The Graduate Students' Autonomy Development in A Thesis Writing Course For Postgraduate Students at EMU

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ABSTRACT

The present study aimed to explore autonomy development of graduate students in a Thesis Writing class at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU). It was designed as a case study involving a questionnaire administration to 9 MA and PhD students enrolled in the graduate course as well as an interview and evaluation of the course instructor. The questionnaire employed in this study was based on an interview designed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) and a questionnaire designed by Jarvis (2012); whereas the interview guide was prepared by the researcher. The study addressed the following research questions:

1) How does the instructor of the Thesis Writing course perceive the graduate candidates' autonomy?

2) To what extent do the graduate candidates enrolled in the course perceive themselves autonomous at the start and end of the course?

3) Have the graduate students developed their autonomy over the Thesis Writing course?

Accordingly, the study collected, content analyzed and triangulated comprehensive qualitative data comprising the graduate candidates' self-reports as well as their course instructor's perceptions and evaluation of their autonomy development.

The analysis of the pertinent qualitative data manifested the participants' awareness of the significance of autonomy both for themselves and their instructor. Further, the triangulated perceptual evidence collected at the start and end of the course suggested promising changes in terms of the autonomy development of the student

participants, as well as their academic progress in the Thesis Writing course. The graduate candidates reportedly could make decisions on their own studies, as well as the course topics, materials, activities, and other aspects. Furthermore, they used Moodle and other resources for their studies, interaction, and discussion with peers and the course instructor. Overall, the graduate students expressed positive perceptions in relation to their learning experiences throughout the Thesis Writing course.

Finally, triangulation of the qualitative data demonstrated a promising congruence between the graduate candidates' self-reports and the course instructor's perceptions and evaluation in terms of their autonomy development and academic progress. Importantly, the study raised the graduate candidates' awareness of the challenges of autonomy in the 21st century and the need to further develop in this regard.

In conclusion, the study provided some implications for the instructor(s) of the Thesis Writing course in the context under investigation as well as made suggestions for prospective research.

Keywords: autonomy development, graduate candidates, course instructor, Thesis Writing course, using English, Moodle.

ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi'nde (DAÜ), Tez Yazma dersindeki lisansüstü öğrencilerin özerklik gelişimlerini incelemeyi hedeflemektedir. Çalışma, lisansüstü dersine kayıtlı 9 yüksek lisans ve doktora öğrencilerine uygulanan anketin yanı sıra dersin öğretmeni ile görüşme ve değerlendirmelerini içeren bir olgu çalışması olarak tasarlanmıştır. Borg ve Al-Busaidi (2012) tarafından tasarlanmış bir görüşme ile Jarvis (2012) tarafından tasarlanmış bir ankete dayalı olan bu çalışmada, görüşme kılavuzu araştırmacının kendisi tarafından hazırlandı. Çalışma, aşağıdaki araştırma sorularını ele aldı:

1) Tez Yazımı dersinin öğretmeni, mezun adaylarının özerkliğini nasıl algılamaktadır?

2) Derse kayıtlı mezun adayları, ders döneminin başlangıcında ve bitiminde kendilerini ne ölçüde özerk algılamaktadırlar?

3) Lisansüstü öğrencileri Tez Yazma desi ile özerkliklerini geliştirdiler mi?

Buna göre, gerçekleştirilen çalışma, lisansüstü adaylarının öz raporlarının yanı sıra ders öğretmeninin algılarını ve özerklik gelişim değerlendirmesini içeren kapsamlı nitel verilerini içerik bakımından üçgensel olarak analiz etti.

İlgili nitel verilerin analizi, hem katılımcılar hem de öğretmen için özerklik bilincinin önemini ortaya çıkarttı. Buna ek olarak, dönem başlangıcı ve sonunda toplanan üçgenlenmiş algısal delil öğrenci katılımcıların özerklik gelişimi açısından umut verici değişiklikler ile birlikte, onların Tez Yazma dersinde akademik ilerlemelerini önerdi. Mezun adaylar, kendi çalışmaları hakkındaki kararların yanı sıra, ders

konuları, materyalleri, faaliyetleri ve diğer hususlar hakkında da karar verebildiklerini bildirdi. İlaveten öğrenciler kendi çalışmaları, etkileşim, akranları ve öğretmenleri ile bilgi alışverişi için Moodle ve diğer kaynakları kullandı. Genel olarak, lisansüstü öğrencileri Tez Yazma dersi boyunca kendi öğrenme deneyimleri ile ilgili olumlu algıları dile getirdi.

Son olarak, üçgensel nitel veriler, mezun adayların öz raporları ve bunların özerklik gelişimi ve akademik ilerlemeleri açısından ders öğretim üyesinin algı ve değerlendirmeleri arasında gelecek vaad eden kongrüans gösterdi. Önemle bu çalışma, mezun adayların 21. yüzyılda özerklik sorunlarına ve bu konuda daha fazla gelişim ihtiyacına yönelik farkındalığı arttırdı.

Sonuç olarak, çalışma öğretim eleman ya da elemanları için Tez Yazma dersi bağlamında bazı sezdirimler ile birlikte muhtemel çalışma için öneriler sağladı.

Anahtar kelimeler: Özerklik geliştirme, mezun adaylar, dersin öğretmeni, Tez Yazma dersi, İngilizce kullanımı, Moodle.

To my beloved family,

who always gave me unconditional love and support.

~

To my beloved grandmother Sıdıka

who will always live

in my heart...

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Presentation

This chapter introduces the background of the study, the problem statement and the purpose of the study, respectively. It also presents the significance of the study as well as the definitions of the significant terms.

1.2 Background of the Study

One of the recent special issues of AILA (The International Association of Applied Linguistics) has been dedicated to learner autonomy (Dam, 2001) which manifests the continuing theoretical as well as practical concern with this learner variable. The concept of autonomy originated from politics and philosophy (Benson, 2001). As a pedagogical ideology, learner autonomy hands control over learning to language learners in order to empower them to become independent (Benson & Voller, 1997). Learner autonomy was applied in practice in the early 1970s in France, at a Pedagogical Centre affiliated with the University of Nancy (CRAPEL). CRAPEL set up a resource center for offering adult language courses. Realization of the participants' lack of capability to assume responsibilities for their learning, specifically, decision making in relation to setting objectives or self-assessment, led CRAPEL to introduce some counselling services as well as learner training. The intention was to develop the participants' capacity in terms of self-directed learning (Holec, 1979, 1981).

Subsequently, learner autonomy became associated with self-access, distance learning, and CALL, which, according to Smith (2008, p. 396) "may require the exercise of autonomy, however, does not necessarily develop this capacity."

This awareness necessitated introduction of effective pedagogical approaches (Benson, 2001), as well as innovative instructional practices (Dam, 1995) so that language teachers could promote their learners' abilities in the language classroom. Consequently, a somewhat different definition of learner autonomy was proposed as follows: "capacity and willingness to act independently and in co-operation with others, as a social, responsible person" (Dam et. al., 1990, p. 102). Subsequently, the autonomous learner was profiled as capable of informed choice, critical reflection, independent decision-making as well as action (Crabbe, 1999; Dam, 1995; Dickinson, 1993). Importantly, learner involvement in journal and diary keeping (Dam, 1995; Warschauer, Turbe & Roberts, 1996) as well as engagement in interaction, negotiation and collaboration were considered to promote learner autonomy which is "the product of interdependence rather than independence" (Little, 1994, p. 435).

It is noteworthy that language learner autonomy has been extensively examined in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) in terms of learner characteristics, as well as in English language pedagogy. The research to date has explored learner centered curriculum (Nunan, 1988), the negotiated syllabus (Bloor & Bloor, 1988; Breen & Candlin, 1980), learner training (Dickinson, 1992; Ellis & Sinclair, 1989), strategy training (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991), experiential and collaborative learning (Kohonen, 1992; Nunan, 1992), as well as learner-based teaching (Campbell &

Kryszewska, 1992). However, Smith (2003) cautioned regarding a tension between those pedagogical approaches that view learners as devoid of autonomy, hence requiring training, and those that, regardless of learner background view learners as somewhat capable of assuming control over their own learning.

1.3 Statement of the problem

The traditional as well as innovative methods of promoting language learner autonomy such as self-access centers and facilities (Sheerin, 1989), pair/group work, self/peer assessment (Chan, 2003), and European Language Portfolio (Little, 2009) have been criticized for focus on the language learning process rather than use, on assumption of responsibility over language rather than negotiation of meaning as well as problem-solving; further, for deconstructing a complex process of learning viewed as a linear rather than cyclical phenomenon.

However, in the new millennium, in light of the recent developments in the world such as the growth of English, emergence of Englishes, importantly English as a Lingua Franca (Seidlhofer, 2005), there is a dire need to revisit the concept of learner autonomy. Moreover, unprecedented advancement of computer-mediated communication (CMC) also requires amendment of the learner autonomy concept. In this regard, it was noted that "changes in the use of English and the subsequent focus on communication processes imply that learner autonomy should include the ability to cope with the linguistic and schematic diversity, the fluidity, and the increased demand for negotiation that interaction in international contexts of use presents" (Illes, 2012, p. 509).

1.4 Purpose of the study

It was assumed that in the advanced English class (ENGL 523), the graduate candidates from different L1 backgrounds engage in ELF (English as Lingua Franca) use. Moreover, the fact that they are continuously exposed to on-line language data, involved in various on-line activities and tasks requires their resorting to (meta)cognitive as well as (meta)linguistic resources on their own. Furthermore, in order to cope with advanced course requirements, they need to interact, negotiate, and collaborate with their instructor and peers. This research, therefore, envisaged undertaking to explore language learner autonomy development in an advanced English class for postgraduate candidates. This study adopted an amended definition of learner autonomy as "the capacity to become competent speakers of the target language who are able to exploit the linguistic and other resources at their disposal effectively and creatively", and autonomous learners as users of language who can solve online problems and make decision independently (Illes, 2012). This was a case study which addressed the following research questions:

1) How does the instructor of the Thesis Writing course perceive the graduate candidates' autonomy?

2) To what extent do the graduate candidates enrolled in the course perceive themselves autonomous at the start and end of the course?

3) Have the graduate students developed their autonomy over the Thesis Writing course?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The present study can be considered significant since there is a research gap in terms of studies into autonomy at the advanced language proficiency and graduate level. It can be also considered important since it provided insights to the instructor of the

advanced English course in terms of the graduate candidates' perceptions of the course format, content, and requirements. It's therefore hoped that the pedagogical implications of this study will contribute to the improvement of the effectiveness of the graduate English course on offer as well as its learning outcomes at Eastern Mediterranean University.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Learner autonomy (LA): The capacity to become competent speakers of the target language who are able to exploit the linguistic and other resources at their disposal effectively and creatively (Illes, 2012, p. 509).

Autonomous learner: Independent language users who are also capable of online problem solving and decision making (Illes, 2012, p. 509).

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC): CMC is any communicative transaction that occurs through the use of two or more networked computers which gives rise to fluid and emergent contexts in which speakers from a variety of language and cultural backgrounds interact (Illes, 2012).

English as Lingua-Franca (ELF): ELF interaction is a contact language between speakers that use English as an additional language but a common native tongue or national culture. In short, ELF is a way of referring to communication in English between speakers who have different first languages (Jenkins, 2007).

Moodle: Moodle is a free software e-learning platform, also known as course managing system (CMS) which stands for Modular Object Orientation Development Learning Environment. It was devised by Martin Dougiamas in 2002.

The aim in developing Moodle was explained by the creators Dougiamas and Taylor (2003) is as follows:

- to improve skills at using internet to facilitate distance learning;

- to improve the pedagogical skills of other teachers by making Moodle freely available under an Open source license;

- to facilitate a supportive community of software contributors (as cited in Küfi, 2008, pp. 55-56).

According to the definition provided in Moodle's site (http://moodle.org), it is "a free, Open Source software package designed using sound pedagogical principles, to help educators create effective on-line learning communities". In terms of this explanation, "Moodle has been created especially for educators and as a result it has an explicit and fully articulated educational philosophy" (Küfi, 2008, p. 56).

As Dougiamas (1998, as cited in Küfi, 2008) stated, constructivism and social constructivism are the integral part of this philosophy. Moreover, Moodle helps language teachers to focus on learning experiences from the learner's point of view, however, it does not just assess and publish the information that teachers assume their learners ought to know. According to Dougiamas, teachers' job is to make changes from being 'the source of knowledge' to being a role model as well as influencer of class culture by being connected with learners in a personal way that addresses their own needs of learning, and chairing discussions and activities in a

way that collectively leads students towards the learning goals of the class (Philosophy, 2008).

It can be understood that this philosophy encourages collaboration between teacher and the student as well as among students (Küfi, 2008). In this regard, Dougiamas (1998) stated that, teachers, friends, students, administrators, as well as participants in a learner's social world may affect that person directly in plenty of different activity forms (as cited in Küfi, 2008). She further maintained that using Moodle enables teacher to be active like their learner so that they can experience life-long learning with their learners (Küfi, 2008).

According to Mougalian and Salazar (2006), the reason of Moodle being beneficial in a language class is because it fosters learner collaboration, and lets learners use the target language in plenty of ways.

Students can sometimes do extra work related to the course "as a time of their liking", they can also receive their teacher's questions or send assignments by using the different features offered on Moodle. Furthermore, language learners can discuss or chat with their friends on a specific matter in the 'discussion forum' of Moodle (Küfi, 2008, p. 60). Küfi (2008) also maintained that when the teachers make use of such tools like discussion forums, wiki or blog, the learners get an opportunity to see the ideas or work of their colleagues.

Developments of Moodle

Moodle has continued to evolve since 1999 (since 2001 with the current architecture). Major improvements in accessibility and display flexibility were developed in 1.5. The current version has been translated into 82 different languages and is accessible in many countries worldwide. Not having to pay license fees or to limit growth, an institution can add as many Moodle servers as needed. It is often known for individual departments of institutions to use the unlimited feature, such as the maths department of the University of York.

The development of Moodle continues as a free software project supported by a team of programmers and an international user community, drawing upon contributions posted to the online Moodle Community website that encourages debate and invites criticism. As of 11 July 2012, Moodle was developing Moodle Mobile on HTML5 and PhoneGap. It was planned to be released at the end of 2012.

Users can freely distribute and modify the software under the terms of the GNU General Public License version 3 or any later version.

There are many vendors that host Moodle such as Remote-Learner and MoodleRooms—which was recently purchased by Blackboard. Because Moodle is an open source software, Moodle can be customized to fit academic needs for students, instructors and the Moodle administrators. Remote-Learner provides their flavor of Moodle called ELIS and MoodleRooms has their own flavor called joule.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Presentation

This chapter comprises several sections overviewing the origins of learner autonomy, and the developments in the research to date. The following section pertains to subsequent studies and practices related to learner autonomy. The final sections are related to the recent work and current perspectives on learner autonomy.

2.2 Learner Autonomy in Applied Linguistics

The past decade has seen considerable changes in the use of English; it also presents new challenges for English Language Teaching (ELT) (Illes, 2012). Some of the most important developments in this regard have been the global spread of English and the fact that English has become an international language that is shared and shaped by all its both native and non-native speakers (Seidlhofer, 2005).

These new developments necessitate autonomous language users, hence autonomy has become increasingly important in the field of language education over the last two decades. David Little (1991, p. 2) described autonomy as a "buzz-word" of the 1990s which was manifested by a number of related books (Dam, 1995; Dickinson & Wenden, 1995; van Lier, 1995), as well as international conferences (Esch, 1994; Pemberton *et al.,* 1996).

Autonomy was traditionally defined as "the ability to take charge of one's learning" (Holec, 1981, p. 3). Later on, autonomy was defined as a more comprehensive concept by Benson (2006) as follows:

> To me autonomy is about people taking more control over their lives – individually and collectively. Autonomy in learning is about people taking more control over their learning in classrooms and outside them and autonomy in language learning about people taking more control over the purposes for which they learn languages and the ways in which they learn them (p. 1).

Anita Wenden (1991, p. 11) contended that "few teachers will disagree with the importance of helping language learners become more autonomous as learners."

Autonomous learning is a complex construct. According to Holec (1981), it is the learners' capacity to self-direct their own learning. In other words, it can be seen as taking responsibility for the decisions concerning different aspects of the learning process.

It should be noted that in language education, the term of learner autonomy was exploited in at least five different ways (Benson & Voller, 1997, p. 1):

1. For situations in which learners study entirely on their own;

2. For a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;

3. For an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education;

4. For the exercise of learners' responsibility for their own learning;

5. For the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

Subsequently, learner autonomy was considered to involve critical thinking, planning and evaluating learning, reflection, a conscious effort on the part of the learner to continuously monitor the entire learning process (Benson, 2001). Therefore, an

autonomous learner is a person who is reflective and actively involved in reflective learning, which means as Little (1996) put it, that they are willing to make conscious effort to know what, why and how they are learning.

In this regard, Benson (1999) contended that "learners need to reflect on and understand the relationships between their beliefs and actions in language learning and the social context in which they occur (p. 315).

In the early 2000s, Chan (2001, p. 23) provided a detailed account of the autonomous learner as someone who

- can set his/her own learning goals and identify and develop learning strategies to achieve these goals;
- can reflect on their learning which includes identifying problem areas and the means of addressing these problems;
- will identify and select relevant resources and the necessary support;
- will assess their own progress and define their own criteria for evaluating performance and learning, including strategies and materials.

Overall, the autonomous learner was viewed as a "decision maker" (Chan, 2003, p. 34). Within this framework, both independence and interdependence are crucial to learner autonomy in that

> Viewed as an educational goal, learner autonomy implies a particular kind of socialization involving the development of attributes and values that will permit individuals to play active, participatory roles in a democratic society. (Benson, 2003, p. 31)

It is advocated that ideally autonomous learners "take over their own learning – in other words, to do it without having to be shown how by the teacher" (Harmer, 2007, p. 399). It is noteworthy that "learners become more autonomous in language

learning in proportion as they become more autonomous in language use and vice versa" (Little, 2009, p. 223).

However, it was argued that without a teacher, autonomous learning is not a learning on one's own (Little, 1990). It is neither a teaching method nor something teachers do to their students. So it is not a permanent and constant state reached by learners. Importantly, van Lier (1996, p. 12) argued that,

> It is a truism that learning has to be done by the teacher. This means that teaching cannot cause or force learning, at best it can encourage and guide learning. The impetus for learning must come from the learner, who must want to learn, either because of a natural human propensity to do so, or because of an interest in material.

In a somewhat similar way, regarding the benefits of linguistic findings for language teaching, Chomsky (1988) noted:

> The truth of the matter is that about 99 percent of teaching is making the students feel interested in the material. Then the other 1 percent has to do with your methods. And that's not just true of languages. It is true of every subject (1988, p. 181).

This should not be surprising since learner autonomy as a pedagogical ideology hands control over learning to language learners in order to empower them in terms of independent learning (Benson & Voller, 1997).

The research and practices on learner autonomy to date involved numerous learner-centered approaches to language education introduced in the 1980s and 1990s, all of which include autonomy and independence of learning among their aims: the learner-centered curriculum (Nunan, 1988), the negotiated syllabus (Bloor & Bloor, 1988; Breen & Candlin, 1980), learner training (Dickinson, 1992; Ellis & Sinclair 1989), learning-strategy training (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991), the project-based

syllabus (Legutke & Thomas, 1991), experiential and collaborative learning (Kohonen, 1992; Nunan, 1992), and learner-based teaching (Campbell & Kryszewska, 1992).

The debate on autonomy has become a popular focus of foreign language teaching (Brookes & Grundy, 1988; Dam, 1995; Dickinson, 1987; Dickinson & Wenden, 1995; Holec, 1981; Little, 1991), since it involves central pedagogical concerns about "learner-centered" methods and aims, (Barnes, 1976; Freire, 1976; Holec, 1981; Hunt, Gow & Barnes, 1989; Illich, 1973; Rogers, 1951; 1969; Trim, 1976; Tudor, 1996). The concern with autonomy was also supported by a general educational concern with guiding learners to become more independent in how they learn, think and behave (Boud, 1988; Hammond & Collins, 1991). Such an approach was often characterized by tensions between responsibility and freedom from constraint; between the individual and the social, and between the view of language learning as a means to an end (autonomy for language learning), and as an end in itself (language learning for autonomy) (Benson & Voller, 1997, p. 5).

Thus, learner autonomy has been on the agenda of Applied Linguistics over the past decades. According to Dam (2001), one of the most recent special issues of AILA (The International Association of Applied Linguistics) has been dedicated to learner autonomy which indicates the continuing theoretical as well as practical concern with this very important learner variable.

2.3 The Developments in the Research and Practice to Date

2.3.1 CRAPEL (Center for Research and Applications in Language Teaching, University of Nancy, France)

Autonomy was initiated in the early 1970s at CRAPEL, a Pedagogical Centre affiliated with the University of Nancy, in France. CRAPEL set up a resource center for offering adults language courses. Realization of participants' inadequate capacity to assume responsibilities in terms of self-directed learning, specifically, decision making ranging from setting objectives to self-assessment, led CRAPEL to introduce some counselling services as well as learning training (Holec, 1979, 1981). Subsequently, according to Gremmo & Riley (1995), CRAPEL provided learners with services that could be used without teacher supervision such as audio-active comparative equipment, listening-comprehension tape services, videotape services and recorded anthology facilities. Yves Châlon, the founder of CRAPEL, has been considered as the father of autonomy in the field. After Châlon's death in 1972, the leadership of CRAPEL was passed to Henri Holec who remains a prominent figure within the field of autonomy today (Benson, 2001, p. 9).

Describing work at the CRAPEL, for example, Stanchina (1975, as cited in Benson, 2008, p. 22) stated:

> Autonomy is an experiment in how learning can be freed from the bounds of any institution, and in how the individual can reclaim control of and responsibility for his or her own education, while investigating the opportunities to learn from a variety of authentic sources.

In a similar vein, Dickinson (1977, as cited in Benson, 2008, p. 22) defined autonomy firstly as the "upper limit of self-directed learning" and later defined it as follows:

This term describes the situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his learning and the implementation of those decisions. In full autonomy, there is no involvement of a 'teacher' or an institution. And the learner is also independent of specially prepared materials (Dickinson, 1987, p. 11, as cited in Benson, 2008).

At CRAPEL, self-access resources are the key word of autonomy, which considered the accessibility of rich references to target language materials as well as an essential opportunity to experiencing of self-directed language learning (Benson, 2011). "At CRAPEL, self-access was seen as a means of facilitating self-directed or autonomous learning" (Benson, 2011, p. 11). In this regard, self-access center can be defined as a facility designed on a purpose of providing learning resources such as video, audio, computer workstations, audio and video tapes, DVDs and CDs, Internet or satellite TV access, computer and its related materials and etc. directly and easily accessible to learners (Benson, 2011).

More recently, it was observed that "the use of new technologies also leads to convergence among different forms of resource-based learning, which are increasingly identified by situational features, rather than the modes of learning they entail" (Benson, 2011, p. 127). Specifically, autonomy is a natural outcome of self-directed learning in which all the goals, progression as well as evaluation of learning are considered by the learners themselves.

In addition, Rivers (2001) indicated that learners should be aware of their needs and objectives and also be free to act accordingly in order to achieve a self-directed learning in terms of a proper use of strategies and having control of one's learning. The scholar concluded that self-directed process of learning is directly dependent on

both genuine autonomy and self-assessment, and it does not occur in the absence of one of them.

2.3.2 Philosophy of Learner Autonomy

In order to make use of characterizing dominant approaches to problems of knowledge and learning within the modern humanities and social sciences, the philosophies of learning were categorized into three dimensions: positivism, constructivism and critical theory. Importantly, these approaches can be related to learner autonomy in that the positivist approaches to language learning would appear to support the 'technical' (due to its concern with learners' technical skills) versions of learner autonomy (Benson & Voller, 1997).

Moreover, positivism advocated 'teacher - learner' models of learning, thus classroom was viewed as a natural site for learning (Benson & Voller, 1997). Technical versions of autonomy are found particularly in the literature on learner strategies and learner training (Benson, 1995, as cited in Benson & Voller, 1997).

Whereas the constructivist approaches to language learning were mainly concerned with the learner's behaviour, attitudes, and personality which can be referred to 'psychological' version of autonomy (Benson, 1997). In this regard, Candy (1989) contended that

> Constructivism is associated with the notion that autonomy is an innate capacity of the individual which may be suppressed or distorted by institutional education (p. 101).

In addition, constructivism tended to support autonomy versions which are couched in terms of self-responsibility for decision-making on what is learnt and how, as well as interaction and engagement with the target language. The constructivist approach

to language learning also regarded self-access and self-directed learning as a positive means of promoting autonomy (Benson & Voller, 1997).

Furthermore, as Airasian and Walsh (1997, as cited in Küfi, 2008, p. 36) indicated, since constructivism emphasizes "autonomy as opposed to obedience, construction as opposed to instruction, and interest as opposed to reinforcement", it was also welcomed by many educators. Learner autonomy, in other words "learners' being active and interested in the learning process are also issues that come to the forefront through the use of technology" (Küfi, 2008, p. 36). In a similar vein, Duffy and Cunningham (1996) stated that "the richness of technology permits us to provide a richer and more exciting learning environment that will better engage the student in learning the material being presented" (as cited in Küfi, 2008, p. 37).

Conversely, the critical theory promotes those versions of autonomy which have more political and social aspects. Autonomy growth has parallelism with learners' awareness of the social context of their learning in a critical way (Benson & Voller, 1997). It is noteworthy that the constructivist view of the autonomous learner who plays an active role in his/her learning and is technology friendly is in line with the contemporary view of autonomous learners as independent language users who are capable of online problem solving and decision making advocated in English Language Teaching by Illes (2012, p. 509).

2.4 Teacher and Learner Autonomy

Teachers and learners assume different instructional roles in the language classroom. As two major participants in the instructional setting, they are supposed to exercise teacher and learner autonomy, respectively. However, one cannot expect promotion

and enhancement of learner autonomy in those settings where language teachers do not favour it or lack it themselves.

According to Little (1995, p. 175), "teachers are indispensable"; thus, learner autonomy depends on teacher autonomy. If teachers are not aware of what being an autonomous learner is, they cannot be expected to foster their learners' growth of autonomy (Little, 2004, p. 1). Therefore, teachers should be able to utilize their professional skills in an autonomous manner (Little, 2004, p. 1). Moreover, "the decisive factor (in fostering the growth of learner autonomy) will always be the nature of the pedagogical dialogue" (Little, 1995, p. 175). In this regard, dialogue is important because all learning depends on social interaction (Little, 2004).

2.4.1 Teacher Autonomy

'Teacher autonomy' was first described by Little (1995, p. 176) as "the teachers' capacity to engage in self-directed teaching". Accordingly, several definitions of teacher autonomy from different perspectives (Hui, 2010) have been introduced as follows. Teacher autonomy was regarded as involving the capacity, responsibility and freedom to make choices in one's own teaching (Aoki, 2000, p. 19). Further, teacher autonomy was considered as the ability to establish appropriate knowledge, attitudes and skills for oneself as a teacher while cooperating with others (Smith, 2000, p. 89). Furthermore, more recently, Benson (2000, p. 111) argued that teacher autonomy can be seen as "a right to freedom from control (or an ability to exercise this right) as well as actual freedom from control".

In this regard, Smith (2001, p. 5) outlined a comprehensive profile of teacher autonomy comprising the following characteristics:

1. Self-directed professional action;

2. Capacity for self-directed professional action;

3. Freedom from control over professional action;

4. Self-directed professional development;

5. Capacity for self-directed professional development;

6. Freedom from control over professional development.

Subsequently, Little (2004, p. 2) summarized the roles of the teacher in an autonomous classroom as follows:

- speaks to her learners in target language, getting her meaning across by all possible means;
- helps her learners to communicate by "scaffolding" their utterances and showing them how to "scaffold" one another's utterances (Wood et al., 1976, as cited in Little, 2004, p. 2);
- engages her learners in activities that allow them to "produce" language that is ahead of their present level;
- engages her learners in regular evaluation of their progress as individual learners and as a class in the target language. This begins as oral interaction using very simple techniques. Note that self-assessment is fundamental to learner autonomy/reflective learning; without it, learners cannot plan or monitor their learning.

Regarding the teachers' professional knowledge and skill, Little (2004, p. 2) further noted that they "need an understanding of the dialogic processes that characterize language and shape learning" as well as "the ability to model all the learning and communicative behaviours they want to develop in their learners". Thus, the autonomous learner should have the capacity of seeing trajectories of learning.

More recently, Hui (2010, p. 67) noted that the research to date has reached consensus in that teacher autonomy is a kind of ability or capacity of teachers to manage knowledge, skills, and attitudes in the learner's acquisition of the language since learners' and teacher's autonomy may influence one another. In the 1990s Voller (1997, as cited in Benson, 2011) outlined the three major characteristics of the autonomous teacher such as facilitator, counsellor, and resource. In this regard, subsequently Benson (2011) added such roles of the teacher in autonomous learning as helper, coordinator, consultant, advisor, and knower.

2.4.2 Learner Autonomy

As regards learner autonomy, it develops owing to the individual learner's acquirement of responsibility for his or her own learning (Holec, 1981, p. 3). Accordingly, traditionally, learner autonomy was treated as "the techniques in order to direct one's own learning" (Pemberton, 1996, p. 3).

Further, learner autonomy was seen as a "situation in which the learner is totally responsible for all of the decisions concerned with his or her learning and the implementation of those decisions" (Dickinson, 1987, p. 11). Moreover, learner autonomy was viewed as "essentially a matter of the learner's psychological relation to the process and content of learning – a capacity for detachment, critical reflection, decision-making, and independent action" (Little, 1991, p. 4). Hence, the autonomous learner profile was outlined as follows:

> a learner qualifies as an autonomous learner when he independently chooses aims and purposes and sets goals; chooses materials, methods and tasks; exercises choice and purpose in organizing and carrying out the chosen tasks; and chooses criteria for evaluation (Dam, 1995, p. 45).

More recently, Lammons (2013, p. 8) stated that learner autonomy is about taking responsibility as well as –for the students, making informed choices about their learning. Importantly, it was noted that teachers, learning advisors, and administrators are responsible for helping "students think through the consequences of their choices"; thus "students should know that they are able to be responsible for those choices and their learning".

2.5 Autonomy and Independence

Autonomy and independence have deep historical roots in both western and eastern philosophies, however, it is primarily in their western form that we know of them in language education (Pierson, 1996). In the past decades, it was proposed by Roger (1969, as cited in Benson & Voller, 1997) that the autonomous individual is "a fully functioning person". It was also maintained that in education, autonomy and independence are associated with the individual formation as the core of a democratic society (p. 4). More recently, Benson (2001) stated that, the concept of autonomy in language learning had begun to suffer from a crisis of identity. Moreover, the situation in which the learner is entirely independent of the teacher, institutions or prepared materials was referred to "full autonomy" (Dickinson, 1987, as cited in Benson, 2001, p. 14).

In this regard, Bound pointed out that

> A fundamental purpose of education is assumed to be to develop in individuals the ability to make their own decisions about what they think and do (1988, p. 18).

Autonomous language learning has long been associated not only with individualization (Brookes & Grundy, 1988; Geddes & Sturtridge, 1982) but also the notion that learners each have their own preferred learning styles, capacities and

needs (Skehan, 1989). Autonomy and independence advocates also appealed to the constructivist approaches to learning which suggested that "learners construct their own systems" (Little, 1991, as cited in Benson & Voller, 1997, p. 6). In this regard, it was noted that

> Proponents of autonomous and independent learning have tended to distance themselves from the implication that they promote individualistic approaches to learning by emphasizing the collective or collaborative nature of effective language learning. Autonomy never ends; it continues, nevertheless, to be supported by views of learning which emphasize the learner's individuality (Benson & Voller, 1997, pp. 6-7).

Learner independence and learner responsibility were emphasized in learner autonomy approach to educational practice (Benson & Voller, 1997, p. 99). Campbell (2013) maintained that "the keywords here are 'independence' and 'responsibility' for the language learner's own learning".

Sheerin (as cited in Benson & Voller, 1997, pp. 55-56) regarded independent learning as involving "learners taking responsibility for their own learning and developing effective learning strategies; in other words, learning how to learn".

However, Holec (1985) emphasized that autonomy should be used for describing a learner's capacity, while others started to use it to refer to situations in which learners worked with their own direction outside the conventional language-teaching classroom. In this regard, Dickinson (1987, p. 11) defined autonomy as "the situation in which learner is fully responsible for all of the decision related to his learning".

Over the past two decades, Tarone and Yule (1989, as cited in Benson & Voller, 1997) emphasized that concepts of autonomy were promoted by the general trend in

language education towards 'learner-centeredness'. Regarding the interrelationship between the two phenomena of autonomy and independence it was noted that

> Although autonomy and independence in language learning currently tend to be conceived in individual and psychological terms, we should bear in mind that the roots of these concepts are both contradictory and complex (Benson & Voller, 1997, p. 4).

The research to date has held that, in order to develop a capacity to take control of their learning, learners need to be freed from control and direction by others. At the same time, it was also cautioned that those learners who preferred to study or were pushed by circumstances, would not necessarily develop this capacity. Nevertheless, it was also argued that it is in opposition of dependence when independence is used as a synonym of autonomy (Benson, 2001, p. 15).

Teachers should be aware that learners have different needs, different individual learning styles, so it is crucial to provide "students the tools and strategies to learn independently" (Schmitt & Schmitt, 1994, as cited in Campbell, 2013, p. 20).

More recently, it was noted that "if teachers provide their students with ways of promoting self-access language learning and self-directed language learning, and act as facilitators in their students' learning, then learner autonomy and learner independence will be engaged" (Campbell, 2013, p. 17).

2.6 Current Perspectives and Work on Learner Autonomy

It should be noted that the development of learner autonomy has been the major goal of the learner-centered language learning and teaching (Little, 2000; Reinders, 2011; Williams & Burden, 1997). As Wach (2012) put it, most of the definitions of the

learner autonomy concept focused on the control and responsibility that learners have in evaluating and managing their own learning. However,

> Increasingly, the social dimension of autonomy has been highlighted in recent literature on the subject, which stresses that autonomous learning needs to incorporate elements of interaction, with the teacher, with other learners, or other users of L2, to prepare learners to function in communicative environments (Wach, 2012, p. 368).

In the past few decades, with the growth of information technology and global trends towards more learner-centred education, the learner autonomy concept has long become associated with technology (Blin, 2004, as cited in Jiang, 2013).

According to Zorko (2007), web-based tools facilitate "peer-to-peer, student-teacher and teacher-teacher interactions and sharing of knowledge". As Levine (2004, p. 2) observed, web-based tools are emerging as a new technology for educators because "people want to use their tools to support what they want to do, not learn new tools to do what somebody else has decided they should do". Importantly, these tools "empower their users to take their own decisions and control their own professional practices" (Küfi, 2008, p. 64).

Using web-based tools in a blended-learning context creates positive effects on students' learning experience because such tools are expected to be good for "improving group collaborations, increasing motivation and promoting knowledge sharing, empowering the students with authority and responsibility for more autonomous learning" (Zorko, 2007, p. 5). Importantly, with the advancement of information and computer technology, Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) has been regarded as a significant phenomenon in promoting learner autonomy to meet new challenges in the new millennium (Wach, 2012).

It is argued that involvement in Computer Mediated Communication provides learners such core features of autonomous learning as making their own decisions on when and how they will engage in CMC, evaluation and management of their own learning process, managing interaction in the L2, being independent as language learners, and interdependence among CMC participants (Benson, 2001, 2006, 2011; Blin, 2004; Jarvis, 2012; Reinders & White, 2011).

In this regard, Zane and Collins (1995) indicated that as well as promoting an interaction which lacks in the traditional teacher-based classroom, CMC also allows learners the freedom in exploring alternative ways in order to find and develop their own learning styles.

In the same vein, Mougalian and Salazar (2005) contended that an interactive web environment on Moodle encourages learners to collaborate and enriches the input they will have. Further, "through this collaboration, students will find that they are much a resource to each other as the teacher is to them" (Mougalian & Salazar 2005, p. 5). In a similar vein, Eldridge and Neufeld (2007) reported that "the most essential and valuable ingredient" of their Moodle experiment was "the creation of a genuine learning community" in their classes at EMU and METU in North Cyprus.

More recently, Mynard (2013) observed that learners can "begin to exercise control over learning" when they are engaged and comfortable as online community members. She also maintained that this process can be under the guidance of instructor; however, language learners most likely already use them proficiently for ordinary everyday communication so language educators do not need to introduce

tools to them. In fact, the purpose is to prepare learners to use the tools effectively for language learning process.

2.7 Related Studies

The past decades of the 20th century have witnessed a number of learner-centered approaches to language education, all of which included autonomy and independence among their aims. In this regard, Nunan (1988) offered the learner-centered curriculum which adopted an aim of the creation and use of the points in order to help educators better meet the needs of students, by removing the focus from other areas of the learning environment. Another significant learner-centered approach was the negotiated syllabus (Breen & Candlin, 1980; Bloor & Bloor, 1988) which embraced full learner participation in content selection, working mode, and working route, as well as assessment, and so on. It's noteworthy that the central principle is that the learner's needs are of paramount significance. Furthermore, learner training (Dickinson, 1992; Ellis & Sinclair, 1989), was offered for helping learners find out how they learn most effectively as well as to reflect on the way learners learn by focusing on to produce effective, independent language learners. On the other hand, in order to develop such skills in second language learning as problem-solving, learning strategies, decision making on how to approach a language task, monitor and self-evaluation, strategy training (Oxford, 1990; Wenden, 1991) was suggested as one of learner-centered approaches to language education.

Further, experiential and collaborative learning (Kohonen, 1992, Nunan, 1992) which considered "the students themselves as learners in general and as language learners in particular" regarding students need to be "facilitated to develop a basic reflective orientation by working on their experiences, beliefs and assumptions of

language and learning" (Kohonen, 2005, p. 1). Considering learner-based teaching (Campbell & Kryszewska, 1992), all class activities can be done using information that learners themselves bring to the class and the input can be based on the experiences, knowledge, and expertise of individual students while the teacher takes role as helper and resource.

Further, Wach (2012) observed that some studies have attempted to investigate the relationship between using different forms of CALL and CMC and learner autonomy. These studies indicated that while engaging in computer-based learning activities, apart from developing language skills, learners have a chance to discover ways of approaching linguistic and interactive tasks to a large extent independently of the teacher, hence the metacognitive and affective sides of their learning are involved (pp. 371-372). Interestingly, Ushioda (2000) focused on the affective dimension of technology-based learning and concluded that sequential email exchanges by L2 learners increased their intrinsic motivation and may have fostered learner autonomy. Furthermore, Shucart, Mishina, Takahashi, and Enokizono's (2008) study reported that a blended learning tool not only fostered learner autonomy in classroom-based and out-of-class learning among their study participants, but also promoted collaboration among learners and increased their motivation and positive attitudes toward learning situation.

The more recent pertinent studies have noted the importance of learner autonomy, however, only few have actually focused on exploring the potential of technology on learners' autonomy development. In this regard, Kaur, Singh and Embi (2006), Kaur and Sidhu (2010), and Abraham and Williams (2011), examined the application of

CMC by students at higher education institutions, and they stressed the lifelong learning dimension of autonomy development that is particularly relevant in the case of adult language learners. Specifically, Kaur, Singh and Embi's (2006) study demonstrated that one way of promoting autonomous behaviour in foreign language learners is through the application of different forms of computer-assisted language learning (CALL), and, in particular, computer-mediated communication (CMC) in the process of language learning.

Subsequently, Arikan & Bakla (2011) demonstrated that blogging contributed to a group of Turkish university students' developing autonomy. Moreover, Jarvis (2012) observed in his study that the application of technology impacted considerably the study participants' autonomous learning in self-study centres.

In the light of the recent developments on the globe such as the increasing role of English as international lingua franca as well as the unprecedented growth of computer-mediated communication, the present study adopted the view that "learner autonomy should include the ability to cope with the linguistic and schematic diversity, the fluidity, and the increased demand for negotiation that interaction in international contexts of use presents" (Illes, 2012, p. 509). Accordingly, we contend that learner autonomy in the new millennium necessitates

> The capacity to become competent speakers of the target language who are able to exploit the linguistic and other resources at their disposal effectively and creatively; hence those independent language users who are also capable of online problem solving and decision making would be considered autonomous learners in the 21st century (Illes, 2012, p. 509).

2.8 Summary

This chapter presented a review of the early and current literature and studies in relation to the developing field of English Language Teaching. It examined different views, as well as the developments in the research and practice to date on learner autonomy. Further, it discussed traditional views and current perspectives on learner autonomy. Finally, the chapter considered related studies into autonomy and independence, as well as frameworks, and approaches for CALL and CMC.

Chapter 3

METHOD

3.1 Presentation

This chapter presents the methodology of the current study. The first section introduces the overall design of the research; the second section pertains to the research questions to be addressed. The subsequent sections describe the context, participants, as well as procedures for data collection and analysis. The final section presents the limitations and delimitations of the current study.

3.2 Overall Research Design

This study aimed to explore autonomy development of graduate students in an advanced Thesis Writing class. It was designed as a case study involving a questionnaire administration to the MA and PhD students enrolled in the graduate course as well as an interview and evaluation of the course instructor. The instruments employed in this study were based on an interview designed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) and a questionnaire designed by Jarvis (2012); whereas the interview guide was prepared by the researcher.

Traditionally, case study was considered "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case" (Stake, 1995, as cited in Dörnyei, 2007, p. 151) and it was regarded within the primary research (Brown, 2004). According to Reichardt and Cook (1979, as cited in Brown, 2004), single case studies are part of the qualitative paradigm that has the following characteristics:

- advocates the use of qualitative methods,
- concerned with understanding human behavior from the actor's own frame of reference,
- naturalistic and uncontrolled observation,
- subjective,
- close to the data; the "insider" perspective,
- grounded, discovery-oriented, exploratory, expansionist, descriptive, and inductive,
- process-oriented,
- valid; "real", "rich", and "deep" data,
- generalizable; single case studies,
- holistic,
- assumes a dynamic reality.

Further, case studies have been referred to qualitative research methods which examine human behaviour in various socio-cultural, educational and other contexts. This is done through a variety of tools, such as interviews, historical methods, case studies and other types of research and ethnography, and it usually results in qualitative primary data. (Salkind, 2005, p. 206).

Significantly, qualitative research studies phenomena within the social and cultural context in which they occur. In this regard, "case study is a method that is used to study an individual or an institution in a unique setting or situation in as intense and as detailed manner as possible." (Salkind, 2005, p. 206).

According to Johnson (1993), the main advantage of case studies is that "they allow the researcher to focus on the individual in a way that is rarely possible in group research" (p. 7). In addition, in order to compare and contrast the participant(s)' behaviour within their particular context, case studies can be conducted with more

than one individual learner or even more than one group of learners. In other words, "case studies clearly have the potential for rich contextualization that can light on the complexities of second language process" (Mackey & Gass, 2005, p. 171). Whereas Salkind noted that "case studies are limited in their generalizability", and highlighted certain disadvantages of case studies such as being time-consuming, lacking breadth, as well as being subject to biases in observing and recording data (2005, p. 206).

Recently, Brown (2002) contended that case study is concerned with "observation of the characteristics of an individual unit such as a person, a social group, a class, a school or a community" (p. 21). Further, Yin (2003) also argued that case studies can be conducted for various purposes, one being evaluation of a particular case which include the following:

1. Case studies can give explanations to the causal links in real life situations.

2. Case studies can describe an intervention and the context in which it occurred.

3. A case study can evaluate a particular case.

According to Dörnyei (2007), researchers have the opportunity of exploring in depth a programme, an organization, a community, or an institution even though cases are primarily people. Moreover Dörnyei (2007) also maintained that:

> In fact, almost anything can serve as a case as long as it constitutes a single entity with clearly defined boundaries. Research studies sometimes describe a series of 'multiple cases'; this is fine as long as each individual case is considered the target of a separate study (p. 151).

Furthermore, McKay (2006) noted that case studies are the more difficult methodologies to define since they may vary in research data and in focus. Thus, collected data can include narrative accounts, transcripts of classroom observations,

verbal reports, interview data and written documents; in this regard, if researchers believe that contextual conditions are relevant enough to their focus of research, they generally select a case study methodology (p. 71).

In the same vein, Dörnyei (2007) held that case studies involve a range of research procedures. The scholar (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 152) categorized case studies into 'intrinsic case studies', 'instrumental case studies', and 'multiple or collective case studies'.

In language teaching and learning, case studies generally envisage to examine the language development of individuals or small groups. In this regard, some case studies have been referred to developmental research in that they involve "an investigation of patterns and sequences of growth and change as a function of time" (Brown, 2002, p. 21). The present study adopted Mackey & Gass's (2005) view of the aim of case studies as follows

> ...to provide a holistic description of language learning or use within a specific population and setting. Case studies tend to provide detailed descriptions of specific learners (or sometimes classes) within their learning setting. Case studies are also usually associated with a longitudinal approach, in which observations of the phenomena under investigation are made at periodic intervals for an extended period of time (p. 171).

The case under investigation in the present study was a group of graduate candidates enrolled in an advanced course. The study employed the qualitative methodology to explore the graduate students' as well as their instructors' perceptions and evaluation of their autonomy development throughout the Thesis Writing course since qualitative research examines "persons' … stories, behavior" as well as "organizational functioning, …, or interactional relationships" (Strauss & Corbin,

1990, p. 17). Thus the present case study collected qualitative - interview, questionnaire and evaluation data - which were content analyzed as well as tabulated for qualitative interpretation.

3.3 Research Questions

Accordingly, the present study addressed the following research questions:

1) How does the instructor of the Thesis Writing course perceive the graduate candidates' autonomy?

2) To what extent do the graduate candidates enrolled in the course perceive themselves autonomous at the start and end of the course?

3) Have the graduate students developed their autonomy over the Thesis Writing course?

3.4 Context

The present study was conducted at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU), an international English medium tertiary institution in Northern Cyprus. EMU has been providing high quality English medium education for over 30 years. It comprises 11 Faculties and 4 Schools offering undergraduate and graduate degree programs. In the past academic year EMU offered education to over 13000 students from 71 different countries by 1000 faculty members from 35 different countries. Moreover, EMU established more than 30 research centers, has organized numerous international academic conferences and professional workshops, and its academic staff as well as graduate students have published in more than 1000 international indexed journals (EMU Brochure, 13/14).

Importantly, EMU has been pursuing universal trends in graduate education. The Institute of Graduate Studies and Research at EMU, especially over the past years, has been "dedicated to setting and maintaining the highest academic standards, and

providing an inspiring educational and research experience to its graduate candidates" (IGSR Graduate Admissions Prospectus, 2012-13, p. 2). It should be noted that graduate studies at EMU are conducted in an international environment. Faculties and Schools offer a range of graduate program choices leading to Master's and Doctor of Philosophy degrees in various areas such as Sciences, Social Sciences, Engineering, Architecture and others. All programs aim to promote graduate candidates' development of advanced research skills as well as communication skills. Moreover, the graduate programs of the university are accredited by the Higher Education Council of Turkey (YOK) as well as some international academic organizations. For the programs whose medium of instruction is English, all written work is assessed at standard international levels of academic English. Hence, all applicants for whom English is a second language are required to present a recent TOEFL or IELTS score or to pass a proficiency examination administered by EMU School of Foreign Languages (Institute of Graduate Studies and Research Brochure, 2013-14, p. 2). (Retrieved from http://issuu.com/emuweb/docs/institute-of-graduate-studies-and-r?e=4589894/6668790)

The Modern Languages Division of the School of Foreign Languages at EMU offers a range of postgraduate English courses as follows:

Intensive English for Postgraduate Students (ENGL 509, ENGL 511)

ENGL 513 - Academic English for Postgraduate Students

ENGL 515 - Advanced Academic English for Postgraduate Students

ENGL 523 - Thesis Writing for Postgraduate Students

ENGL 525 - Advanced Presentation Skills

According to the description of ENGL 523 course, lectures are held within four class hours per week. Although there is some formal teacher input, lessons are not lecture-based. Further, students are expected to take active part in class discussions related to and dependent on their dissertations. Participants are then invited to exploit the detailed understanding of textual dynamics in their own writing and helped to produce appropriate, accurate, and concise work. In addition to four class hours per week, there is a complementary web-based interactive e-learning platform, MOODLE, which provides participants with maximum exposure to more tasks, materials, and interaction with peers and enables the communication between all participants and the instructor.

3.5 Participants

The current study involved 9 graduate candidates from different programs at EMU who were enrolled in ENGL 523 - Thesis Writing for Postgraduate Students course as well as an instructor of the course. Of 9 student participants, 4 were female, 5 were male with an age range between 23 and 37 years. Moreover, all graduate candidates reported to have different education background varying from Masters to PhD level; they were working towards their advanced academic degrees in Industrial Engineering, Computer Science, Architecture, Interior Architecture, and History of Art departments at Eastern Mediterranean University. Further, the student participants were of Iranian, Turkish-Cypriot, and Lebanese nationalities. As required by the research ethics, all participants granted their consent to take part in the study (see Appendices E, F); they were also assigned codes for the sake of confidentiality. One of the participants reported in the background information part of the Graduate Candidates' Survey that she had been to an English speaking country for one year. Moreover, 3 of them reported to know other foreign languages such as

Turkish, Spanish, and Italian. Since most of the participants were of the Middle Eastern background, it was assumed that their previous English language learning experiences were somewhat similar.

As regards the instructor of ENGL 523 course, she was a Turkish-Cypriot with an extensive teaching and training experience at the School of Foreign Languages and the English Preparatory School at Eastern Mediterranean University. She held a BA degree in English Language and Literature, an MA degree in English Language Teaching, and a PhD degree in ELT. The instructor was 52 years old and she had 29 years of teaching experience across different language proficiency levels.

3.6 Data Collection Instruments

The present case study employed a questionnaire and an interview, as well as the course instructor's evaluation records. The questionnaire was based on an interview designed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) and a questionnaire designed by Jarvis (2012); whereas the interview guide was prepared by the researcher. The original interview by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) included 8 items mostly related to the context of the Language Centre at Sultan Qaboos University in Oman. Four (4) of 8 items of the interview were selected for inclusion into the questionnaire of the present case study. As regards the questionnaire by Jarvis (2012), it comprised 10 items, predominantly related to self-study contexts of Thai and Arabic university students. Three (3) of 10 items were chosen to be incorporated into the questionnaire to be administered to the participants in the current study (see Appendices A, B and C).

The questionnaire administered to the student participants comprised two parts. The first part included 10 questions related to the graduate candidates' background regarding age, nationality, gender, and education. The second part included 14 open-ended questions related to their perceptions of various aspects of their autonomy development throughout their studies in 'Thesis Writing for Postgraduate Students' (ENGL 523) course. The questionnaire was administered to the student participants at the start of the graduate course, in the classroom. The second administration was conducted on-line, towards the course completion in order to capture their autonomy development, if any, over the advanced course. Further, the same questionnaire, for each graduate candidate, was administered to the Thesis Writing course instructor, in order to obtain her perceptions and evaluation of the student participants' autonomy development throughout the semester. Furthermore, a semi-structured interview guide was designed to elicit the course instructor's views of autonomy in general, and at the graduate level specifically. The interview guide comprised 2 sections. In the first section, the interviewee was requested to respond to 6 questions pertaining to her background regarding age, gender, native language and education. The second section included 10 questions related to autonomy.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

Initially, the researcher contacted the School of Foreign Languages to secure their permission for her to conduct the research at the Modern Languages Division of the school. She also requested information pertaining to postgraduate candidates' numbers as well as their time tables for the Thesis Writing Course for Postgraduate students - ENGL 523. The researcher, together with her supervisor, prepared a schedule for data collection in May, 2013. The data collection procedure started with an interview which was conducted in the course instructor's administrative office at

the School of Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School. The interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. Subsequently, the researcher requested another appointment with the ENGL 523 course instructor in order to administer questionnaires to the postgraduate candidates enrolled in the course and to obtain their contact details. The questionnaire administration took approximately one hour. Another questionnaire administration was conducted on-line, towards the course completion. However, owing to health problems of one participant and some technical problems with on-line communication, the researcher collected the pertinent data later than the scheduled date. Further, at the end of the semester the instructor of the Thesis Writing Course was also invited to participate in an on-line questionnaire in order to report her perceptions as well as provide evaluation of her graduate students' respectively. The course instructor was very supportive and cooperative, which enabled the researcher to collect the overall data in accordance within the previously set timeline. In accordance with the research ethics, all the participants were asked whether they were willing to take part in the study, and they gave their written consent.

The data from the ENGL 523 course instructor and the students were collected between April 2013 and June 2013. It is noteworthy to mention that, the interview was held in a productive and business-like atmosphere in which the interviewer took a listener role so that the interviewee could give detailed responses and provide various insights related to the research topic. The researcher established good rapport with the interviewee which provided "the deep meaning" of the phenomena under investigation as well as "personal historical account of how" these phenomena developed (Dörnyei, 2007, p. 136).

3.8 Data Analysis Procedure

Administration of the questionnaire to the graduate candidates at the start and the end of the advanced course provided 2 sets of qualitative data – their self-reports related to their autonomy development throughout the course. Further, the interview and the subsequent questionnaire administration to the course instructor and her evaluation of the student participants' development yielded another 2 sets of qualitative data. The multiple sets of the questionnaire and interview self-reports and reports from different respondents were typed up, processed and classified into files, for each graduate candidate, respectively. Finally, all sets of the qualitative data were triangulated and tabulated, across various aspects, in order to explore autonomy development of the graduate candidates over the Thesis Writing course.

3.9 Limitations and Delimitation

The present case study exhibited certain limitations. First, the participants included only one class of graduate candidates. Therefore, the study did not attempt to generalize the findings to all the graduate student body at the tertiary institution. Furthermore, the present research did not involve classroom observations to contribute to the emerging picture of the graduate candidates' autonomy development throughout the Thesis Writing course.

However, this study also had delimitations in that it was conducted over one semester to capture the developmental dimension of the phenomena under investigation. Moreover, the case study adopted a contemporary framework of the autonomous learner in the 21st century (Illes, 2012) which takes into account the most recent technological developments in the world, as well as the changes that have taken place in terms of English language use and users.

3.10 Summary

This chapter introduced the research methodology of the current study. It presented the overall design of the study, as well as the research questions to be investigated. Further, the chapter described the context of the study, and the participants of the study. The subsequent sections presented the data collection instruments as well as the procedures for data collection and analysis. Finally, it presented the limitations and delimitations of the study.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

4.1 Presentation

This chapter presents the results of the study.

4.2 Research Question 1

How does the instructor of the Thesis Writing course perceive the graduate candidates' autonomy?

Initially, in relation to the interviewee's previous graduate learning experience (MA-PhD level) and professional experience, she admitted that at the BA level she was somewhat autonomous, at the MA level she developed in this respect, and especially at the PhD level she became very well aware of the need of being autonomous in her graduate studies. Further, the graduate course instructor expressed that in order to promote learner autonomy as instructor she has to be autonomous herself since autonomous teachers are always more effective ones. Also, at the graduate level, the instructor should be very well aware that it is crucial for students to be autonomous. Thus, for the interviewee, one of her responsibilities was to promote her graduate students' autonomy.

Regarding the graduate instructor's views on autonomy in general, she expressed that autonomy meant being aware that learning is not limited to the classroom, as well as feeling responsible for one's own learning, and learning about the world. She

stressed that having a broad perspective on issues in general contributes to autonomy. Overall, the graduate instructor held that autonomy can be developed through awareness.

Further, the interviewee expressed that at the graduate level, autonomy becomes more important since learners have to go beyond what is offered to them. Thus, for her "going beyond" was the keyword to autonomy. She also pointed out that the more you know about the world, the more autonomous you are; therefore, for her, world knowledge is also very much related to autonomy. The instructor also contended that the main characteristics of the autonomous graduate candidate included critical thinking, going beyond the classroom, all the time-challenging information, and building on the offered information by using own resources.

Furthermore, the interviewee expressed that the more autonomous graduate candidates are, the more successful they are; she shared that she could spot the autonomous learners as soon as she walked into the classroom. The interviewee also reported that she would try to promote learner autonomy throughout the course, but some candidates would not be receptive to it. Such students would prefer the instructor to offer everything to them, however, others go beyond the input offered to them, and they build on their own learning all the time. Therefore autonomous learners are more likely to be successful and to benefit from the advanced English graduate course more. Moreover, the graduate instructor shared that she would give graduate candidates optional tasks and also provide feedback in order to create opportunities for fostering their autonomy.

In addition, the interviewee's response to the question if her graduate students were previously involved in any decision making regarding the advanced graduate English course was positive. In this regard, she took into account the graduate candidates' reactions and related feedback on the classroom tasks. However, the interviewee emphasized her dissatisfaction with some of her graduate students' academic English background. Specifically, she stated that in the classroom there would be diversity, in terms of graduate candidates' different English proficiency levels, some below the minimally required IELTS 6.5. Consequently, different proficiency profiles of graduate candidates would affect how she taught and the extent of autonomy that she could promote in the classroom.

The interviewee also shared that those students who were not receptive would still hold traditional views in that they believed it was the professor's responsibility to decide on things and to make sure that students learn. Thus, in her opinion, some of the graduate candidates were autonomous, whereas others somewhat autonomous or lacking it. In response to the question which asked whether the graduate students had autonomous potential or not, the course instructor expressed that it could be understood from the way graduate candidates ask questions, if they challenge the instructor as well as the information provided. Some of them would come up with things beyond the required topics/materials the instructor could identify that potential. The interviewee also noted that everyone has the potential to be autonomous, provided that they either develop it or are offered related training, however there may be some limitations in this regard.

Finally, the course instructor stated that she provided opportunities for fostering her graduate candidates' autonomy. In this regard, she would assign optional tasks so that they could decide and choose whether/which tasks to complete, also she would encourage and welcome their queries and contributions to the class. Moreover, she stressed that the advanced English graduate course required graduate candidates to continuously work on-line, complete various tasks, produce multiple drafts for written assignments, and that the students would comply with these requirements without any pressure from the instructor. Thus, she believed that her graduate candidates were autonomous, to a varying degree though, and that the course on offer provided them multiple opportunities to further develop their autonomy as well as improve Academic English knowledge and writing skills.

4.3 Research Question 2

To what extent do the graduate candidates enrolled in the course perceive themselves autonomous at the start and end of the course?

The graduate students enrolled in ENGL 523 Academic English course expressed their perceptions in relation to their autonomy in a survey conducted at the start of the course and on-line towards its completion. It should be noted that some of the candidates either did not provide comprehensive answers to some items or did not elaborate on certain items as anticipated. The main objective of the survey was to elicit insights into the graduate candidates' perceptions related to their learning and autonomy development throughout the advanced English course.

The survey was based on six major aspects as follows:

1. Graduate candidates' beliefs about autonomy;

2. Graduate candidates' self-reported perceptions of their autonomy;

3. Graduate candidates' perceptions of learning in the course in terms of :

    a. Decision making regarding objectives, topics, materials, teaching method, activities, assessment, and classroom management;

    b. Decision making regarding own studies;

    c. Use of Moodle for the advanced English course;

    d. Use of Moodle for other courses;

4. Graduate candidates' perceptions of learning in the course in terms of use of resources;

5. Graduate candidates' perceptions of learning in the course in terms of online communication with the instructor and the peers;

6. Graduate candidates' perceptions of the course benefits.

Beliefs about autonomy

Regarding the graduate candidates' beliefs about learner autonomy, more than half of the participants referred autonomy to "learning without teacher" or "self-learning". Approximately half of the respondents described autonomy as "learning with own effort". Whereas a few participants shared that for them learner autonomy meant "independent learning", "learning individually", "self-study" or "self-training".

For example, at the start of the course, participant GC2 perceived learner autonomy as "material collection and learning about the material without any help of instructor", whereas towards the course completion the same participant elaborated on autonomy as follows:

- Having liberty of managing study time (time management),

- Self-discipline,

- Ability to study anywhere and anytime,

- Developing ability to think outside the box.

Another participant GC6 at the beginning expressed somewhat unfavorable beliefs about autonomy as follows:

"In my opinion, learner autonomy is not all useful but it can help us and gives us some feedback about our language. Additionally some people be [sic] shy to ask some questions face to face and the only way here [sic] earner autonomy."

However, at the end the same participant held more positive beliefs on learner autonomy as follows:

"For me learner autonomy is very significant and every day I try to use online programs related to linguistics. It's the most important thing that makes me feel more free asking and proposing any question."

Perceptions of own autonomy

Further, as regards the graduate candidates' perceptions of their autonomy, in other words, whether they considered themselves as autonomous learners at the start of the course the perceptions of the majority - GC2, GC4, GC5, GC7, GC8, and GC9 were positive in this regard. In addition, GC4 expressed that she learned by herself while GC5 expressed that he tried to be more independent. However, GC1 and GC6 expressed that they still needed teacher guidance. Moreover, GC6 stated that although he did not consider himself autonomous he hoped to be one in future, and, importantly, towards the course completion his perception was positive and he expressed that the level of his autonomy increased after the graduate course. Conversely, even though participant GC1's and GC3's previous perceptions were favorable, interestingly, towards the course completion they did not consider

themselves as autonomous graduate candidates; moreover, GC1 stated that she needed to be pushed by the instructor so that she could learn.

Perceptions of the course in terms of

-decision-making

Regarding the graduate candidates' perceptions of the advanced English course, especially in relation to decision making on objectives, topics, materials, activities, assessment, teaching method, and classroom management, the respondents reported mostly making decision on materials, activities and topics. Further, a few participants also indicated that they contributed to decision-making on objectives and teaching method.

According to participant GC1, she made decision on materials, activities and teaching method, subsequently, in this regard, she added materials. Candidate GC2 indicated that she had been involved in decision making on topics, materials and activities, however, towards the end of the course, she reported only activities. Respondent GC3 first reported contributing to decision making on objectives, topics, materials, teaching method and classroom management, subsequently this student added objectives, activities and classroom management. According to participant GC4, at the beginning, she made decision on topics, materials and activities, later she reported the latter as well as objectives. Further, Candidate GC5 initially indicated objectives, topics, materials, and activities, subsequently he chose not to provide any response in this regard. Respondent GC6 reportedly had been involved in decision-making on all aspects, however, towards the course completion he excluded assessment. According to participant GC7, at the start he made decision on topics and activities, whereas at the end of the course on objectives, materials and teaching

method. Furthermore, although candidate GC8 first preferred to provide no response in terms of involvement in decision-making, later he pointed out objectives. Respondent GC9 was initially reported being involved in decision-making on materials, activities and teaching method, however at the end he also indicated objectives and topics.

As regards decision making on their own studies, at the start of the course the majority of the graduate candidates, specifically 8 out of 9 reportedly made decisions, whereas only 1 respondent gave a negative response in this regard. However, interestingly, towards the course completion again 8 out of 9 participants expressed their positive perceptions of decision making on their studies, however, one of the respondents who had previously provided a favorable response, at the end of the course chose not to respond to the related item. The graduate candidates' reported perceptions were as follows:

GC1 "Yes I can."(time lapse)

"It's useful to writing a paper in our field because we learn about the structure of thesis or paper."

GC2 "Yes I can. All the parts of this course [sic] useful for my own studies." (time lapse)

"Yes, because I have all the necessary tools such as course instructure [sic] & resources such as dictionaries , Internet , etc."

GC3 "Yes, I can."(time lapse)

"Moodle is helping to [sic] me for all studies such as master writing or other lectures because when I don't find a word or I want to find how can [sic] I use

a word with proposition [sic] I am looking or searching from moodle. Moodle is not a site for only one course."

GC4 "Yes, almost all part [sic] of this course was [sic] helpful and useful for me."

(time lapse)

No response

GC5 "Yes, it's possible to choose it." (time lapse)

"Yes, I am fully capable of making decisions (related to my lectures) on my own."

GC6 "My studies all depend on the Moodle."(time lapse)

"Absolutely, i feel free studying on Moodel [sic] since nobody can control me on it . this[sic] way gives me more opportunities to find my mistakes and think about them freely."

GC7 "Using Ant Conc [sic] software for analyze [sic] my favorite articles."(time lapse)

"Yes, during the summer before the date of Defense of my thesis i use[sic] of [sic]Moodle."

GC8 "No."

"Of course. Moodle is giving [sic] very good idea about this. I can decide how can [sic] I develop my writing structure. There are very good examples about this. Additionally, because of its components I can find the true academic words for using academic writing."

GC9 "Yes I can. We have done self-study, quations,[sic] pharapheres [sic]."

"For example when you [sic] trying to use antcont firstly you should separate [sic] your topics one by one . what [sic]ı [sic] mean is first[sic] of all you should put all introduction parts [sic] then you should put all abstract part

[sic] and conclusion part. They are very usefull [sic] for writing parts of your thesis."

Perceptions of Moodle

Regarding the graduate candidates' perceptions of Moodle, they reportedly used it with varying frequency. Considering the reasons for using Moodle, more than half of the participants reported to use it for assigned tasks. Specifically graduate candidate GC1 used Moodle in order to submit her assignments once a week, whereas GC2 first indicated using Moodle for assignments and reading units for 4 or 5 days in a week, subsequently for discussions at least for an hour every day. Respondent GC3 stated that she used Moodle in order to complete the vocabulary tasks and writing tasks every day throughout the course, while GC4 reportedly initially used Moodle for assignments, Target Abstract Corpus and for the materials 5 days in a week, subsequently twice a week.

Further, according to participant GC5, he used Moodle at least 3 times a week during the course in order to complete the tasks or to follow course materials and assignments, sometimes to catch up with class when he was absent. Whereas graduate candidate GC6 expressed that the course was strongly related to Moodle and all the materials that he would need were on the website, without specifying the frequency of Moodle use though, he also mentioned to being engage in Moodle for assignments and for communication with peers. Respondent GC7 reportedly used Moodle throughout the course to review units, to complete tasks and to benefit from useful links on website, initially 4 times a week, towards the course completion more than 7 hours a week. According to participant GC8, he benefitted from almost all the

tools and resources available on Moodle, almost every day at the beginning, every two days a week at the end. Respondent GC9 reportedly always used Moodle throughout the graduate course.

As regards the graduate candidates' perceptions of Moodle components they provided different responses, however almost half of the participants reported tasks and corpus. According to participant GC1, she initially reportedly worked on tasks, and subsequently on forums, and bank of moves as well. Respondent GC2 pointed out that she worked on tasks and materials at the beginning of the course, and also added discussion towards the course completion. Graduate candidate GC3 responded that she worked on thesis chapters, quotations and paraphrasing at the beginning, as well as on all of the components, especially vocabulary and examples towards the end of the course. According to participant GC4, since her research study was related to Corpus, she mostly worked on it in order to get more ideas on Moodle, subsequently on synonym and references components. Further, respondent GC5 found Bank of Moves very useful among Moodle components at the beginning of the course, whereas he worked on course-related materials like Power Point files on Moodle towards the end of the course. Graduate candidate GC6 initially reportedly worked on problem solving, subsequently he often used corpus, especially whenever he needed more information about the collocations and synonyms of some words. According to participant GC7, at the beginning he worked on tasks, materials and different parts of every unit, towards the course completion on some parts explaining how to write an academic essay, corpus and also the example links to other useful websites. Respondent GC8 indicated that he worked on AWL (Academic Word List) over the entire course. Graduate candidate GC9 reportedly worked on corpus since it

was the most significant component of Moodle to him, as well as subsequently on practice exercises and AntConc.

Regarding the graduate candidates' perceptions of Moodle use for other courses, 4 out of 9 participants, at the beginning of the course as well as end indicated that they used Moodle for other courses (GC3, GC4, GC6), whereas 5 participants (GC1, GC5, GC8) provided negative responses in this regard. Interestingly, graduate candidates GC2' and GC7' responses were unfavorable at the beginning, favorable at the end, whereas respondent GC9 reportedly used Moodle at the beginning of the course, however did not do so towards the course completion.

Perceptions of other resources

As regards the graduate candidates' perceptions of using any other resources in the advanced English course such as internet, self-study materials, dictionaries, etc., the majority of the respondents indicated that they used dictionaries, and some academic publications. More than half of the participants reportedly used internet, approximately half of the participants used self-study materials such as audio books. Further, one third of the respondents stated they benefited from Google translator, very few students reportedly used library and grammar books, whereas only 1 student did not report using any other resources.

Perceptions of online communication

-with the course instructor

Regarding the graduate candidates' perceptions of the purpose(s) for using Moodle, specifically to communicate with their instructor, approximately half of the participants reportedly used it in order to get feedback from the instructor via

Moodle. Few respondents indicated that they used it to share their ideas, whereas very few students provided negative responses in this regard. For instance, graduate candidate GC1 reportedly used Moodle to communicate with the instructor in order to share her ideas about specific units and to get feedback from her throughout the course In a similar vein, participant GC2 stated that she used Moodle for sharing her ideas about different units and for asking questions about the course and assignments over the advanced course. Respondent GC3 also provided a positive response, however did not specify the purpose(s) for communication with the instructor via Moodle. Graduate candidate GC4 indicated that at the start she shared her ideas about the parts she contributed and she received feedback from the instructor which helped her find her mistakes; also she would use Moodle for improving her knowledge about specific unit(s) through the instructor's feedback and better understanding of concepts about related topic(s). Furthermore, participant GC5 reportedly would send the instructors e-mails throughout the English course. Graduate candidates GC6, GC8 and GC9 indicated in general that they used Moodle to communicate with the instructor in order to get feedback. However, respondent GC7 stated that he used Moodle communication with the instructor in order to improve his academic writing.

-with the peers

As regards the graduate candidates' perceptions of the purpose(s) for using Moodle, specifically to communicate with other graduate peers, more than half of the participants reportedly did so to share their ideas with other peers and/or to learn different opinions from each other, while few participants used Moodle for discussion. A participant indicated that s/he would use Moodle for getting help with tasks, while another participant would use it for social communication. Interestingly,

respondents GC1, GC2, GC3 and GC4 reportedly communicated with others on Moodle in order to discus and share different ideas. However, graduate candidate GC5 stated that at the beginning he never communicated with his classmates via Moodle since there were other better ways for communication; however, at the end he would ask for help and get some information about the assignments and projects from other graduate students. Further, participant GC6 reportedly used Moodle to share his ideas and views about the course and some course-related topics with others at the beginning of the course, whereas to communicate with other peers on Moodle for the sake of social interaction towards the course end. Interestingly, respondent GC7 initially provided a negative response in this regard, however, subsequently he would use Moodle to get involved in discussions about different research areas with his classmates. According to participants GC8 and GC9, they reportedly interacted with their peers on Moodle for benefiting from others' ideas and also sharing their own ideas.

Perceptions of the course

-difficulty level

Regarding the graduate candidates' perceptions of the difficulty level of the graduate English course, at the start more than half of the students indicated that the course was not difficult to them and the majority emphasized the role of the instructor in making it easier through her assistance and her effective way of teaching. Few students found the course difficult because of various factors such as lack of background information about topic(s). However, towards the course completion, reportedly, for almost all of the participants the course requirements were not difficult. For instance, according to graduate candidate GC1, although she had found

it difficult at the beginning, the course gradually became easier for her since the instructor gave them clear instructions. Similarly, participants GC2, GC3 and GC4 did not reportedly experience difficulties since the beginning due to the teacher's effective teaching. Respondent GC5 initially perceived the course, as difficult, especially some topics related to proposal writing since he didn't have any background information about it. A related insight from this respondent is provided below:

"The requirements themselves were not as [sic] difficult, but the fact that I've been very busy as an assistant and it caused me some troubles in keeping up with the class."

Furthermore, for graduate candidate GC6, the advanced course was easy since he attended it regularly; also, the course instructor helped him meet the course requirements. Similarly, participant GC7 did not perceive the English course as difficult either at the beginning or at the end, although he expressed he hoped to understand the meaning of learner autonomy in the future. Interestingly, respondent GC8 perceived the course as different, as well as very useful for improving academic writing. Participant GC9 first found the advanced English course extremely difficult to complete, but at the end, he reportedly did not experience any difficulties since all of the instructions were very clear to understand.

-benefits of the course

As regards the graduate candidates' overall perceptions of the course benefits, importantly, all of them found the advanced English course very helpful for academic writing. Furthermore, participants GC1, GC2, GC3, GC4, GC5, and GC6 reportedly rated their progress 'good' both at the beginning and at the end of

graduate course. Participant GC7 reportedly indicated his performance 'fair' to 'good', and participant GC8 reportedly rated himself as 'excellent' to 'good' throughout the course completion. Overall, the participants' perceptions towards their progress in the course was positive.

4.4 Research Question 3

Have the graduate students developed their autonomy over the Thesis Writing course?

Graduate Candidates' Perceptions and the Course Instructor's Evaluation

Autonomy

As regards the graduate candidates' perceptions of their autonomy and the instructor's related evaluation, participant GC1 who regarded herself as an autonomous student, still felt the need for teacher guidance. Interestingly, her perception changed towards the course completion and she would prefer the course instructor to exert pressure on her to learn more effectively. In a somewhat similar vein, the course instructor did not consider participant GC1 autonomous since she fulfilled only the minimum requirements of the advanced English course, and did not go beyond that. Moreover, the instructor maintained that graduate candidate GC1 could have benefitted more from the advanced English course if she had spent more time to explore the resources and tasks offered. In this regard, the course instructor shared this participant's insight from Moodle as follows:

"I think this course is one of the most usefull course [sic] of this university, but i think that students need this course a little sooner than now, i [sic] dont [sic]know about another department but in Architecture Department this course is a must course of our third term and i think its a little late because last term i [sic] wriote[sic] a paper and now i understood that if sooner i had this course it was more usefull for me

[sic], anyway, i think all of the material [sic] of this course like Target Abstract Corpus , WLA and etc... are most usefull for me and for my wrting [sic] and i think just now i [sic] undrestood [sic] what is [sic] English Academic Writing... !"

Further, participant GC2 who reportedly still needed the guidance of the course instructor at the beginning and regarded herself autonomous seemed to have developed in that she felt more confident and could think independently at the end of the course. In a similar vein, the language instructor who was reportedly aware of this graduate candidate's health problems at the start, who was not able to complete the assigned tasks at the right time, expressed that participant GC2 managed to catch up with peers by asking for extra time, benefitting from the instructor's office hours, and her feedback on assignments. According to the English teacher, under the circumstances, this graduate candidate did her best and could have been more autonomous if she had been able to follow the course more regularly.

Regarding participant GC3, her initial perception of her autonomy was positive, however, interestingly this perception changed to negative towards the end of the course. Interestingly, the advanced course instructor regarded this candidate as a very autonomous student who went beyond the course requirements. Participant GC3 would come to tutorials with new drafts, ask all kinds of questions, and take initiatives throughout the semester.

Furthermore, participant GC4's perceptions of her autonomy at the start of the course were as follows:

"Yes. Especially in my research area which is 'intelligent tutoring system', there is noone that work on this topic in seeking [sic]and learning by myself."

In a similar vein, she regarded herself as autonomous towards the course completion, with some reservations though, as the following insight illustrates:

"According to my field it is possible to be autonomous in some area [sic],but in most cases I need explanation from assistants or instructors to undrestand the concept better in both theoritical and practical part [sic]."

Importantly, the course instructor considered this graduate candidate to be a very autonomous learner who determined her priorities from the beginning of the course, and acted accordingly. Moreover, the instructor also indicated that participant GC4 was the one who referred to her own corpus as well, as the related insight below from Moodle illustrates:

"Since I'm using my corpus, I could improve my writing. Particularly in a case of finding a proper synonym of some words that [sic] I need to use it frequently!!"

As regards participant GC5 he perceived himself as an autonomous graduate candidate throughout the course. He was also reportedly highly motivated in the learning process even though he sometimes was pushed to learn things. Interestingly, for the advanced course instructor, this graduate candidate was also autonomous, but in a different sense. She stated that he chose not to do some tasks because he felt he did not need them. This was mostly due to his advanced proficiency level of English, by far the highest in the graduate class level. This graduate candidate's positive perceptions of the course and instructor are presented below:

"This course is incredibly important and at the same time very effective for post-graduate students who no matter how good and professional they are at [sic] their field; [sic] have an average knowledge [sic] in English.")

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He also shared that the course instructor "will show you how important it is to have good writing skills in English. She will provide the best methods and strategies in writing, and I believe every Masters and Ph.D. student should take advantage of her knowledge and this chance, and try to improve their English."

According to participant GC6, he developed autonomy in that first he indicated that he did not perceive himself as autonomous, he reportedly needed teacher guidance in learning, and he hoped to become autonomous in the future. Towards the course completion, this graduate candidate's related perception was positive. The advanced graduate course instructor shared that participant GC6 had a very interesting personality in that even though he was not positive about Moodle he never missed a class, and still completed most of the tasks. The English instructor's perception was that this graduate candidate wanted to look as if he was negative towards everything, although he was reportedly very autonomous.

Regarding participant GC7, he did not change his perception of being autonomous throughout the advanced graduate course. Some insights from Moodle provided by this participant supported his perception as follows:
"Yes I did it several time [sic]. For example 9 years ago I went to [sic] Italian class for 1 term but after that I use [sic] book [sic] & internet or for my master courses I research [sic] about Architecture but my bachelor field was painting."
"Yes, I use[sic] some self-study books about grammar, vocabulary and key words for fluency that belongs [sic] to Cambridge university press. Also I read article and English book [sic] in my field study. For listen [sic] to news I use [sic] of [sic] BBC

world news channel and if sometimes I find problem I ask [sic] of my friends who studied [sic] English language in [sic] university."

According to the course instructor, participant GC7 looked at all the tools, resources, etc. on Moodle, and was the one who made the best use of them. Even though the language teacher felt that he was in his own world, his performance reportedly was something else throughout the course. This graduate candidate's insight from Moodle is worth considering:

"Using [sic] of WLA learned [sic] me what is [sic] a word mean [sic] about its meaning, synonyms, collocation and its role in a sentence. Grammar always [sic] was hard for me, because I try to member [sic] it, but using [sic] of WLA shows me I can learn grammar by use of vocabulary and collocation. In my opinion [sic] not only for of Master or PhD students but for everybody wants [sic] to learn English, WLA is useful."

As regards participant GC8, he reportedly needed the advanced course instructor's guidance whenever he was confused in terms of academic writing. This graduate candidate expressed his perception of autonomy as follows:

"Ms.[sic] or phD[sic] students must have high level [sic] English especially academic writing. According to this, these students should improve their English level effectively. I think, this is about [sic] autonomous."

For the course instructor, GC8 was a very quiet participant, who was not easy to describe in terms of learner autonomy. However, the instructor's reports on this

graduate candidate showed that he was quite active on Moodle, looking at tools and resources, especially in the first half of the semester.

Regarding participant GC9, his positive perception of being autonomous did not change throughout the advanced English course. This graduate candidate was reported by the course instructor to be autonomous in doing minimal work for maximum gain. Moreover, he even compiled his own corpus.

The Advanced English Course

-decision-making

Regarding the graduate candidates' perceptions of the advanced English course, especially in terms of decision making on objectives, topics, materials, activities, assessment, teaching method, and classroom management, as well as the instructor's reports on each graduate candidate in this regard, triangulation of the respondents' perceptual data suggested congruence for participants GC1, GC3, GC4, GC6, GC8 whereas some congruence for participants GC7, GC9, and incongruence for participants GC2, GC5.

As regards the graduate candidates' perceptions of the advanced English course, especially in terms of decision making on their own studies, as well as the instructor's reports on each graduate candidate in this regard, triangulation of the respondents' perceptual data suggested the following as illustrated by the related insights and reports:

congruence for participants GC3, GC4, GC5, GC7, GC9

GC3 – "Yes, I can."(time lapse)

"Moodle is helping to me for all studies such as master writing or other lectures because when I don't find a word or I want to find how can [sic] I use a word with proposition I am looking [sic] or searching from moodle. Moodle is a not a site for only one course."(time lapse)

Instructor – "Yes, I think she has. She knew what she needed and acted accordingly."

GC4 – "Yes, almost all part [sic] of this course was [sic] helpful and useful for me." (time lapse)

No response

Instructor – "Yes, definitely. Her aim was to write an extended PhD proposal to send a university and she focused on that the whole semester, choosing the relevant tasks and resources."

GC5 – "Yes, it's possible to choose it." (time lapse)

"Yes, I am fully capable of making decisions (related to my lectures) on my own." (time lapse)

Instructor – "Yes, I think so.He made informed decisions about what to focus on on Moodle."

GC7 – "Using Ant Cont software for analyze [sic] my favorite articles."(time lapse)

"Yes, during the summer before the date of Defense of my thesis i use of [sic] Moodle."(time lapse)

Instructor – "Yes, he mentions TAC, Bank of moves, and Lexical tutor as being particularly useful for him."

GC9 – "Yes I can. We have done self-study, quations, pharapheres."

"For example when you trying [sic] to use antcont firstly you should seperate your topics one by one . what ı mean is firts [sic] of all you should put all introduction parts then you should put all abstract part and conclusion part. They are very usefull for writing parts of your thesis." (time lapse)

Instructor – "Yes, he decided that compiling his own corpus would be good for him, and that's what he did. He used a tool introduced on this course to analyse his corpus (AntConc)."

some congruence for participants GC2, GC6

GC2 –"Yes I can. All the parts of this course [sic] useful for my own studies." (time lapse)

"Yes , because I have all the necessary tools such as course instructure & resources such as [sic] dictionaries , Internet , etc."

Instructor – "I think she has used the sample theses to get ideas about writing her own thesis. This is what she says in terms of benefitting from Moodle:"

"instructor thesis samples and tasks and discussions."

GC6 – "My studies all depend on the Moodle." (time lapse)

"Absolutely , i feel free studying on Moodel [sic] since nobody can control me on it . this way gives me more opportunities to find my mistakes and think about them freely." (time lapse)

Instructor – "Yes, he refused to be very much involved in Moodle activities. Still, he mostly did corpus-related work."

lack of congruence for participant GC1

GC1 – "Yes I can." (time lapse)

> "It's useful to writing [sic] a paper in our field because we learn about the structure of thesis or paper."

Instructor – "Maybe a little bit. From the reports, I can see that she chose to look at the WLA 165 word list, but not at the Bank of Moves much. So I could say very minimal."

It should be noted that the advanced course instructor apparently did not have enough evidence to provide a report for participant GC8.

GC8 – "No."

> "Of course. Moodle is giving very good idea about this. I can decide how can [sic] I develop my writing structure. There are very good examples about this. Additionally, because of its components I can find the true academic words for using academic writing."

Instructor – "I really cannot tell."

Moodle for the Advanced English Course

As regards the graduate candidates' perceptions about the use of Moodle for the advanced English course and the instructor's related evaluation, participant GC1 reportedly used Moodle in order to submit her assignments once a week. In a somewhat similar vein, the course instructor reported that GC1 used Moodle when necessary, and when there were tasks to complete. However, she also stated that tasks which were designed for self-evaluation were not completed by this candidate most of the time. Thus, the activity reports showed that GC1 did the assignments, but

did not go beyond that. Therefore, she did not explore the resources provided on Moodle.

Further, participant GC2 who reportedly used Moodle for assignments and for reading the units for 4 or 5 days a week at the beginning of the course, continued using Moodle for discussions at least for an hour every day at the end of the course. Importantly, the evaluation of the instructor indicated that this graduate candidate used Moodle frequently when she was not having health problems, 8 hours a week in addition to the 4 hours in class in order to contribute to discussion forums and to do quite a few hot potato exercises (working with corpus data – collocations, etc. - and completed self- evaluation. However, this student did not use the extra resources much.

Regarding participant GC3, she used Moodle in order to complete the vocabulary tasks and writing tasks every day throughout the course completion. In a same vein, the instructor reported that this graduate candidate used Moodle 8 hours a week. Further, this participant used Moodle especially for vocabulary expansion, learning collocations, etc. Some insights from Moodle by this student were as follows:
"Firstly I must thank to [sic] X hoca for adding corpus to [sic] my life... Before this course I didn't know what is [sic] 'Corpus' but now it is very very useful for me. I am learning new words, how can [sic] I use words correctly, synonyms, collocations, etc. It is a perfect way for improve [sic] student's [sic] english [sic] and writing."

Furthermore, participant GC4 reportedly used Moodle for assignments, TAC and the materials around 5 days a week at the course start, twice a week towards the course

completion. Importantly, the instructor evaluated the duration of this graduate candidate's Moodle work as extended periods of time. Also, this student looked at the resources nobody else looked at. Therefore, as well as the assignments and data-based hot potato activities, she explored the self-study resources and tools.

As regards participant GC5, he reported using Moodle at least 3 times a week throughout the course period. The course instructor noted that since this graduate candidate did not complete his end-of-semester evaluation, he did not specify the frequency of Moodle use. However, according to his activity reports for the previous course units, although he did not contribute much, he had a peek at almost all the tools, resources, and especially the AAC Bank of Moves, but mostly the corpus-based materials.

According to participant GC6, both the advanced English course and all the materials that he would need were mostly related to Moodle. Although this graduate candidate did not specify the frequency of his Moodle work, he reportedly engaged in Moodle for assignments and for communication with peers. The course instructor's evaluation indicated that this student extensively used Moodle for corpus-based material; moreover, he compiled his own corpus although he was not positive in this regard.

Regarding participant GC7, he reportedly used Moodle in order to review units, to do tasks and to benefit from useful links on website throughout the semester, the frequency being 4 times a week at the beginning whereas more than 7 hours a week towards the end of course. In a somewhat similar vein, the course instructor observed

that this graduate candidate used Moodle more than 5-7 hours. Further, this student looked at almost everything and importantly, he made the maximum use of Moodle.

According to participant GC8, he benefitted from all the tools and resources available on Moodle. Further, he reported using Moodle almost every day at the start of the course, while every two days a week at the end of the course. In a somewhat similar vein, the course instructor's evaluation indicated that GC8 used it at least 6 hours a week for looking at almost all the tools and resources.

As regards participant GC9, he reported always using Moodle for corpus. Conversely, the course instructor noted that this graduate candidate used Moodle for the assignments, though not as much as other graduate candidates did.

Moodle for other courses

Participant GC1 reported that she did not use Moodle for other courses throughout the advanced English course which was consistent with the course instructor's evaluation. Moreover, the instructor also observed this graduate candidate would not like any more courses supported by Moodle, which is illustrated by this student's insights from Moodle as follows:

"ı [sic]choose 'no' because ı [sic] get confuse [sic] ın moodle [sic] and ı [sic] thınk ıf [sic] we had a lecture ıt [sic] would be more benefıcıal [sic], because moodle ıs [sic] a lıttle bıt [sic] hard to use :("

Further, participant GC2' initial perception was negative, whereas towards the course completion she reportedly used Moodle for other courses as well. The changed perception of this graduate candidate was not congruent with the course instructor's

report since this student did not have an idea about whether there should be more courses supported by Moodle in the course evaluation.

According to participant GC3, she used Moodle for other courses throughout the semester, which was not supported by the instructor's evaluation. However, the end-of-semester evaluation of this graduate candidate indicated that she preferred more courses supported by Moodle.

Participant GC4 reportedly used Moodle for other courses throughout the advanced graduate course, which was not congruent with the course instructor's related evaluation.

Regarding participant GC5, she did not report using Moodle for other courses over the advanced English course, which was consistent with the instructor's observation. Unlike participant GC5, participant GC6's related perception was positive, however apparently the course instructor had no evidence in this regard.

Participant GC7' initial negative perception changed to the positive one towards the end of the course, and he reportedly started using Moodle for other courses as well. However the course instructor could not confirm this, although she noted that this graduate candidate preferred more courses supported by Moodle.

As regards participant GC8, he did not report using Moodle for other courses during the semester. The course instructor could not confirm this repot either. According to participant GC9, he initially used Moodle for other courses, whereas he quit towards

the course completion. Again, the course instructor could not support this graduate candidate's report.

Moodle components

Regarding the graduate candidates' perceptions in terms of their work on Moodle components, as well as the instructor's respective reports on each candidate, triangulation of the respondents' perceptual data suggested the following as illustrated by the related insights and reports:

-congruence for participants GC1, GC2, GC3, GC4, GC5, GC7, GC8

GC1 - "Doing the related task and sometimes learn [sic] about the way of thesis writing by [sic] teacher information."

"I work on my task [sic] for doing them and submit [sic] them before [sic] deadline."

Instructor – "The activity reports show us that X did the assignments, but did not go beyond that. Therefore she did not explore the resources provided on Moodle."

GC2 – "To do my homework to submit and reading [sic] the units also about our course which [sic] ENGL 523."

"Tasks (Homeworks [sic]) , Reading Materials & Topics , Participating in Discussions with others."

Instructor – "She mostly contributed to discussion forums. She also did quite a few hot potato exercises (working with corpus data – collocations, etc- and getting the evaluation herself. She has not used the extra resources provided much."

GC3 – "Vocabulary task, writing task."

"Writing thesis chapters" (time lapse)

Instructor – "I think she found the use of corpus very helpful, as she says she uses it a lot for vocabulary expansion, learning collocations, etc."

GC4 – "First of all I'm doing tasks and submit [sic] them one by one, checking the latest news and update to get to know it [sic] any new topic or material added."

"First of all I submit my homeworks [sic] and then check some material [sic] about refrensing [sic], TAC for using some words in a different way and etc."

Instructor – "I checked her activity reports, and I could see that X had looked at the resources nobody else looked at. Therefore, as well as the assignments and data-based hot potato activities, X explored the self-study resources and tools."

GC5 – "I'm using Moodle in order to completing [sic] the tasks or following [sic] course materials, sometimes [sic] catch up with class when i was [sic] absent." (time lapse)"

"Usually I use the website to find out about the new assignments that I'm responsible for."

Instructor – "He looked at the corpus-based materials most."

GC6 – "I review the units, read them & try to do task again, also I use the usefull link [sic] that are on the site."

"Ï [sic] read all of [sic] links and try to use [sic] of Moddlie in the form that my teacher tell [sic] in the class."

Instructor – "He has looked at almost everything. He made the maximum use of Moodle, and he says he thinks 'corpus' will be very useful for him."

GC7 – "Review[sic], following news, doing some practice for learning new subjects and of course using thesis writing for synonims [sic] and collocations."

"Homeworks[sic], collocations, synonyems[sic] and especially X's thesis for [sic] to be exemplary."

Instructor – "He looked at almost all the tools and resources."

-some congruence for participant GC6

GC8 – "I use Moodle these days for Engl 523. I share my attitude on [sic] it about using Corpus."

"İ do all assignments that are appointed by instructors and sometimes I connect with my friends and share my ideas with them on [sic] forum opened by the instructor."

Instructor – "Obviously, he was interested in corpus-based material. He also compiled his own corpus and analysed it. He says:

"Making a respective corpus is [sic] very good approach for improving academic writing in our fields. By collecting various relative [sic] articles and using our own corpus we will find the most important words related to our domain with the proper collocations. For example, in my department, math, I found out some frequency words like: express, present, etc. collocations of these words for instance: to be expressed as, as expressed by, be expressed in, to be presented, as presented to, be presented by, presented with, ………"

-lack of congruence for participant GC9

GC9 – "I usually look at the corpuses[sic]."

"My main works comes from corpus. Corpus is one of the most important and usefull [sic] part [sic] of moodle. I realy tahnks [sic] to X for giving therir [sic] golden knowlage [sic] of thesis writing."

Instructor – "He worked on assignments."

Other resources

As regards the graduate candidates' perceptions in terms of their use of any other resources in the advanced English course such as Internet, self-study materials, dictionaries, etc., as well as the instructor's respective reports on each candidate, triangulation of the respondents' perceptual data suggested the following as illustrated by the related insights and reports.

Participant GC1 reportedly used no other resources in advanced English course, which the course instructor could not confirm. According to participant GC2, she used internet, self-study materials and dictionaries, which was not congruent with the instructor's observation that this graduate candidate "worked with a classmate most of the time, and also she mentioned working with someone else outside the class."

Further, participant GC3 reported sometimes using English dictionary; the course instructor noted that she worked very much with this student to improve her English. According to participant GC4, she resorted to some surveys in relation to grammar, which was somewhat supported by the course instructor's evaluation that this graduate candidate would use other resources in the past, however, she started to use the resources and tools provided in this course. Participant GC5 reportedly used such resources as dictionaries, self-study materials and Internet, which the course instructor could not confirm.

Regarding participant GC6, he reported using Oxford Dictionary and internet, the latter was confirmed by the course instructor. Furthermore, participant GC7 reportedly resorted to self-study materials in order to improve his grammar and vocabulary knowledge. Also, he benefited from some online articles and Longman Dictionary for synonyms and antonyms. According to the instructor, since this graduate candidate was very interested in writing, he must have used Internet a lot.

Participants GC8 and GC9 reported using Google translation and some other dictionaries, however, the instructor did not have any evidence in this regard.

Online communication with the course instructor

Regarding the graduate candidates' perceptions in terms of their online communication with the instructor, as well as the instructor's respective reports on each candidate, triangulation of the respondents' perceptual data suggested the following as illustrated by the related insights and reports.

Participant GC1 reportedly resorted to Moodle to communicate with the advanced English course instructor in order to share her ideas about specific unit and to get feedback from her, which was not congruent with the course instructor's related report.

According to participant GC2, she used Moodle for sharing with the instructor her ideas about different units and for asking questions about the course and assignments, which was somewhat supported by the course instructor's observation that even though this graduate candidate wrote mostly e-mails, rather than personal

messages to her through Moodle, she used discussion forums to make her voice heard.

As regards participant GC3, she just mentioned communicating with the instructor throughout the course, without specifying the purpose. The course instructor reported that this graduate candidate used personal messaging, as well as made use of forums. Moreover, this student would constantly e-mail the instructor, text her on mobile, visit her office; thus there was constant interaction between them.

Participant GC4 reportedly shared her ideas about the parts she contributed and she received feedback from the instructor which helped her find her mistakes on Moodle, improve her comprehension and knowledge about specific units. In this regard, the course instructor confirmed that this graduate candidate used Moodle for arranging tutorials, as well as mostly to ask for clarification.

Regarding participant GC5, he reportedly sent the instructor direct e-mails throughout the ENGL 523 course, which was somewhat congruent with the instructor's report in that this graduate candidate wrote her emails a couple of times, thus there was no communication through Moodle.

According to participant GC6, he used Moodle to communicate with the instructor in order to get feedback over the advanced English course, which was confirmed by the instructor who reported that this student contributed to discussion forums, and communicated with her to mostly ask for clarification, and sometimes to complain about Moodle.

Participant GC7 reported resorting to Moodle in order to improve his ability in academic writing, to get the instructor's feedback, mostly clarification. This was congruent with the instructor's evaluation in that this graduate candidate used Moodle mostly to ask for clarification of the tasks. In a similar vein, participant GC9 also reportedly communicated with the instructor for the purpose of getting feedback, which was not congruent with the instructor's evaluation in that there was not much interaction.

Online communication with peers

As regards the graduate candidates' perceptions in terms of their online communication with peers, as well as the instructor's respective reports on each candidate, triangulation of the respondents' perceptual data revealed that participants GC1, GC2, GC3 and GC4 reportedly communicated with others on Moodle in order to discuss and share different ideas. However, participant GC5's initial perception was negative since he believed that there were better ways to communicate with peers. Interestingly, towards the course completion, this graduate candidate's perception changed in that he would ask for help and get some information about the assignments and projects from other students.

Participant GC6 at the start initially reported sharing his ideas and views about the course and some course-related topics with others on Moodle. He also mentioned communicating with peers through Moodle for the sake of social interaction.

According to participant GC7, he did not resort to Moodle at the beginning, however got involved in discussions about different research areas with his classmates

towards the course completion. Participants GC8 and GC9 reported interacting on Moodle in order to share own and benefit from others' ideas.

It is worth noting that the course instructor did not have much evidence on her students' communication on Moodle with peers, however, she observed that participants GC4 and GC5 communicated with their classmates through the discussion forum. An excerpt from peer communication is provided below:

"X I am [sic] totally agree with you especially in "no matter how good a person is in field" this problem led me to take such an elective course (English course 523) and honestly, the language is the wide bridge that we can cross through it [sic]by [sic] our knowledge and ideas into people and social [sic]. Otherwise, we will keep all our educations [sic] in the opposite side with ourselves away from the people.[sic]"

The difficulty level of the course

As regards the graduate candidates' perceptions in terms of the difficulty level of the course, as well as the instructor's respective reports on each candidate, triangulation of the respondents' perceptual data revealed the following. Participant GC1 shared that even though she found it difficult at the beginning, the course became easier for her in the interim since the instructor gave them clear instructions. This was somewhat congruent with the instructor's evaluation in that this graduate candidate experienced difficulty in general, and with Moodle specifically since she was working on her thesis at the same time.

Importantly, participants GC2, GC3 and GC4 found the course easy since the beginning owing to the course instructor's effective teaching. These perceptions were confirmed by the course instructor for participants GC3 and GC4 who coped with all

the course requirements, incongruent for participant GC3 though, mostly due to her illness.

According to participant GC5, some topics related to proposal writing were difficult since he didn't have any background information about it in the early days of the course. Later, this graduate candidate expressed his perception as follows:
"The requirements themselves were not as difficult, but the fact that I've been very busy as an assistant and it caused me some troubles in keeping up with the class."

In a similar vein, the instructor noted that the course was not difficult for this student due to his more than adequate English proficiency level.

Participant GC6 did not reportedly experience difficulty since he attended the course regularly. He also shared that with the course instructor's help, the requirements got easier for him. This was consistent with the instructor's observation that this graduate candidate was very much aware of everything, and as a very hard working person, he did not have any difficulty in the advanced English course.

As regards participant GC7, the graduate language course was not difficult, which was confirmed by the course instructor. Interestingly, this graduate candidate hoped to understand the meaning of learner autonomy towards the course completion. According to participant GC8, rather than specifying it as difficult or not, the course was "different". This graduate candidate found the course as very useful for improving their academic writing. The instructor observed that the advanced English course was hard for this student, but somehow he coped with it.

Participant GC9 reported that he first found the course extremely difficult to complete, but at the end he admitted that he had no difficulty since all of the instructions were very clear to understand. This was somewhat congruent with the instructor's evaluation who described this graduate candidate as consciously doing the minimum to get the maximum, without difficulty.

-Course benefits

Regarding the graduate candidates' perceptions in terms of the course benefits, and the instructor's respective reports on each student, triangulation of the respondents' perceptual data revealed that all participants described the advanced English graduate course beneficial for their academic writing, especially for thesis writing. They reportedly learned, throughout the course completion, the requirements of thesis writing. In a similar vein, the course instructor stated that the course was beneficial for the graduate candidates, especially participants GC2, GC3, GC4, GC5, GC6, GC7, and GC8 which seemed to indicate that the students' perceptions were congruent with the course instructor's evaluation. Whereas, the teacher reported that participant GC1 did not benefit from the course as much as she should have, however, this course raised her awareness of the requirements of thesis writing. Thus, only this candidate's perception in terms of course benefits was somewhat congruent with the instructor's report. The related insights of the graduate candidates and the advanced English course instructor are presented below:

GC1 – "Of course yes because I learn how can [sic] I write my thesis step by step."

(time lapse)

"Of course its [sic]100 percent has benefit [sic] for graduate studies because by passing this course we learn how we can write a thesis and also paper with the best structure."

Instructor: "She recommends that this course should be taken by graduate candidates in the last semester of their graduate studies. Although GC1 did not benefit from the course as much as she should have, I am sure this course gave her the understanding of what thesis writing requires and involves. She herself says that she will spend time in the summer to explore the resources, tools, and techniques provided by the course more...."

GC2 – "Yes, it help [sic] me to improve my language and to understand more academical[sic] writing. It is very helpful." (time lapse)

"Yes, I got to learn how to organize structure of thesis as well as chapters."

Instructor: "Yes, definitely. I believe she will make use of her notes and also Moodle in the future. This is what she says:

This course helped me to learn many new things about academic writing and how I should improve my vocabulary and other English skills. It was useful to me because this course showed me that [sic] how I should write my thesis step by step in a correct format. The given materials, such as tasks, discussion helped me to follow the course every week.The course taught me about avoiding plagiarism,corpus, paraphrasing, using different synonyms, references and many other topics. And I would like to thank my dear instructor in advance because she helped us all to keep up with the course materials and topics and she always cared about her students. Thank you hocam"

GC3 – "Definitely yes. I feel more develop [sic] my own [sic] self about vocabulary

      and writing."(time lapse)

   "Yes, exactly... It is useful for my thesis writings"

Instructor – "Yes, X has now been through her thesis defense [sic] as well. (yesterday in fact), and she was found very successful. She brought me parts of her thesis to look at, and with guidance, those excerpts developed beyond recognition. She mentions the course and the instructor in her acknowledgements section as well. Here is what X put in the final evaluation to refer to the usefulness of the course:

    Really I must thank X because she give me lots of things. firstly [sic] from the begining [sic] of this semester, she is not teacher [sic] for us she is friend [sic] with us. She didn't talk only about lecture, she talk [sic] daily news, general news, our problems, her problem, etc. this is very good for student because all student [sic] feel firendly [sic] with teacher [sic]. Moreover [sic], she is professional in her job. her accent and english [sic] knowledge are perfect. I learn [sic] lots of things from her... Really I love her xxx"

GC4 – "Definitely! I wish that I got [sic] this course when I was master [sic]. now

      [sic] I can write my theses very easy [sic]."(time lapse)

   "Definietly [sic]! Every day I wish to got [sic] this course during the first

      semester while [sic] I started my Master."

Instructor: "Yes, definitely. As I mentioned earlier, X is a truly autonomous learner, always ready to learn. Here is what she says:

    I would like to appreciate of [sic] my dear Instructor as my English teacher, X, I can't thank you enough! Thank you for giving me courage and confidence in myself. You gave me strength, helped me see what I could be. You are the

best teacher ever and I will never forget you. At first when I entered to [sic] the class I thought at the end how could I improve in [sic] my writing? Is it possible? am [sic] I able to get to understand till end [sic] of this course? now [sic] I should answer **YES! 100%** In this course, I could improve my writing skills in unbelievable [sic] way! I understood how to write, how to start and finish what should [sic] I write and what I shouldn't! This course by providing many tasks in [sic] different methods like online or in the class, individual or as a group, we have done many practices [sic] related to each subject of writing. I wish that I was[sic] aware to get this course 3 years ago while I was doing my master [sic]. I'm suggesting [sic]all my friends to get this course and get to know how to write their thesis in a standard way."

GC5 – "Since graduate students are involve [sic] with [sic] reading and writing different kind [sic] of scientific articles, I strongly believe that this course will be so beneficial for my graduate studies." (time lapse)

"Indeed! While I am completing this survey I can feel the positive effects of this course on my English and my graduate studies."

Instructor: "Yes, I think he will benefit more when he starts writing his thesis."

GC6 – "Definetely [sic], this course is the tool that by it [sic] we can study all materials and we can write in good [sic] academic way, and understand the articles that [sic] written by native experts."

"İt [sic] is [sic] very useful course for postgraduated [sic] students because all they should write [sic] thesis in order to graduate and without taking this course they often face big problem [sic] even for native language [sic] they need such a course."

Instructor: "Yes, I think so. Getting the following feedback from someone who tried his best to look negative made me very happy:

I remembered very well how much I was depressed when I finished my master's courses and I sat to write thesis [sic]. I had stopped doing anything for 6 months and I was about to give up because I didn't know how should [sic] I write my thesis even [sic] I had enough knowledge about my subject. I can't express my feelings that time [sic] I had no information about paraphrasing, quota ting [sic], referencing, etc. At present I am on [sic] the same stage but through [sic] PhD's thesis journey and fortunately I took ENG523. Undoubtedly, after finishing this course I am feeling so comfortable to start conduct [sic] my thesis [sic] and carry on with happy [sic] journey. At least now it is fair to say I am good with [sic] the chapters of my thesis (Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Data Analysis, and Conclusion). Moreover, during each chapter [sic] I learn [sic] what should go in [sic]."

GC7 – "Yes, I learned using a variety of statement [sic] for my academic writing."

"Yes, this course was very useful for me. now [sic] for writing an academic paper i [sic]care about some important point [sic] to avoid of [sic]mistakes."

Instructor: "Yes, I believe he will continue to use his learnings in the future as well."

GC8 – "Very much. Especially our thesis writing." (time lapse)

"Definitely yes. This course increased my awareness of academic writing. I learned

-Corpus

-Moves

-Genre

-Register

-Process writing"

Instructor: "Yes, he gained awareness of important considerations in academic writing. He himself says:

There are actually many things to say about this course. But as a summary, I would like to say that after this course english [sic] is looking different for [sic] me. Because I learned academic writing. I am very happy from [sic] this. X is very [sic] great instructor. After this couse, [sic] I know [sic] academic writing structure and moves. But in structure there are so many things like introduction, literature review, methodology, data analysis etc..After this course, I know how I [sic] develop my structure and how I [sic] strengthening my structure [sic].Thank you very much for everything"

GC9 – "Yes, I have. It is very usefull. [sic] Especially Ant.Cont is the best choice."

"Yes 1 [sic] have. Because this course supports [sic] us lots of usefull [sic] information about the Thesis Writing."

Instructor: "Yes, he talks about AntConc a lot. He also says that moves and corpus work have been very beneficial:

This course is the the best way to improve and develop our academic writing skills and knowledge. At the begining [sic] of Thesis writing,I strongly recommend that every MS and Phd [sic] students [sic] take this course. I learned that collocations(word partnerships), synonyms, process writing are very important for academic writing. Especially ''lextutor'' [sic] web page is very usefull [sic] for Corpuses [sic]. Also WLA 165 which is considered the

most use [sic] of the terms Academy [sic] is very usefull for academic writing.

I belive [sic] that at the end of this semester most of my thesiss [sic] writng [sic] will finish."

Finally, triangulation of the graduate candidates' self-rating and the instructor's rating of their progress throughout the course suggested congruence for participants GC2, GC5, and GC7. These participants' progress over the advanced course was self-rated and rated as 'good'. Further, the analysis also suggested some congruence for participants GC3, GC4, and GC6 who self-rated their progress as 'good'. Interestingly, the course instructor evaluated these participants' progress as 'excellent' in terms of the course requirements. Whereas, triangulation of the perceptual data revealed incongruence for participants GC1, GC8, and GC8. These participants seemed to overestimate their performance throughout the course which they self- rated as 'good', while the instructor rated their progress in the Graduate English course as 'fair'. The pertinent perceptual data are presented below:

Table 4.1: *Students' Performance Evaluation*

	Course start	Course completion	Instructor
GC1	Good	Good "Because in this semester I had 5 courses and I couldn't spend more time for [sic] this course and also Moodle but I will do it in the summer."	Fair "She could have benefitted much more and she is aware of it."

GC2	Good	Good	Good
	"I understand about the entire unit until today. It helps me to improve my writing in format of academic." [sic]	"I am clearer [sic] about thesis chapters and structure of it."	
GC3	Good	Good	Excellent
GC4	Good	Good	Excellent
	"I could understand the whole section of thesis and how to write in each [sic] like introduction which is the first chapter, and how to write it by using 3 moves."	"Before I enrol to [sic] this class, I was realy [sic] confuse [sic] and had no idea about how to write,what are [sic] the sections of each chapter,and how to use the word in an academic writing." (time lapse)	

GC5	Good	Good	Good
	"In this course I learned [sic] very useful complete idea not [sic] only about academic writing in general wich [sic] I'm sure will help me in my PhD program."		
GC6	Good	Good	Excellent
	"My writing has been going very good since I joined this course and now I feel comfortable when I decide to write in English."	"İ [sic] cannot say excellent because i [sic] was very busy during taking [sic] this course so i [sic] didn't give the adequate time studying and preparing all the assignment as it should be."	"I said excellent but he would not agree with me most probably ☺"
GC7	Fair	-------	Good
	"Using Corpus was very useful for me."		"He is aware of this himself as well. He could have asked for more tutorials to benefit more."
GC8	Excellent	Good	Fair

	"I learned [sic] so many thinks about writing."	"There are obviously a lot of things to say about this. I would like to say that, after this course English is looking different for [sic] me. Of course my English is academically developed but the important thing is awareness of academic writing. I am very happy from [sic] this. My academic writing Knowledge rate is [sic] increased."	
GC9	Good	Good	Fair

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Presentation

This chapter presents the major findings of the present study, their discussion in relation to the relevant research and a summary. The following sections pertain to the pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Discussion of the Major Findings

The present case study explored language learner autonomy development in Thesis Writing course for postgraduate candidates. Specifically, it investigated the graduate students' perceptions as well as the course instructor's perceptions and evaluation of their autonomy development over the graduate course. Through administration of a questionnaire to the student participants, conducting an interview with the course instructor, and collating the pertinent evaluation documentation, the study collected comprehensive qualitative data on learner autonomy at the graduate level, which were content analyzed.

The major findings of the study were as follows:

The course instructor believed that autonomy means being aware that learning is not limited to the classroom, as well as feeling responsible for one's own learning. Furthermore, for her, autonomy involved going beyond what is offered, and learning about the world. In this regard, for the course instructor, autonomous graduate candidates should possess such skills as critical thinking, going beyond the

classroom, challenging information, and building on the offered information by using own resources. According to her, autonomy can be developed through awareness, and having a broad perspective on issues in general contributes to autonomy. This finding was in line with the characteristics of the autonomous learner described by Chan (2001).

In order to foster candidates' autonomy, the postgraduate course instructor would assign optional tasks so that they could decide and choose whether/which tasks to complete. Moreover, she would encourage and welcome their queries and contributions to the class. Since the Thesis Writing course required graduate candidates to continuously work on-line, complete various tasks, produce multiple drafts for written assignments, the students would comply with these requirements without any pressure from the instructor. These findings supported Little (2004) who held that teachers need to be aware of the importance of learner autonomy in order to promote their students' related development.

Further, the triangulated data suggested the following:

- Even though the graduate course instructor made every effort to promote learner autonomy throughout the course, some candidates would not be receptive to it. Such students would prefer the instructor to offer everything to them.

- Some graduate students went beyond the input offered to them, and they built on their own learning all the time. Therefore such autonomous learners were likely to be successful and could benefit from the advanced course more.

- Most graduate students were involved in the decision making regarding various aspects of the advanced course.

- However, the course instructor did not find some graduate students' academic English background adequate.

- The way certain graduate candidates asked questions suggested whether or not they had autonomous potential; some of them would come up with things beyond the required topics/materials, hence the instructor could identify that potential.

- Some students who were not receptive would still hold traditional views in that they believed it was the professor's responsibility to decide on things and to make sure that they learn. This observation was at variance with Rivers (2001) who noted that learners should be aware of their needs, objectives, have control of own learning, use effective strategies, and thus engage in self-directed learning. Overall, some of the graduate candidates were autonomous, whereas others somewhat autonomous or lacking it.

Further, the present case study manifested that the graduate course instructor qualified her graduate candidates as autonomous, to a varying degree though, and that the course on offer provided them multiple opportunities to further develop their autonomy as well as improve Academic English knowledge and writing skills. However, more than half of them still reportedly needed teacher guidance in their learning process. In this regard, van Lier (1996) argued that teaching cannot force and cause learning, but it can encourage and guide learning.

Another promising finding was that more than half of the graduate candidates reportedly could make decisions on their own studies which was also confirmed in the course instructor's evaluation. This finding supported the view of Chan (2003) of the autonomous learner as a decision maker. The student participants also reported making decisions regarding objectives, topics, materials, activities, assessment, teaching method, and classroom management, which was congruent with Dickinson's (1987, p. 11, as cited in Benson, 2008) definition of autonomy involving responsibility for all decisions and material selection related to their learning, without an instructor or an institution involvement.

Furthermore, all the graduate candidates used Moodle to meet the requirements of the Thesis Writing course, specifically mostly for assignments, tasks completion, discussion forums and Corpus. However, only 3 participants reportedly used Moodle frequently; the graduate students also reportedly benefitted from such resources as Internet, dictionary, and some self-study materials. In addition, half of the participants reported using Moodle for other courses as well; whereas a few participants indicated that there should be more courses supported by Moodle. These results are consistent with Chan (2001) who contended that the autonomous learner is able to choose and classify the pertinent resources necessary for learning.

Yet another promising finding was that more than half of the candidates communicated with the course instructor via Moodle in order to get her assistance with problematic issues. This finding was somewhat in line with Küfi (2008) who held that through application of technology teachers may create environments whereby they can contribute to discussions on their practices and benefit from

continuous learning. Interestingly, one of these respondents who was also evaluated as very autonomous and successful, had constant interaction with the instructor via personal text messages, and e-mails. This result revealed a promising congruence with the results of Ushioda's (2000) study which demonstrated that sequential email exchanges by L2 learners increased their intrinsic motivation and may have fostered their autonomy.

It is noteworthy that few participants preferred to be in touch with the course instructor via e-mails rather than Moodle; conversely, 2 participants reportedly had no online interaction with their teacher. Another finding was that almost all the participants communicated with their peers on Moodle in order to get their voices heard, to share and discuss their ideas, however only 1 participant indicated that he did not have any personal interaction via Moodle, rather he used other online sources to communicate with his classmates. These findings were consistent with Zorko (2007) who contended that web-based tools can make positive effects on on-line interaction among participants as well as Küfi (2008) who contended that web-based tool can make a positive impact on users' decision-making and control over their professional learning. Importantly, all learning depends on social interaction (Little, 2004).

The findings of the present case study also seemed to indicate that most of the participants made a promising progress in the Thesis Writing course, and that they regarded it as very beneficial. Specifically the course instructor evaluated the progress of 3 graduate candidates as 'fair', and the other 3 participants as 'excellent'.

These findings were congruent with the research to date reporting that a blended learning tool fostered learner autonomy in classroom-based and out-of-class learning, promoted collaboration among the participants, and increased their motivation as well as their positive attitudes to learning (Shucart, Mishina, Takahashi, & Enokizono, 2008).

Moreover, the results of the present study were not at variance with those of Eldridge and Neufeld (2007, as cited in Küfi, 2008) who demonstrated that the participants in their study conducted at EMU and METU in Northern Cyprus were encouraged to use and practice English that they were learning in class through Moodle. Thus Moodle can play a significant role in building an authentic learning community.

The overall findings of the present case study seemed to indicate that at the start of the Thesis Writing course most of the graduate participants perceived themselves as autonomous, whereas only one perceived himself as somewhat, and one as not autonomous at all. Interestingly, towards the completion of the graduate course, only 4 graduate candidates still perceived themselves as autonomous, whereas 3 students changed their perceptions from being autonomous to becoming somewhat autonomous. Also, although only one graduate candidate at the start of the course considered himself as lacking autonomy; 2 candidates were not reportedly autonomous towards the end of the course. These findings might be accounted for these participants' increasing awareness of the challenge of being autonomous.

Interestingly, the evaluation of the graduate candidates' overall performance throughout the entire Thesis Writing course, including their classwork and their

performance on Moodle, as well as evaluation of the multiple writing drafts on the part of the course instructor demonstrated that she considered 3 of her graduate candidates as 'very autonomous' which was congruent with their perceptions both at the beginning and the end of the course. This perceptual evidence suggested promising development of autonomy as well as academic progress on the part of these graduate students since these 3 participants were rated as 'excellent' students by the course instructor. These findings supported the related results by Jarvis (2012) who reported that the application of technology considerably impacted the participants' autonomous learning in self-study centers. Further, the findings of the present study were also in line with the results of Arikan and Bakla (2011) which demonstrated that blogging contributed to a group of Turkish university students' developing autonomy.

Overall, the results of the current study confirmed Benson and Voller's (1997) view of constructivism that regarded self-directed learning as a positive means of promoting autonomy, specifically, in terms of learners' responsibility for decision-making on what is learnt and how, interaction as well as engagement with the target language.

Further, the perceptual evidence of the autonomy development of the graduate candidates can be accounted for by their positive beliefs about learner autonomy as well as their awareness of the challenges of being autonomous in the 21st century, specifically being language users who are able to solve online problems and make their own decisions (Illes, 2012). As regards involvement in Computer Mediated Communication, the results of this study were also in line with the research to date

profiling the autonomous learner as a decision maker in terms of when and how to engage in CMC, to evaluate and manage own learning process, interaction in the L2, hence independence of language learners, and interdependence among CMC participants (Benson, 2001, 2006, 2011; Blin, 2004; Jarvis, 2012; Reinders & White, 2011).

Furthermore, the findings of this study were not at variance with Maynard's view (2013) that an online discussion forum enables communication that is controlled by learners in learning. Specifically online activities in the Thesis Writing course can be considered to provide a social environment in which learners could engage in controlling their learning. These social activities therefore can be regarded as opportunities for collaborative learning through interactions with other students within the online community for practice (Mynard, 2013).

Finally, the results of the present study supported the findings of Kaur, Singh and Embi's (2006) study which showed that application of computer-mediated communication in the language learning process had positive effects on promoting autonomous behaviour.

5.3 Summary

The present case study explored the language learner autonomy development in a Thesis Writing Course for postgraduate candidates. Specifically, it conducted a survey with the graduate candidates and course instructor of ENGL 523 course at Eastern Mediterranean University. The study triangulated the graduate candidates' self-reports as well as their course instructor's perceptions and evaluation of their autonomy development. The analysis of the pertinent qualitative data manifested the

participants' awareness of the significance of autonomy both for themselves and their instructor. Further, the triangulated perceptual evidence collected at the start and end of the course suggested promising changes in terms of the autonomy development of the student participants, as well as their academic progress in the Thesis Writing course. The graduate candidates reportedly could make decisions on their own studies, as well as the course topics, materials, activities, and other aspects. Furthermore, they used Moodle and other resources for their studies, interaction, and discussion with peers and the course instructor. Overall, the graduate students expressed positive perceptions in relation to their learning experiences throughout the Thesis Writing course.

Finally, triangulation of the qualitative data demonstrated a promising congruence between the graduate candidates' self-reports and the course instructor's perceptions and evaluation in terms of their autonomy development and academic progress. Importantly, the study raised the graduate candidates' awareness of the challenges of autonomy in the 21st century and the need to further develop in this regard.

The study provided some implications for the instructor(s) of the Thesis Writing course in the context under investigation as well as made suggestions for prospective research.

5.4 Pedagogical Implications

This case study contributes to the yet under-researched area of autonomy at the graduate level. Owing to the lack of survey studies on autonomy at advanced level in the institutional context, specifically involving graduate candidates and graduate course instructor(s), the present research provided comprehensive data on learner

autonomy in general, and the teacher's and graduate students' perceptions, as well as perceptual congruence in particular. In this regard, the current case study provided valuable insights into the participants' teaching and learning experiences, as well as their difficulties, academic progress in the course and autonomy development. Further, it revealed some of the participants' inadequate autonomy for the graduate level, hence lack of congruence with the course instructor's perceptions and evaluation.

The findings of the present research, therefore, suggested that instructors of the Thesis Writing course for postgraduate students should address the issue of awareness of their prospective students in terms of autonomy. Also, course instructors should take into account the fact that in order to foster their graduate candidates' autonomy they should be more actively involved in the decision making in terms of various aspects of the graduate course. Moreover, course instructors should consider promoting more interaction and collaboration via Moodle and other platforms on the part of their graduate students. Importantly, graduate course instructors should consider further improving the course on offer and creating various opportunities for graduate candidates to become autonomous and competent language users who can solve on-line problems in the globalizing world.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Future research on autonomy can adopt a cross-sectional design to investigate effects of such learner variables as age, proficiency level and other individual characteristics on participants' autonomy development as well as differences, if any, across different participant groups.

Further, prospective research on autonomy at advanced or graduate levels can consider conducting interviews with graduate candidates as well as their instructors in order to obtain deeper insights into advanced or graduate English language classrooms.

Future research can also adopt the ethnographic design across various classrooms and involve conducting observations, keeping field notes, collecting narratives from participants in order to obtain a more comprehensive picture of autonomy development at the tertiary level. Furthermore, prospective studies can undertake large scale surveys, with larger numbers of participants across various graduate programs at EMU in order to yield comprehensive findings for fostering autonomy in the tertiary context. Finally, future research can consider conducting a comprehensive evaluation of the English language courses for postgraduate candidates with involvement of all those concerned.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Graduate Course Instructor's Interview

Background Information

1. **Age:**_____

2. **Gender:** Male_____   Female:_____

3. **L1:**_____

4. **Years of Teaching Experience:**_____

5. **Degree and field of study:**_____in_____

6. **Postgraduate Qualifications** (e.g. MA, PhD, certificates, etc.):_____in_____

Interview Guide for the Course Instructor

1. How would you briefly summarize your views on autonomy in general and at the graduate level specifically?

2. In your opinion, what are the main characteristics of the autonomous graduate candidate?

3. How would you relate graduate candidates' autonomy to their learning in your course?

4. How have you developed your current views on graduate candidates' autonomy through the following:

   a. your previous learning experience (MA-PhD level);

   b. your training experience (Cambridge accredited teacher trainer);

   c. your teaching experiences at the graduate level?

5. Have your graduate students been involved in any decision making regarding this course?

6. Have you been satisfied with your graduate students' academic English background?

7. Have your graduate candidates been autonomous in this course?

8. How do you know whether or not they have autonomous potential?

9. Have there been any individual and/or institutional constrains on graduate candidates' autonomy?

10. Do you as the instructor of this course provide opportunities to foster graduate candidates' autonomy?

   a. What is your role in fostering their autonomy?

   b. How do you foster their autonomy?

   c. Are there better/alternative ways to do so?

Appendix B: Graduate Candidates' Survey

Part I: Background Information

Age: ____

Nationality: _____

Gender: ☐ female ☐ male

Level of Study: ☐ MA/MS ☐ PhD

Area of Study: _____

How long have you been at EMU? _____

Why do you study for your Masters/PhD Degree?

_____

How long have you been studying English? _____(years)

_____(school)

Have you ever been to an English speaking country?

If yes, _____(country) _____(duration)

Do you speak any other language(s) in addition to English? If yes, please

specify._____

Part II:

Recently, ***Learner Autonomy*** has been defined as "the capacity to become competent speakers of the target language who are able to exploit the linguistic and other resources at their disposal effectively and creatively. Autonomous learners are independent language users capable of on-line problem solving and decision making" (Illes, 2012, p. 509).

Considering this definition of 'learner autonomy', and your learning experiences in this course, please respond to the questions below.

1. What does learner autonomy mean to you? Please specify.

2. Do you consider yourself as an autonomous graduate candidate? Please specify.

3. In this course, have you been involved in decision-making regarding the following?
   ☐ Objectives
   ☐ Topics
   ☐ Materials
   ☐ Activities
   ☐ Assessment
   ☐ Teaching method
   ☐ Classroom management

4. How often do you use Moodle in this course? Please specify.

5. Do you use Moodle for other courses as well? Please specify.

6. When using Moodle what do you work on? Please specify.

7. Which of the Moodle components do you work/use most often? Please specify.

8. Have you used any other resources in this course (Internet, self-study materials, dictionaries, etc.)? Please specify.

9. For what purpose(s) do you use Moodle to communicate with your instructor? Please specify.

10. For what purpose(s) do you use Moodle to communicate with other graduate candidates? Please specify.

11. Can you make decision on your own related to your studies while using Moodle? Please specify.

12. Have the course requirements been difficult for you to complete? Please specify.

13. Have you found this course beneficial for your graduate studies? Please specify.

14. How would you rate your progress in this course since the beginning of this semester?

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

Please specify.

Many thanks for your contribution!

Appendix C: Instructor's Evaluation

1. Do you consider X as an autonomous graduate candidate? Please specify.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____ .

2. In this course, has X been involved in decision-making regarding the following?

   ☐ Objectives

   ☐ Topics

   ☐ Materials

   ☐ Activities

   ☐ Assessment

   ☐ Teaching method

   ☐ Classroom management

3. How often has X used Moodle in this course? Please specify.

   _____

   _____

   _____ •

4. To the best of your knowledge, has X used Moodle for other courses as well? Please specify.

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____.

5. When using Moodle what would X work on? Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____.

6. Which of the Moodle components has X been working/using most often? Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____.

7. To the best of your knowledge, has X used any other resources in this course (Internet, self-study materials, dictionaries, etc.)? Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____.

8. For what purpose(s) has X used Moodle to communicate with you? Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____.

9. For what purpose(s) has X used Moodle to communicate with other graduate candidates? Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____.

10. To the best of your knowledge, has X been able to make decision on her own related to her studies while using Moodle? Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____.

11. Have the course requirements been difficult for X to complete? Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____.

12. Has this course been beneficial for X's graduate studies? Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____.

13. How would you rate X's progress in this course since the beginning of this semester?

☐ Excellent   ☐ Good   ☐ Fair   ☐ Poor

Please specify.

_____
_____
_____
_____.

Many thanks for your contribution!

Appendix D: Permission Letter

Eastern Mediterranean University

School of Foreign Languages & English Preparatory School

Research Request Form

Please fill in the form below and attach the necessary documentation (e.g. cover letter, sample questionnaire). NB. All documentation should be error free.

Name: Funda Toprak

Contact no: 0548 889 05 84 - 4034   **Email:** funda.toprak@cc.emu.edu.tr

Institution / Dept: ELT   **Supervisor:** Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gülşen Musayeva Vefalı

Area of Research: ELT

Proposed period of research: Spring 2013

Research to be carried out in:
☐ English Preparatory School   ☑ Modern Language Division   ☐ both
(English taught at Graduate Level)

Research to be carried out with:
☐ teachers ☐ students ☑ both ☐ other *(please specify)* _____

Level of students:
☐ beginners ☐ elementary ☐ pre-intermediate ☐ intermediate ☐ upper-intermediate
☑ other *(please specify)* (Graduate) ENGL 523 Thesis Writing for Postgraduate Students

No. of teachers required: 1   **No. of students required:** 9

Research to be carried out by:
☐ online questionnaire ☑ paper based questionnaire ☑ interview ☐ classroom observation
☐ other *(please specify)* _____

Aim(s) of Research:
☑ thesis (masters) ☐ thesis (PhD) ☐ conference presentation
☐ other *(please specify)* _____

Any other relevant information:

Upon completion of my research, I agree to submit a copy of my findings to the SFLEPS administration and do a presentation if requested. I understand the administration have the right to intervene at any time during my research period and that any further requests on my behalf may not be accepted if I violate the code of conduct and ethics of research.

Date: ...../...../.....   Signature _____

To be completed by the SFLEPS Administration
☑ Approved   ☐ Disapproved (reason):
Comments:
Date: 28|3|2013 Signature:

Appendix E: Teacher Consent Form

Dear Colleague,

I am conducting an MA study on 'learner autonomy' of the EFL graduate candidates at Eastern Mediterranean University. You are, therefore, invited to take part in an interview related to your ENGL 523 Course, Thesis Writing for Postgraduate Students. I assure you that your identity and your responses will remain confidential. The data collected through this tool will be used for research purposes only. If you give your consent to participate in this research, please sign the statement below.

Thank you for your time and co-operation.

Researcher	Thesis Supervisor
Funda Toprak	Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gülşen Musayeva Vefalı
MA Candidate ELT Department Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, TRNC. Email: funda.toprak@cc.emu.edu.tr	ELT Department, Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, TRNC. Email: gulsen.musayeva@emu.edu.tr

_____

Consent Form

Instructor's name and surname: …………..

Signature: ....

Date:
....

_____

Appendix F: Written Consent Form

Informed Consent Form for Graduate Candidates

You are invited to participate in this research study which is intended to examine your learning experiences in ENGL 523 Course, Thesis Writing for Postgraduate Students. In order to make an informed decision regarding whether or not to participate, you are invited to carefully read the following information. If you decide to participate in the study, you will be requested to complete the Survey.

Please note that your participation in this study is voluntary, and that there is no known risk involved in the study. I assure you that all information provided by you will be kept strictly confidential and shall have no negative effect on your assessment in the course. Please also note that you are free to withdraw from the study at any time; if you decide to do so, information related to your participation will be completely removed. Please be informed that information to be collected from this research will be used for research purposes only.

If you give your consent to participate in this study, please sign the statement below.

Thank you for your time and cooperation.

If you have any queries concerning the study or the Survey, please contact the Thesis Supervisor or me:

Researcher   Thesis Supervisor

Funda Toprak   Assoc. Prof. Dr. Gülşen Musayeva Vefalı

MA Candidate   ELT Department,
ELT Department   Eastern Mediterranean University,
Eastern Mediterranean University,   Famagusta, TRNC.
Famagusta, TRNC.   Email: gulsen.musayeva@emu.edu.tr
Email : funda.toprak@cc.emu.edu.tr

CONSENT FORM

I have read the information provided by the researcher and I give my consent to take

part in this research study.

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____