFL teachers in other related studies (Al Asmari, 2013; Borg & Al Busaidi, 2012a, 2012b; Chan, 2003; Joshi, 2011; Tapinta, 2016; Wang & Ryan, 2020), the Moroccan teachers acknowledged the importance of learner autonomy in language learning. In this study, teachers' beliefs were divided into four types: the technical, the psychological, the social, and the political.

The most supported were the technical and the psychological orientations, which focus on encouraging opportunities for learners to work alone, learning how to learn skills, and promoting motivation. Their perception of learner autonomy in terms of learning through cooperative work was less dominant. This finding is partially not in line with that of Van Loi (2016) and Wang and Wang's (2016) studies in which Vietnamese and Chinese teachers' views were more directed to the psychological and the social aspects of learner autonomy than the other two. In fact, while the technical view in this study was the highest rated, it was the least rated in Van Loi's (2016) study. Although the present study's findings revealed the teachers' understanding of the nature of learner autonomy, teachers in Saraswati's (2019) study failed to demonstrate this understanding of the concept, thereby failing to foster autonomy among students.

The two supported orientations by the teachers also recurred in the qualitative analysis. For the technical orientation, teachers emphasized the need for learning outside the walls of the classroom. This has already been alluded to in the specialized literature by Benson (1997), who defines learner autonomy, assuming the technical perspective, as the 'act' of out-of-class language learning without any sort of teachers' interference. The psychological perspective also manifests in the interview analysis when teachers chose to define learner autonomy in terms of their ability to use metacognitive strategies. This finding joins the established arguments by other scholars in the literature. For example, Cotterall

(1995) defines autonomy as "the extent to which learners demonstrate the ability to use a set of tactics for taking control of their learning". Similarly, Macaro (2008) states that it entails the ability to effectively employ cognitive and metacognitive strategies. Also, teachers' responses seemed to also advocate the political perspective of learner autonomy when they mentioned the notion of learners' 'control' in their learning, which is, again, in congruence with Benson's (1997) argument that autonomy takes place when learners are able to take "control over the processes and content of learning" (p. 19).

Moreover, Ahmadianzadeh et al. (2018) found out that EFL teachers held positive beliefs about learner autonomy, a finding that is in congruence with that of the present study. This study is in line with the mainstream theory of learner autonomy by Benson (2010) and Little (1991). Rather than indicating full independence from the teacher's control, Little (1991) argues that the teacher-learner relationship should be interdependent because total detachment usually results in individuals being autistic learners who will deprive themselves from social interaction. This teacher-learner dialogic relationship is advocated by Benson (2010) when he states that autonomy does not imply the "freedom from the influence of teachers, institutions, materials and so on, or learning by oneself" (p. 80). Therefore, the participants seemed to display an understanding of learner autonomy that is principally evident through their views.

CONCLUSION

The study has provided local and rich information on Moroccan university EFL teachers' perspectives and practices regarding the promotion of learner autonomy. It has certainly contributed to raising our awareness of how teachers perceive the concept and how the beliefs they bring to the classroom shape and influence their practices in promoting learner autonomy. One of the main findings is that teachers generally held positive beliefs towards learner autonomy, stating that it is important for students' academic growth. Another finding relates to a general understanding of what learner autonomy actually means. This can be exemplified by their overall agreement that learner autonomy is when learners take control of their own learning and should not be understood as total independence from the teacher. Moreover, two limitations of the study were identified. The first one is the study's reliance on a relatively small number of participants, which limits the possibility of generalizing the findings. The second one, at the level of the methodology, is that the study employed a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview as the two main tools through which teachers' insights and practices were gained. Although the use of these tools was warranted by the research objectives of this study, which were indeed useful, the study would have provided more interesting results if it included a professional development workshop element to see how that would change their perceptions and practices.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Not applicable

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest reported by the authors.

REFERENCES

Ahmadianzadeh, B., Seifoori, Z., & Tamjid, N. H. (2018). Exploring EFL teachers' beliefs about and practices of learner autonomy across experience and licensure. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1-18. DOI: 10.1080/17501229.2018.1501694

Al Asmari, A. (2010). Practices and prospects of learner autonomy: Teachers' perceptions. *English Language Teaching, 6*(3), 1-10. http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n3p1

Auerbach, C. F., & Silverstein, L. B. (2003). *Qualitative data: An introduction to coding and analysis*. New York University Press.

Benson, P. (1997). The philosophy and politics of learner autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 18-34). Routledge.

Benson, P. (2010). Measuring autonomy: Should we put our ability to the test?. In A. Paran & L. Sercu (Eds.), *Testing the untestable in language education* (pp. 77-97). Multilingual Matters.

Benson, P. (2011). *Teaching and researching autonomy* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Boddy, C. R. (2016). Sample size for qualitative research. *Qualitative Market Research, 19*(4), 426-432. https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2016-0053

Borg, M. (2001). Teachers' beliefs. *ELT Journal, 55*(2), 186–188. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/55.2.186

Borg, S. (2006). *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. Bloomsbury.

Borg, S., & Al-Busaidi, S. (2012a). Teachers' beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy. *ELT Journal, 66*(3), 283-292. http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccr065

Borg, S., & Al-Busaidi, S. (2012b). *Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices* (ELT Research Paper 12-07). British Council. Available at https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/b459%20ELTRP%20Report%20Busaidi_final.pdf

Borg, S., & Alshumaimeri, Y. (2017). Language learner autonomy in tertiary context: Teachers' beliefs and practices. *Language Teaching Research,* 1-30. DOI: 10.1177/1362168817725759

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Chan, V. (2003): Autonomous language learning: The teachers' perspectives. *Teaching in Higher Education, 1*(8), 33-54. https://doi.org/10.1080/1356251032000052311

Chang, L. Y. H. (2020). Taiwanese EFL Language Teachers' Beliefs and Actual Practices Related to Learner Autonomy. *Tesl-Ej*, *23*(4), n4.

Cotterall, S. (1995). Developing a course strategy for learner autonomy. *ELT Journal, 49*(3), 219-227. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/49.3.219

Cotterall, S. (1999). Key variables in language learning: What do learners believe about them? *System, 27*, 493-513. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(99)00047-0

Creswell, J., & Clark, V. P. (2018). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research* (3rd ed.). SAGE.

Dam, L. (2018). Learners as researchers of their own language learning: Examples from an autonomy classroom. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal, 9*(3), 262-279. DOI.10.37237/090303

Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects* (4th ed.). Open University Press.

Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford university press.

Dornyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing* (2nd ed.). Routledge.

Duong, T. M. (2014). EFL teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy and their classroom practices: A case study. *International Journal of Education and Management Engineering*, *4*(2), 9-17.

Holec, H. (1981). *Autonomy in foreign language learning*. Pergamon.

Joshi, K. R. (2011). Learner perceptions and teacher beliefs about learner autonomy in language learning. *Journal of NELTA, 16*(2), 13-31. https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v16i1-2.6126

Leavy, P. (2017). *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, arts-based, and community-based participatory research approaches*. The Guilford Press.

Little, D. (1991). *Learner autonomy 1: Definitions, issues and problems*. Authentik Language Learning Resources.

Littlewood, W. (1996). Autonomy: An anatomy and a framework. *System 24*(4), 427-435. https://doi.org/10.1016/S0346-251X(96)00039-5

Loewen, S., & Plonsky, L. (2016). *An A-Z applied linguistics research methods*. Palgrave.

Macaro, E. (1997). *Target language, collaborative learning and autonomy: Modern languages in practice*. Multilingual Matters.

Macaro, E. (2008). The shifting dimensions of language learner autonomy. In T. Lamb & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Learner and teacher autonomy: Concepts, realities, and responses* (pp. 47-62). John Benjamin's Publishing Company.

Murase, F. (2015). Measuring language learner autonomy: Problems and possibilities. In J. Everhard & L. Murphy (Eds.), *Assessment and autonomy in language learning* (pp. 35-63). Palgrave Macmillan.

Nunan, D. (1997). Designing and adapting materials to encourage learner autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 192 - 203). Longman.

Ouakrime, M. (1988). The neglected species need some "AIR": Focus on the learner. In A. Zaki, A. Boumoussa, M. Najbi & S. Mehdi (Eds.), *ELT in Morocco: Directions for the nineties.* Proceedings of the Eighth National Conference (pp. 64-68), Rabat.

Oxford, R. L. (2003). Toward a more systematic model of L2 learner autonomy. In D. Palfreyman & R. C. Smith (Eds.), *Learner autonomy across cultures: Language education perspectives* (pp. 75-91). Palgrave Macmillan.

Palfreyman, D. (2003). Introduction: Culture and learner autonomy. In D. Palfreyman & R. C. Smith (Eds.), *Learner autonomy across cultures: Language education perspectives* (pp. 1-19). Palgrave Macmillan.

Pennycook, A. (1997). Cultural alternatives and autonomy. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 35-53). London, New York: Routledge.

Perry, F. J. (2005). *Research in applied linguistics: Becoming a discerning consumer*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Rañosa-Madrunio, M., Tarrayo, V. N., Tupas, R., & Valdez, P . N. (2016). Learner autonomy: English language teachers' beliefs and practices in the Philippines. In R. Bernard & J. Li (Eds.), *Language learner autonomy: Teachers' beliefs and practices in Asian contexts* (pp. 114-133). IDP Education.

Rasinger, S. M. (2010). Qualitative methods: Concepts, frameworks and issues. In L. Litosseliti (Ed.), *Research methods in linguistics* (pp. 50-67). Continuum International Publishing Group.

Richards, J. C., & Schmidt, R. (2010). *Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education.

Saraswati, S. (2019). EFL teachers beliefs and practices on learner autonomy. *English Journal, 13*(2), 99-112. https://doi.org/10.32832/english.v13i2.3782

Sheerin, S. (1997). An exploration of the relationship between self-access and independent learning. In P. Benson & P. Voller (Eds.), *Autonomy and independence in language learning* (pp. 54-65). Routledge.

Sinclaire, B. (2008). Multiple voices: Negotiating pathways towards teacher and learner autonomy. In T. Lamb & H. Reinders (Eds.), *Learner and teacher autonomy: Concepts, realities, and responses* (pp. 237-266). John Benjamin's Publishing Company.

Smith, R. (2008). Learner autonomy. *ELT Journal, 62*(4), 395-397. https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccn038

Tapinta, P. (2016). Thai teachers' beliefs in developing learner autonomy: L2 education in Thai universities. In R. Bernard & J. Li (Eds.), *Language learner autonomy: Teachers' beliefs and practices in Asian contexts* (pp. 96-113). IDP Education.

Tassinari, M. G. (2012). Evaluating learner autonomy: A dynamic model with descriptors. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, *3*(1), 24-40. https://doi.org/10.37237/030103

Tassinari, M. G. (2018). Autonomy and reflection on practice in a self-access language center: Comparing the manager and the student assistant perspectives. *Studies in Self-Access Learning Journal*, *9*(3), 387-412.

Van Loi, N. (2016). Learner Autonomy in Vietnam: Insights from English Language Teachers' Beliefs and Practices. In R. Bernard & J. Li (Eds.), *Language learner autonomy: Teachers' beliefs and practices in Asian contexts* (pp. 1-22). IDP Education.

Wang, Y., & Ryan, J. (2020). The complexity of control shift for learner autonomy: A mixed-method case study of Chinese EFL teachers' practice and cognition. *Language Teaching Research,* 1–26. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168820957922

Wang, Y., & Wang, M. (2016). Developing Learner Autonomy: Chinese University EFL Teachers' Perceptions and Practices. In R. Bernard & J. Li (Eds.), *Language learner autonomy: Teachers' beliefs and practices in Asian contexts* (pp. 23-42). IDP Education.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS



Author's Biography			
Name	*Said Oussou*		
Affiliation	*Moulay Ismail University*		
Email	*s.oussou@umi.ac.ma*	Scopus ID	
Google Scholar	*https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=db2kxHYAAAAJ&hl=fr&oi=ao*	WoS ID	*If any*
Research Interest	*Said Oussou is a Professor Lecturer at Moulay Ismail University. He is interested in learner autonomy, CALL and language learning, and L2 writing.*		



Author's Biography			
Name	*Abdelhak Elbouziani*		
Affiliation	*Sidi Mohamed Ben Abdellah University*		
Email	*abdelhak.elbouziani@gmail.com*	Scopus ID	
Google Scholar	*If any*	WoS ID	*If any*
Research Interest	*Abdelhak Elbouziani is a PhD student at Sidi Mohamed Ben Abellah University. He is interested in gender in education and L2 motivation.*		



Author's Biography			
Name	*Hajare Bouali*		
Affiliation	*Chouaib Doukkali University*		
Email	*boualihajare@gmail.com*	Scopus ID	
Google Scholar	*If any*	WoS ID	*If any*
Research Interest	*Hajare Bouali is Professor Lecturer at Chouaib Doukkali University. She is interested in communication in education, L2 motivation, and language anxiety.*		