

Fostering Learner Autonomy outside the Classroom at an English Preparatory School

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ABSTRACT

Learner autonomy is one of the major topics in education and language learning for more than 40 years. It has been studied as a research topic almost all over the world. In contrast to being studied too much, every single study comes up with a new point to be considered. This is the proof for the wideness of this subject.

The main purpose of the present study is to identify the FLEPS students' and instructors' perceptions as regards fostering learner autonomy outside the classroom at Eastern Mediterranean University (EMU) School of Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School (FLEPS). To this aim, the study attempts to find out the students' study habits, and how they use the Student's Self Study Centre (SSSC) to develop their autonomy level. In other words, it aims to obtain to what extent the SSSC and the instructors are fostering learner autonomy outside the classroom.

In this case study, the mixed method approach was used to gather both quantitative and qualitative data. The participants were 10 instructors and 105 students from the FLEPS. A questionnaire was administered to the students and semi-structured interviews were conducted with the instructors in order to obtain data.

The results revealed that generally the students watch movies and listen to music outside the classroom to improve their English. They also said that they frequently use the SSSC. Based on the results, the instructors, on the other hand, mainly give assignments to help students develop autonomy. Moreover, the results showed that there is an urgent need for updating the materials and renewing the SSSC's resources and facilities. There is also need for a continuous staff development programme in

the SSSC in order to equip the staff with necessary knowledge and skills to make them be able to inform, guide and facilitate students more effectively.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy (LA), English Preparatory School (EPS), Students' Self Study Center (SSSC), perceptions.

ÖZ

Öğrenen özerkliği, 40 yılı aşkın süredir eğitim ve dil öğreniminde en önemli konulardan biridir. Hemen hemen dünyanın her yerinde, bu konu üzerinde araştırmalar yapılmıştır.

Bu araştırmanın ana amacı, Doğu Akdeniz Üniversitesi (DAÜ) Yabancı Diller ve İngilizce Hazırlık Okulu'ndaki (YDİHO) öğrenciler ve öğretmenlerin sınıf dışında öğrenen özerkliğinin geliştirilmesi ile ilgili algılarını belirlemektir. Bu amaç doğrultusunda, bu çalışma öğrencilerin sınıf dışındaki çalışma alışkanlıklarını ve Öğrencilerin Kendi Çalışma Merkezi'ni ne şekilde kullandıklarını tespit etmeyi hedeflemektedir. Yani, bu çalışma, Öğrencilerin Kendi Çalışma Merkezi'nin ve öğretmenlerin sınıf dışında öğrenme özerkliğini ne derece desteklediğini bulmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu çalışma, bir durum çalışmasıdır. Nitel ve nicel veriler öğrencilerden anket aracılığı ile ve öğretmenlerden mülakat yolu ile toplanmıştır. Çalışmaya 10 öğretmen ve 105 öğrenci olmak üzere toplam 115 kişi katılmıştır.

Araştırmanın sonuçları öğrencilerin genellikle sınıf dışında film izleyerek ve müzik dinleyerek İngilizcelerini geliştirdiklerini göstermiştir. Ayrıca, öğrenciler sık sık Öğrencilerin Kendi Çalışma Merkezi'ni kullandıklarını da belirtmişlerdir. Sonuçlara göre, öğretmenler ise ödevler vererek öğrencilerin öğrenen özerkliğini geliştirmeye çalışmaktadırlar. Ayrıca, çalışmanın sonuçları Öğrencilerin Kendi Çalışma Merkezi'ndeki materyallerin ve kaynakların yenilenmesine ihtiyaç olduğunu da göstermektedir. Diğer bir ihtiyacın ise, öğrencileri daha etkili bilgilendirebilmek ve

yönlendirebilmek için, Öğrencilerin Kendi Çalışma Merkezi'ndeki görevli personelin bir sürekli gelişim programından geçmesi yönünde ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Öğrenen özerkliği, İngilizce Hazırlık Okulu, Öğrencilerin Kendi Çalışma Merkezi.

Dedicated to my beloved family for their patience and support. Above all, they always stood by my side in all conditions. Thank you all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EMU	Eastern Mediterranean University
EPS	English Preparatory School
FLEPS	Foreign Languages English Preparatory School
SSSC	Students' Self Study Center
ELT	English Language Teaching
LA	Learner Autonomy
AL	Autonomous Learning
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the study. It provides background information by referring to many scholars and presents different views, perspectives and ideas about the topic. Next it states the problem and the purpose of the study, and then it presents the research questions. The chapter also explains the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

The nature of language learning and teaching has been transforming in many steps and ways in line with the critical advancements in the world and in technology, economics and politics. The body of knowledge, strategies and practices of language teaching and learning in recent years have been subject to change to focus more on the communicative, functional and individual aspect of language and the language learning dynamics. The current trends mainly have a thrust focused on the individual; consequently, the teacher and the learner responsibilities seem to be reassigned according to Little et al (1991). These innovations have their roots in the Communicative Approach in language teaching which is commonly referred to as Communicative Language Teaching. In Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), it is implied that communicative activities are supposed to be centered on an aspiration to communicate with no teacher involvement, and no materials restrictions. Vernon-Feagans, Hammer, Miccio and Manlove (2001) state that the level of teacher involvement should be minimized during communicative activities; however, the teacher should promote the use of communicative language by giving

immediate answers to the students in the somewhat uninhibited conversations. Similar theories and practices in the classroom go in tandem with that thought pattern, lending support to each other. Learner autonomy has thus emerged as one of the relatively recent concepts to invade the current language learning and teaching landscape. (p. 200-201)

Scholars have been engaged in protracted researches and debates on Learner Autonomy in various platforms which seek ways to define and apply learner autonomy as both a teaching and a learning technique. As it is underlined in Benson (2013) and Little (1991) learner autonomy, as a pedagogical technique, refers to a student's aptitude to set suitable learning goals and manage his or her own learning. Learner Autonomy therefore seeks to redefine the roles of the teacher and students in the classroom. It promotes self-access and self-directed learning. The challenge associated with the concept is actually correlated with the difficulty of breaking old age habits of teaching and learning. Teachers and learners are having difficulty in reassigning the roles of players in the classroom. When we consider the fact that much of the learning takes place outside the formal setting, then it can be stated that the learners are not accustomed to be in the center of their own learning as dictated by the principles of Learner Autonomy. This observation presents problems to be solved which include the need to develop awareness amongst students of the role of autonomy and strategy use in learning.

Self-directed language learning activities, that is, the activities done outside the classroom, are considered to be fostering autonomy in language learning. Therefore, language teachers, as well as the institutions they work for, should systematically encourage students to engage in self-study (outside the classroom) in order to take

responsibility of their own learning. Taking responsibility of one's own learning and making decisions as regards his or her learning process lead to autonomy, and this may result in more effective language learning. Lee (1998) mentions that "the aim of self-directed learning is to promote independence in learners so that they can continue their language development and take increasing responsibility for their learning" (p. 288). It is mentioned in Lee (1998) that "Learner autonomy is promoted through the provision of circumstances and contexts for language learners which will make it more likely that they take charge – at least temporarily – of the whole or part of their language-learning program, and which are more likely to help rather than prevent learners from exercising their autonomy" (p. 288).

Pearson (2004) points out that out-of-class learning has been used in the recent literature on autonomy, somewhat narrowly, to refer to the efforts of learners taking classroom-based language courses to find opportunities for language learning and use outside class. Benson (2007) mentions that recent studies suggest that students tend to engage in out-of class learning activities more frequently than their teachers know, often showing considerable creativity in situations where opportunities for out-of-class learning appear to be limited.

Students have much more opportunities to learn a language outside the classroom through the non-stop development in technology. Gremmo and Riley (1995) summarize that with these sentences:

Developments in technology have made an undeniable contribution to the spread of autonomy and self-success. The tape-recorder, the fast-copier, TV and the video-recorder, the computer, the photocopier, magazines, newspapers, fax and e-mail, all provide a rich variety of tools and techniques for the implementation of self-directed learning (p. 153).

It is the institutions' responsibility to provide learners with opportunities to do self-study to learn language outside the classroom. With the help of technology, nowadays it is much easier for teachers and institutions to motivate, encourage learners towards self-directed learning. For example, for the institutions which have a self-access center with various book resources, language practice materials (mock tests, activities for all 4 skills etc.), computers with internet connection, private study desks, it is easier to encourage learners to study on their own.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Learner autonomy has been a very important issue in language learning classrooms. Autonomous learners are better learners which take the responsibility of their own learning. In other words they try their best in order to learn more both inside and outside the classroom. There is an important role for teachers to encourage, direct, facilitate and/or inform students about being autonomous and its benefits towards their educational life. Also the institutions are the other part of this process which need to give the necessary opportunities to students for studying on their own outside the classroom. There are some research studies on this area. Gardner and Miller (1999) and Hughes, Krug and Vye (2011) are two of those studies and they agree on the teacher's roles to be a facilitator, guide and to be encouraging. They also agree on institutions' responsibility to supply multiple opportunities for students in order to study on their own. There is also another very important issue that has been accepted by the studies which is the importance of technology. With the development in technology, learners and also teachers can easily reach any kind of materials, books from multiple resources. Computers, even mobile phones can be used to read something by connecting to internet. If you know the right websites and have access to join, it takes just a couple of seconds to reach a book written forty years ago. The

learners can read books, do on-line exercises and they can even practice pronunciation with the help of some applications which can be easily downloaded.

The main problem is that there is a big gap in the literature about this topic in Cyprus where English is being taught as a foreign language. Also this is a case study which focuses on a single institution, its opportunities given to students and the instructors' encouragement and guidance level for students towards studying outside the classroom on their own. There is Students' Self Study Centre (SSSC) in English Preparatory School in Eastern Mediterranean University, which has an aim to make their students become aware of their improvement in language learning and become autonomous learners who take responsibility of their own learning.

This study aims to focus on the question of to what extent SSSC, SSSC staff and instructors supply opportunities for students to study on their own outside the classroom and become autonomous learners. Another focus of the study is to find out the effectiveness of the SSSC's facilities towards motivating the students studying on their own.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of the study is to assess the extent to which the teachers and SSSC as a self-access center are creating an environment for learning outside the classroom and find out the level of opportunities which EPS provides to learners to learn on their own outside the classroom. To this aim, the study attempts to identify students' self study habits and practices. Another point to be focused on is to assess the encouragement and motivation that the teachers and SSSC staff provide for learners

to become autonomous and what more they can do in order to improve themselves and the institution.

1.4 Research Questions

In this study, the following research questions are answered:

1. What do the EPS students do outside the classroom to develop learner autonomy?
2. What do the EPS instructors do to foster learner autonomy outside the classroom?
3. What are the students' and instructors' perceptions of the SSSC at EPS and its role in promoting autonomy?
4. What do they suggest for the improvement of the SSSC at EPS?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The present study can be considered significant in several ways. First, the findings of the study may provide suggestions to the institution regarding how to improve its facilities and practices so that it can better encourage and guide learners in doing self-study and consequently to take the responsibility of their own learning. The results of this study may also lead to an improvement in teacher training programs to develop teacher motivating and encouraging skills towards learner autonomy in English Preparatory School at Eastern Mediterranean University. Moreover, the results will help other institutions or preparatory schools review their teaching strategies. In addition, this research may provide a model for the adoption of learner autonomy at any languages preparatory school. It is also hoped that the findings of this study may add to the body of knowledge pertaining to learner autonomy.

1.6 Summary

In this chapter the background of the study has been discussed to show how the institutions and instructors should supply, encourage and/or direct students towards being autonomous learners in order to study and learn outside the classroom on their own by referring to the studies done before. Next, the problem has been stated and the purpose of the study has been explained. After that the research questions have been listed, and finally the significance of the study has been explained.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The chapter discusses the literature on learner autonomy with special emphasis on various implementation strategies leading to performance improvement. The relation between student and teacher performance in relation to learner autonomy is also aimed.

2.1 Defining Learner Autonomy

According to Wynn-Jones (1996) the field of language education is changing at an ever-increasing rate. Traditional notions of education are giving way to newer, more innovative ways of thinking about how we learn, teach and acquire knowledge (as cited in Cox and Mungall 1999 p. 121).

The term 'Autonomy' has been very popular since the beginning of 1980s. We can consider Holec (1981) as the inventor of autonomy, after Yves Chalon, without any doubt and put his definition in first place: "an ability, a power of capacity to do something" (Concise Oxford Dictionary) "and not a type of conduct, behaviour. According to him, "to say of a learner that he is autonomous is therefore to say that he is capable of taking charge of his own learning and nothing more" (p. 4). According to Holec (1981) autonomy is "the ability to take charge of one's own learning. This ability is not inborn but must be acquired either by "natural" means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, in a systematic, deliberate way"(p. 3). It is still a very important issue in the field of language learning and teaching. As

Benson and Voller (2013) mention “Autonomy and independence are key words of 20th century liberal western thought in the fields of philosophy, psychology, politics and education” (p. 4). Benson (2013) claims that “since entering the field of TESOL in the 1970s, the theory and practice of autonomy has evolved considerably in response to changing landscapes of language learning and use” (p. 839).

Another definition for autonomy has been done by Chan (2001) as “to have and to hold, the responsibility for all the decisions concerning all aspects of this learning” (p. 505). Furthermore, Joshi (2011) described autonomy as “it is the complete responsibility for one’s learning carried out without the investment of a teacher or pedagogic materials” (p. 13). Littlewood (1996) defines “an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out the choices which govern his or her actions” (p. 428).

Learner autonomy is closely related to Communicative Language Teaching. For instance, according to Larsen-Freeman and Anderson (2011), in Communicative Language Teaching “since the teacher’s role is less dominant than in a teacher-centered method, students are seen as more responsible managers of their own learning” (p. 122). Students are at the center of teaching-learning process, and this makes them more active and responsible learners.

Sinclair (2000, cited in Borg and Al-Busaidi, 2012a) suggests 13 aspects of learner autonomy as shown below:

1. Autonomy is a construct of capacity.
2. Autonomy involves a willingness on the part of the learner to take

- responsibility of their own learning.
3. The capacity and willingness of learners are important issues.
 4. Complete autonomy is an idealistic goal.
 5. There are degrees of autonomy.
 6. The degrees of autonomy are unstable and variable.
 7. Autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent.
 8. Developing autonomy requires conscious awareness of the learning process – i.e. conscious reflection and decision making.
 9. Promoting autonomy is not simply a matter of teaching strategies.
 10. Autonomy can take place both inside and outside the classroom.
 11. Autonomy has a social as well as a political dimension.
 12. The promotion of autonomy has a political as well as psychological dimension.
 13. Autonomy is interpreted differently by different cultures.

The above given aspects clearly show that autonomy is an important feature for politics, psychology as well as education. Autonomous learners, first of all, need to have the willing to learn without enforcement of teacher or any condition. If they have the enough capacity to take the responsibility of their own learning, they will have the advantage of using the opportunities they find. They make use of authentic materials outside the classroom which enables them to learn by themselves without being dependent on the teacher or the books being taught in classroom.

2.2 Autonomous Learners

There are different approaches to or definitions of autonomy depending on the perspectives of the scholars. However, all these different definitions meet at a common point: autonomy is one's taking the responsibility of and becoming the decision maker in his/her own learning. Engaging in self-study outside the classroom can get learners to achieve these two qualities. Lee (1998) claims that "It is important to help students become aware of the value of independent learning outside the classroom, so that they acquire the habit of learning continuously, and maintain it after they have completed their formal studies." (p. 282).

The language learning is a life long process that learners should feel themselves responsible to take care of their own learning. The teachers are responsible for their learners' learning for a limited time which includes the time during the students learn how to use the target language and realize that learning a language is the most important part of improving themselves and they should develop their language by themselves. They may be facilitated by their teachers in order to become an autonomous learner. Fumin and Li (2012) says that the teachers in China were using the traditional method where the teachers have the responsibility to teach the language completely, before 2007. Then the Ministry of Education changed the system where the learners became responsible for their own learning. The teachers became the facilitator for students who gives them the chance to choose how to learn, when to learn and also where to learn the target language. This lead the teachers to use authentic materials in language teaching more. The learners were being encouraged to; read newspapers, magazines or listen to music, news or watch movies, series in English, by teachers. Also the teachers' role changed in class. They have multiple

roles in new system; classroom organizer, learning regulator, study guide and resource facilitator. Dang (2010) mentioned that learner autonomy has a great impact on personal growth and achievement.

Little (2010) recognizes autonomous learners by their active involvement in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of their learning. Chan (2001) states that autonomous learners must be able to control their learning at every stage, from setting their learning goals to developing study plans and assessing their own progress.

2.3 Autonomy in Language Learning and Teaching

Autonomy can be considered as a technique for students in order to develop themselves in language learning outside the classroom but for teachers it can be regarded as a strategy to be given to learners for improving their language learning skills on their own.

Chuck (2004) suggests that in order for learners to make informed decisions about their learning, they need to develop an awareness of at least four important areas of metacognition as proposed by Ellis (1999) and Sinclair (1999):

1. Learner awareness
2. Subject matter awareness of the target language
3. Learning process awareness
4. Social awareness

The awareness of the learner about the importance of learning a new language is a great motivation and also gives the learner the chance to make decisions on his or her

own learning. At this point the learner can be available to see his or her progress and be more relaxed while using the target language.

Reinders (2010) suggests that there is an important task for the classroom teacher in raising students' awareness of their learning outside the classroom, and for ensuring students have the necessary skills. This places great impetus on learning outside the classroom than in the classroom, bringing the concept and idea that the autonomous classroom has no boundaries.

In a publication which considered the feasibility of developing autonomy in the classroom, Benson (2003) argues that autonomy is perhaps best described as a capacity; because various kinds of abilities can be involved in control over learning. Researchers generally agree that the most important abilities are those that allow learners to plan their own learning activities, monitor their progress and evaluate their outcomes.

A very large number of studies have been conducted to assess and define the responsibility of the teacher in learner autonomy. Higgs (1998:41) suggests that the teacher should act as a manager of the learning programme and a resource person. Zimmerman and Risemberg (1997) agree with the fact that teachers should promote students' self-regulated learning. Fumin (2012) proposed a model to show teachers' roles in class, given in figure below.

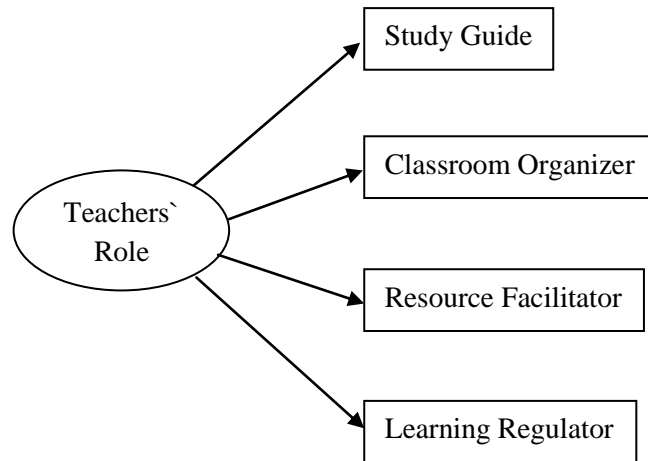


Figure 2.1: Structural Model of the Teachers' Roles (Fumin 2012)

Gao (2012) indicates that the teachers' prior learning experiences also lead to teachers advocating for and promoting learner autonomy in their professional practices. Autonomous learners, if they are willing to become teachers, are more likely to become autonomous teachers, who will foster a new generation of autonomous learners. The same sentiments are echoed by Little (1995) when he says teachers cannot be expected to foster the growth of autonomy in their learners if they do not themselves know what it is to be an autonomous learner. In all their pedagogical actions, teachers must be able to exploit their professional skills autonomously.

Little (2004) states that learner-centred pedagogies have generated numerous attempts to redefine the teacher's role; facilitator, counsellor, manager of resources and also he emphasizes that if teachers stop teaching, most learners will stop learning.

2.4 The Role of Motivation in Learner Autonomy

Motivation offers an explanation to a large extent why people choose to do a particular activity and the time that they are willing to persist in that activity. It also gives a view as to the level of effort individuals may invest in pursuing this particular activity (Dörnyei, 2001). Scholars have concluded that these three components of motivation are in alignment with the goals and the reasons for engagement and in effect, permanent level of the learning effort. This would therefore mean that the reason for learning a particular language is built around these components of motivation. This leads to the generation of, numerous and various language learning goals. Gardner (2006) gives a differentiation of these goals. There is an assertion that these goals are associated with the satisfaction and the utility value of speaking another language. There are also the integrative goals, which reflect the students' desire to learn another language in order to become integrated into the target language culture. English, however, has become an international language serving as a lingua franca in a globalized world, all people wants to be able to communicate in this language, which will enable them to be able to communicate most of the people around the world. This idea, to be able to communicate with foreigners, is a real effective motivation towards language learning.

There are other additional key elements of motivation which include personal beliefs, which would reflect on an individual's capacity to perform a particular task. English as a language carry such levels of motivation. By knowing English, the learners will be able to contact people all over the world and take the chances to study or work abroad. These opportunities provide motivation to learn language.

The learners who have the willing to communicate with foreigners, study or work abroad can be considered as motivated for language learning which makes them try to improve themselves continuously. They study, practice more to learn more. Because they want to be able to use the language in a short time, they do extra practice on their own which can be considered as autonomous learning.

2.5 Role of Technology in Fostering Learner Autonomy

Nowadays world forces and makes people to use technology in work, education and even daily life in order to be able to communicate. Students use computers, mobile phones and internet connection to reach a huge resource. There are e-libraries which include books and a lot of written work. This can be very useful and motivating for learners that they can reach a book from their house, even their bed. They may prefer studying at home on their own which leads to autonomous learning.

Students have much more opportunities to learn a language outside the classroom through the non-stop development in technology. Gremmo and Riley (1995) mention that:

developments in technology have made an undeniable contribution to the spread of autonomy and self-success. The tape-recorder, the fast-copier, TV and the video-recorder, the computer, the photocopier, magazines, newspapers, fax and e-mail, all provide a rich variety of tools and techniques for the implementation of self-directed learning (p. 153).

Gremmo and Riley (1995) point out that “the first resource centres and self-access systems were developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s” (p. 156). They added that “the major lesson which has been learnt from resource centres is that if they are to be successful, they must provide some sort of learner-training” (p. 157). Gremmo and Riley (1995) also said that:

the development of both the theory and the practice of autonomy, and in particular of self-directed learning systems and resource centres has resulted in the emergence of a new pedagogical profession, that of “counsellor” (helper, tutor, adviser, etc.) . Counsellors have two main roles: on the one hand, they help learners develop their learning competence, what Holec has called “knowing how to learn”. On the other hand, they set about creating the material conditions favourable to language learning, (Holec’s “being able to learn”), which in practice often means designing, establishing and running resource centres (p. 159).

Cotterall and Reinders (2001) defined SALL (Self Access Language Learning) as:

consist of a number of resources (in the form of materials, activities and support) usually located in one place, and is designed to accommodate learners of different levels, styles, goals and interests. It aims to develop learner autonomy among its users. Self-Access Language Learning is the learning that takes place in a Self Access Centre (p. 2).

According to the findings of the research study conducted by Hughes, Krug and Vye (2011), the self-access centre (ERC – English Resource Centre) provides learners an environment to use the language in its real purpose. The students who attend to the centre uses only English to communicate with each other and also with the staff. The teachers who work in the centre are in the role of advisors and they help students when they need. The results showed that the centre has an effect on attendees that their language proficiency increased two times more than the students who did not attend to the centre during a semester.

Reinders and White (2011) argue that:

the areas of autonomy and technology in language education have a potentially very close but in practice often also uneasy relationship. In a narrow sense, technology is a tool that helps learners and educators to achieve certain educational goals. Autonomy can be one of those goals (p. 1).

Students today want to learn a language not only to communicate, but also as a means to find contacts, meet people and establish partnerships (Soontiens, 2004).

2.6 Current Studies in the Development of Learner Autonomy

Important steps in the development of learner autonomy at University level have been taken. The subject has captured the interest of many scholars especially in the learning and teaching of new languages. Komos and Csizer (2013) engaged into a study that sought to investigate how motivational factors and self-regulatory strategies affect and impact autonomous learning behaviour. They created and administered it to secondary school students, university students, and adult language learners. The resulting equation model that was generated to show that the use of facilities and their general goals in their application, linked to the international position of the learners, coupled with positive outlook for self-guides, are important for the general use and effective self-driven learning strategies. In other words, the willingness towards learning plays an important role in fostering autonomous learning. At lower levels of learning, the position of the governments, from which policy of study and learning is derived play an important role in directing the autonomous use of traditional and computer-aided learning resources. The findings derived thereof revealed no major applicable and functional differences of the model. This therefore suggests that the derived model is applicable to the most important language learner populations in the context investigated without it as far as the major factors that influence the overall perception are considered. Students also need to take opportunities to study and learn by not succumbing to boredom, due to some repetitive nature of the activities, and, they are also encouraged to exercise effective time management as well as to seek proactively available learning opportunities.

This is reflective of the general development in the trends in autonomous learning, since they adopt from the various subjects such as psychology and information technology.

These major steps in the research on self-directed or self-managed learning, better known as autonomous learning has reached a level that permits it to be considered as an educational philosophy. The trends leading to this systemic adoption can be traced to as far as the 1980s as highlighted by Brockett et al. (2001). Studies in education have embraced the topic of autonomous learning, and the topic is greatly featured in many educational publications. This phenomenon has been reported in the period between 1980 and 2000. Conner et al. (2009) also noted this notable growth and wide interest developed amongst scholars for the topic on self-directed learning. The longevity of this sustained interest therefore suggests that this topic is of great relevance in the education and in the process of meeting the learning needs of society. Lambier (2005) emphasizes this phenomenon by attesting to the visible changes, especially in the speed of the growth of the knowledge bases, information integration and in general, the information and communication technology which have fostered and created a need for lifelong learning.

Wenden (1991) states that:

learner autonomy has attracted more and more attention in education especially in the western world since 1970s. Nowadays, autonomy is widely accepted as a desirable goal in education, and few teachers will disagree with the importance of helping learners become more autonomous as learners (p. 11).

Breen and Littlejohn (2000) on the other hand introduce that:

the process syllabus is a radically analytic syllabus. In its strong form at least, not only the content but the materials, methodology and types of assessment

used in a course are not pre-determined but are negotiated between the instructor and the learners throughout the course. That is, learners help select course content and materials and provide input on how they want to be taught and assessed. Process syllabuses have therefore evolved as a means of planning, implementing and evaluating negotiation in the classroom, and the decisions to which teachers and students may jointly arrive (p.2).

Moreover, according to Ma and Gao (2010), learner autonomy can be fostered as:

student-initiated teaching combined with syllabus negotiation brought all the learners to be more open-minded to other's ideas, thoughts, suggestions and even criticisms, because greater control over the learning process, resources and language cannot be achieved by each individual acting alone according to his or her own preferences and collective decisions need to be arrived at by individuals achieving consensus and acting in concert (p. 907).

Ma and Gao (2010) added that:

above all, it enables them to begin to take control of their own learning in ways that will be effective in terms of goals that they have determined for themselves. This practice of negotiated syllabus helps students to break out of the cocoon of dependence on the teacher. Once this has happened, negotiation inevitably becomes an ongoing process. It is thus that the foundations of autonomy are laid (p. 908).

Self-directed or autonomous learning is therefore important in the attainment of lifelong learning goals so as to meet the rapidly transforming needs of the world, which has since evolved into a global village. In this instance, individuals assume responsibility in ensuring that their knowledge and skills remain relevant and up-to-date (Marsh, Richards and Smith 2001). It can therefore be argued that the goals of autonomous learning are to foster self-directed learning in students – who are consequently forced, directly or indirectly to take full responsibility of their learning requirements and objectives.

2.7 Summary

In this chapter, learner autonomy has been described and defined. Autonomous learners have been recognized and their study habits have been explained. The importance and role of autonomy in language learning and teaching have been

discussed. Then the role of motivation in learner autonomy expressed and next, the role of technology in fostering learner autonomy explained. Finally, some of the current studies have been/being done in the development of learner autonomy has been given.

Chapter 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the approach and steps taken in conducting this research study. In this chapter the research design is explained first. Then, the context of the study is described, and the research questions are listed. Afterwards, the detailed information about participants are given. Next, the data collection instruments defined. Moreover, the data collection procedures explained and finally the data analysis described.

3.1 Overall Research Design

The present study was designed as a case study including both qualitative and quantitative data by using mixed method. This study is a descriptive case study based on Foreign Languages English Preparatory School.

Cresswell (2014) gives the definition of mixed methods research as:

mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry involving collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, integrating the two forms of data, and using distinct designs that may involve philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks. The core assumption of this form of inquiry is that the combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a more complete understanding of a research problem than either approach alone (p. 4).

By this definition we can come up with the statement that mixed method gives more definite results by triangulating the qualitative and quantitative data.

Mackey and Gass (2005) state that “case studies tend to provide detailed descriptions of specific learners (or sometimes classes) within their learning setting” (p. 171). They mention that “triangulation involves using multiple research techniques and multiple sources of data in order to explore the issues from all feasible perspectives” (p. 368).

3.2 Context

The study was carried out at the Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School (FLEPS) at Eastern Mediterranean University, Northern Cyprus. In this preparatory school there are Turkish and English lessons being taught to students before they become capable to continue their education with their department program. Turkish course is at the beginning level to make foreign students able to communicate during their daily lives in North Cyprus. There are four main levels of English courses. They are beginner, elementary, intermediate and advanced. There are codes of each level like EPS 101 which refers to beginner level, EPS 102 referring to elementary level, EPS 103 for intermediate level and EPS 104 is being used for advanced level. There are also EPS 111, EPS 112, EPS 113 and EPS 114, which are in between two levels having the students who fail in the exam which moves them next level.

There is a self-access center called SSSC and on the official web page of Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School, it is stated that:

there are three different areas: The Multimedia Area, the Consultancy Area, the Self Study Area. In the Multimedia Area, students can watch DVDs, do their projects and practice English on computers. In the Consultancy Area, students can borrow graded readers, watch the news and documentaries on TV, watch the latest films on DVDs, read daily newspapers and magazines, photocopy and get print outs. If any student needs help, they can ask for help at the consultancy desk. In the Self Study Area, students can have tutorials with their teacher(s), study for exams with language materials, practice speaking and record their voice alone or with friends (<http://fleps.emu.edu.tr/en/facilities/erc>).

Also in their visions section on the website it is mentioned that they give the students the responsibility of their own learning, encourage them to be independent and they place importance on students' self-autonomy and doing research for their individual needs.

Realizing the importance of autonomous learning, the Foreign Languages and English Preparatory School (FLEPS) at Eastern Mediterranean University is expected to create an environment which promotes autonomy by means of curriculum and opportunities provided for students to do self-study. With regard to this, on the website of the school, it is said that "We believe that learning takes place through many different activities, both inside and outside the classroom" (<http://sfl.emu.edu.tr/about.html>).

3.3 Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to find out to what extent the teachers in the English Preparatory School (EPS) and the institution itself are creating such an environment and providing enough opportunities to learners to learn on their own, outside the classroom. The study also aims to identify students' self-study habits and practices. To this aim, the study attempts to focus on the opportunities that are provided by the SSSC (Student's Self Study Center) in the EPS at Eastern Mediterranean University as perceived by the students and the instructors. The study also aims at finding out the encouragement that the instructors and the SSSC staff provide for learners to become autonomous and what more can be done in order to improve the SSSC's effectiveness. According to these purposes, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What do the EPS students do outside the classroom to develop learner autonomy?
2. What do the EPS instructors do to foster learner autonomy outside the classroom?
3. What are the EPS students' and instructors' perceptions of the SSSC at EPS and its role in promoting autonomy?
4. What do they suggest for the improvement of the SSSC at EPS?

3.4 Participants

The participants of the study are the students of high levels and the instructors in English Preparatory School at Eastern Mediterranean University. There are 115 participants in total including 10 instructors and 105 students.

3.4.1 Students

In total, 105 students of high levels (EPS 103, EPS 104, EPS 114) in EPS participated in the study. The students' ages were as follows: 61% of the students were below 20 years of age, 34.33% were between the ages of 21 and 23, and 2.9% were of ages between 24 - 26 while 1.9% aged above 27. The statistical mean of the students' age was 20.39, which is approximately 20 years of age.

With respect to their origins, 58.1% of the students were from North Cyprus, 9.5% of them were coming from European countries and 32.4% were from Asian countries. 72.4% of the students' native language was Turkish, 2.9% of them spoke Arabic and 24.8% students' native language was Farsi.

As regards the students' level of study, 65 students were in EPS 103, 25 were in EPS 104 and 15 from EPS 114. 63 of the students were male and 42 of them were female.

3.4.2 Instructors

A total of 10 instructors and/or SSSC staff in EPS participated in the study. Seven of the instructors were female and three of them were male. They were all Turkish Cypriots but three of them were born and came from England after primary school. The native language of seven instructors who participated in this study was Turkish and three were native speakers of English. Their age range was between 29 and 41. Four of them had more than 15 years teaching experience, five of them had more than 10 years of teaching experience and one of them had been teaching for 4 years. Four of them were in the testing team of the FLEPS with different duties and responsibilities.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

The different data collection instruments used during the research included a student questionnaire (Appendix A) and semi-structured interviews (Appendix B) for instructors.

3.5.1 Student Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study is made up of four sections (Appendix A). The researcher prepared the questionnaire by adopting or adapting items from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a), Jarvis (2012), and “English Preparatory School Evaluation Questionnaire” from EMU portal. The reliability of the questionnaire was found out as 0.75 which was calculated by using Cronbach’s alpha formula. The aim of the questionnaire is to find out the students perceptions and ideas about autonomy, SSSC and its facilities towards fostering learner autonomy. Also it aims to get information about learners’ study habits outside the classroom.

The first section of the questionnaire focuses on background information about students which include their age, gender, nationality, native language and level of study.

The second section focuses on the students' study habits outside the classroom, the SSSC's facilities, SSSC's effectiveness on skills learning and usefulness and also the instructors' and SSSC staff's encouragement towards learner autonomy. There are 26 closed-items in the form of the five-point Likert-scale [Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Unsure (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1)].

The third section focuses on students' internet and SSSC using level towards language learning. There are 4 closed-items. 2 of them are in the form of five point Likert-scale [Most days (5), Two or three times a week (4), Once a week (3), Hardly ever (2), Never (1)]. One item is again closed-item and asks about students' preferences of place to use the internet to study in the form of five Likert-scale [At home (5), In the university library (4), In the SSSC (3), No preferences (2), Other (1)]. Last item of this section is a fill in the blank type and asks about the time they spend in SSSC per week.

The fourth and the last section includes 5 open-ended questions focusing on students' study habits outside the classroom, SSSC's facilities and effectiveness on skills development, the resources and activities' sufficiency and their suggestions for improving SSSC.

3.5.2 Instructor Interviews

The researcher conducted face-to-face interviews with teachers in FLEPS. The SSSC staff members were also interviewed. The interviews were semi-structured. There are 12 open-ended questions in the instructor interview.

The interviews conducted with the instructors to measure their knowledge about autonomy and check if they are encouraging autonomy. Also the way that they promote autonomy asked and their perspectives about SSSC's facilities and resources are questioned. Last questions were about the students who use SSSC regularly and autonomous learners' successfulness.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The data in this study were collected during the Spring Semester of the Academic Year 2016-2017. The data was collected in several steps. First of all, permission letters were collected from the university's Ethics Committee and the FLEPS, respectively.

Secondly, the questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered to the students in the EPS with the consent forms. It took approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Thirdly, the interviews (Appendix B) were conducted with the instructors and they were asked to sign the consent forms before they started. The interviews were audio recorded.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data were collected through student questionnaires and instructor interviews. Then the data were analyzed in several stages. The present study used both qualitative and quantitative data. Quantitative data included the closed-items in the student questionnaire and these data were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics was used to analyze the data and frequencies were calculated.

The qualitative data were collected through open-ended items in student questionnaire and instructor interviews. The data were analyzed by organizing raw data under each question and giving codes while identifying the themes. After that, the data were categorized and coded. Then, the frequencies were calculated. The instructor interviews were transcribed (Appendix C) by the researcher before analyzing the data.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter, firstly the research design has been identified. After that, the context has been introduced. Next, the research questions have been listed and then, participants have been introduced. Afterwards, the data collection instruments and procedures have been described. Lastly, the data analysis procedures have been clarified.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the study. The results obtained from the student questionnaire and instructor interviews are presented under the two separate headings below.

4.1 Student Questionnaire Results

The questionnaire was administered to the students of EPS in order to gather information about their beliefs and perceptions about learner autonomy, studying outside the classroom, opportunities provided by the EPS, especially the SSSC for students to develop autonomy and the teachers' encouragement to learners towards being autonomous learners. There were two different kinds of items: closed items and open-ended items. Their results of each kind of items are given in separate sections below.

4.1.1 Closed Items

This section presents the results of closed items with tables and then, all the items are explained by referring to the frequencies obtained from statistical analysis. The table below shows the results for items 1-26:

Table 4.1: The results of closed items 1-26 in the student questionnaire

	STATEMENT	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Unsure (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
1.	I study English outside the classroom on my own.	28.6	37.1	27.6	3.8	2.9
2.	I go to the lessons well prepared.	14.3	43.8	27.6	12.4	1.9
3.	Doing self-study outside the classroom has a positive effect on my success as a language learner.	27.6	40.0	31.4	1.0	0
4.	I feel I am learning English outside the classroom on my own.	19.0	43.8	22.9	10.5	3.8
5.	The teacher has an important role in supporting me to learn English outside the classroom.	27.6	35.2	27.6	5.7	3.8
6.	The teacher gives homework that helps me learn English on my own outside the classroom.	32.4	38.1	20.0	5.7	3.8
7.	Out-of-class tasks, which make me use additional books or materials, help me develop my English.	22.9	48.6	22.7	2.9	2.9
8.	Out-of-class tasks, which make me use the Internet, help me learn English.	41.0	37.1	20.9	1.0	0
9.	Studying on my own outside the classroom makes me a better	35.2	38.1	16.2	9.5	1.0

	language learner.					
	STATEMENT	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Unsure (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
10.	I use the SSSC in the English Preparatory School.	37.1	28.6	15.2	11.4	7.6
11.	Doing self-study in the SSSC is an activity which helps me learn English outside the classroom.	16.2	38.1	29.5	9.5	6.7
12.	I use the <i>multi-media facilities</i> in the SSSC.	21.9	21.0	38.1	12.3	6.7
13.	I use the <i>listening facilities</i> in the SSSC.	17.1	31.4	30.5	12.4	8.6
14.	I use <i>the graded readers and reference books</i> in the SSSC.	10.5	23.8	25.7	24.8	15.2
15.	I use <i>the self-study materials section</i> (e.g. grammar, reading, vocabulary, etc.) in the SSSC.	15.2	28.6	28.6	19.0	8.6
16.	I use <i>the speaking section</i> in the SSSC.	14.3	21.9	33.3	18.1	12.4
17.	I use <i>the satellite and video section</i> in the SSSC.	14.3	24.8	37.1	15.2	8.6
18.	The SSSC helps me reinforce the language learning we do in class.	12.4	33.4	34.2	13.3	6.7
19.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my English.	13.3	30.5	29.5	21.9	4.8

20.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my reading skills.	13.3	27.7	38.1	17.1	3.8
	STATEMENT	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Unsure (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
21.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my listening skills.	14.3	28.6	29.5	23.8	3.8
22.	Spending time in SSSC helps me develop my speaking skills.	12.4	21.0	32.4	26.6	7.6
23.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my writing skills.	7.6	23.8	29.5	30.5	8.6
24.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my grammar.	8.6	27.6	36.2	15.2	12.4
25.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my vocabulary.	10.5	32.4	34.2	12.4	10.5
26.	The SSSC personnel are supportive when I am in the SSSC.	14.3	29.5	25.7	19.0	11.5

Table 4.1 shows that the students gave positive responses to the majority of the items. Only the items 14 (I use the graded readers and reference books in the SSSC), 22 (Spending time in SSSC helps me develop my speaking skills) and 23 (Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my writing skills.) were negatively responded. Item 14 was rejected with 40% D/SD (Disagree/Strongly Disagree), 34.3% A/SA

(Agree/Strongly Agree) and 25.7 U(Unsure). Item 22 had 34.2% D/SD, 33.4% A/SA and 32.4% U. The last item which has low percentage of agreement is the item 23, with 39.1% D/SD, 31.4% A/SA and 29.5% U. The rest of the items' responses were all given positively.

The item with the highest agreement was 8 (Out-of-class tasks, which make me use the Internet, help me learn English.) with 78.1% A/SA, 1% D/SD and 20.9% U. Item 8 was followed by 9 (Studying on my own outside the classroom makes me a better language learner.) with 73.3% A/SA, 10.5% D/SD and 16.2% U. The third highest positive percentage is for item 7 (Out-of-class tasks, which make me use additional books or materials, help me develop my English.) with 71.5% A/SA, 5.8% D/SD and 22.7% U. For these items that students have high percentages of agreement, even the students who are not sure about the statement are more than the ones disagreeing.

On the other hand, item 1 (I study English outside the classroom on my own.) with 65.7% A/SA has a positive response from students participated in this study. Item 2 (I go to the lessons well prepared.) with 58.1% A/SA, item 3 (Doing self-study outside the classroom has a positive effect on my success as a language learner.) with 67.6%, item 4 (I feel I am learning English outside the classroom on my own.) with 62.8%, item 5(The teacher has an important role in supporting me to learn English outside the classroom.) with 62.8%, item 6 (The teacher gives homework that helps me learn English on my own outside the classroom.) with 70.5%, item 10 (I use the SSSC in the English Preparatory School.) with 65.7%, item 11 (Doing self-study in the SSSC is an activity which helps me learn English outside the classroom.) with 54.3%, item 13 (I use the *listening facilities* in the SSSC.) with 48.5%, item 19 (Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my English.) with 43.8% and item 26

(The SSSC personnel are supportive when I am in the SSSC.) with 43.8% had positive response from the majority of the students.

The majority of students responded as ‘Unsure’ to total 11 items. The percentage of U for item 12 (I use the *multi-media facilities* in the SSSC.) is 38.1%, item 14 (I use *the graded readers and reference books* in the SSSC.) is 25.7%, item 15 (I use *the self-study materials section* (e.g. grammar, reading, vocabulary, etc.) in the SSSC.) is 28.6% same with A(Agree), item 16 (I use *the speaking section* in the SSSC.) is 33.3%, item 17 (I use *the satellite and video section* in the SSSC.) is 37.1%, item 18 (The SSSC helps me reinforce the language learning we do in class.) is 34.2%, item 20 (Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my reading skills.) is 38.1%, item 21 (Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my listening skills.) is 29.5%, item 22 (Spending time in SSSC helps me develop my speaking skills.) is 32.4%, item 24 (Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my grammar.) is 36.2% and item 25 (Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my vocabulary.) is 34.2% neutral.

Table 4.2: The results of closed items 27 and 29 in the student questionnaire

	Question	Most days %	2 or 3 times a week %	Once a week %	Hardly ever %	Never %
27.	How often do you use the Internet outside the classroom in your English language studies?	46.7	32.4	14.3	5.6	1.0
29.	How often do you visit the Student`s Self-Study Center (SSSC)?	19.0	16.2	58.1	3.8	2.9

As shown in Table 4.2, 46.7% of respondents most days use the internet in their English language studies outside the classroom. The students’ 32.4% use 2 or 3 times

a week, 14.3% use once a week, 5.6% use hardly ever and only 1% never make use of internet for their English language development. 19% of the students state that they visit SSSC most days, 16.2% say that they go there 2 or 3 times a week, 58.1% mention that they visit SSSC once a week, 3.8% hardly ever and 2.9% never go to SSSC.

There are 2 more closed items in student questionnaire which cannot be added in tables because of their different format. In regards to their difference, closed items 28 and 30 of student questionnaire are going to be explained by referring to the frequencies gathered from statistical analysis as follows:

Item 28: When using the Internet outside the classroom to help you practice or learn English where do you prefer to work?

-At home -In the university library -In the SSSC -No preferences -
Other

The students' majority 68.6% prefer to work at home, 13.3% prefer to work in the university library, 14.3% of the respondents prefer to work in SSSC, 1.9% said no preferences and 1.9% chose other but did not mention any places.

Item 30: I spend _____ hour(s) a week in the SSSC.

The responses were 1 with 66.7%, 2 with 17.1%, 3 with 8.6%, 4 with 1.9%, more than 5 with 4.7% and 6 with 1% of students.

4.1.2 Open-ended Items

There are 5 open-ended items in this section of the questionnaire to be answered by the participants, honestly. These questions are expected to give participants freedom to express their ideas and perceptions about studying outside the classroom and SSSC's resources, tasks and activities.

For the first question (What do you do outside the classroom to learn English? Please list them.), 60% of the students stated that they watch movies in English, 13.3% said that they listen to music in English, 6.7% mentioned that they read English books, 15.2% prefer to chat with their friends in English and 4.8% of the students reported that they play games to learn English outside the classroom.

In response to second question (What do you do when you go to the SSSC? Please list them.), 45.7% of the participants claimed that they watch movies in English, 13.3% stated that they listen to music in English, 3.8% said that they read English books, 32.4% reported that they do My English Lab, 4.8% of the respondents expressed prefer to play games in the SSSC.

Concerning the third question (Does the SSSC help you to develop your English? If no, why? If yes, please explain how.), 36.2% of the students mentioned that it does not, because of the out dated materials, 58.1% reported that it does help with the variety of good materials and resources, 1% said that yes it does, because of the staff's guidance and 4.7% of the students left this question unanswered.

Regarding the fourth question (Are the SSSC resources, tasks and activities sufficient and effective? Please explain.), 18.1% of the participants answered negatively that the materials and resources are not useful, updated and organized properly, 71.4% stated that the materials and activities are good enough, 3.8% mentioned that they need the staff to help them with the materials most of the time and 6.7% did not answer the question.

For the fifth and last question (What can be done to make the SSSC better? Please give your suggestions.), 9.5% of participants mentioned that there is need for a continuous staff improvement programme, 17.1% stated that more recent materials should be added, 34.3% claimed that refreshments should be allowed in SSSC, 1.9% reported the need for more computers, 31.4% suggested a new design for SSSC's arrangement and 5.7% of the students left this question unanswered.

Overall, the results for questionnaire indicate that some students are happy with SSSC and its facilities and believe that learner autonomy is being fostered in FLEPS but other students want modification, update and more responsible and helpful staff in SSSC.

4.2 Results of the Instructor Interviews

Q1. How can you describe learner autonomy or autonomous learning?

The interviewees were asked to define and describe learner autonomy. All the respondents explained clearly what learner autonomy is. Although they had their own way of definition and explanation, they all met at the point that the autonomous learners take the responsibility of their own learning and improvement.

For instance, Instructor 4 responded as:

Autonomous learning is when students take responsibility of their own learning. They realize the need for shouldering their academic responsibility outside the class, when they are on their own they put more effort and devote their time to learning. [Inst.4]

Q2. What can a teacher do to promote autonomous learning outside the classroom?

The instructors, that were interviewed, believed that giving the students some homework will help promote learner autonomy. It is open for discussion if the suggestion they have made is true or effective, but half of them agreed with the idea that giving assignment promotes learner autonomy. Four of them suggested guidance, two of them mentioned technology and on-line materials and one of the instructors suggested students to find themselves friends, who are native speakers of English language, to practice while spending time together.

In response to this question, Instructor 7 said:

Firstly teachers should stop spoon-feeding; this is the major problem of all of us, especially in Cyprus. Reasons being that we all grew up being spoon-fed by our parents. If we stop the act of spoon-feeding our students and handover more responsibilities to children or the students, I think their autonomy and learning independence will be increased. [Ins.7]

Q3. Do you think that you promote learner autonomy in your teaching? If yes, why? If no, why not? Please explain how (by focusing especially on what students do outside the classroom).

Eight of the instructors answered this question with an unsure style and said that they try their best with their excuses like the curriculum to follow or the limited time. One of them shared his/her complaints about the students that they are not willing to learn outside. Only one of the instructors said that s/he does promote autonomy, at least does what s/he can do.

In regards with this question Instructor 6 expressed his/her ideas as:

Actually I try my best to promote learner autonomy in my teaching. Because the things we do in class are not enough. That's why I may ask them to do exercises related to their levels outside or I just give them texts to read outside the classroom. [Inst. 6]

Q4. How do you encourage your students to use the SSSC in the FLEPS?

Only one instructor mentioned that s/he doesn't encourage students to go and use the SSSC, because s/he is not aware of the available materials or facilities in SSSC. Rest of them stated that they encourage learners to use SSSC regularly, by listing them the available and useful materials and facilities in there. Three of them mentioned My English Lab as an encouragement, two of them Graded Reader Books. One of them thinks that SSSC is a place to practice, another instructor believes that it is a good quality place to do listening activities. Two of them said they let their students to find the materials or facilities appropriate for themselves. All of the instructors have good feelings about the internet access, but one of them complained about the students that they use the internet for wrong purposes. Also two instructors stated that the students get lost in SSSC and need their guidance.

For instance Instructor 9 said that:

Previously in EMU, SSSC works differently, but now as you know we are in a computer age. The materials in the SSSC are all paper based and students usually get bored. And it's difficult to take photocopies of them. What I usually try to do in my SSSC hour is, beforehand I go to the SSSC, find some useful materials for them, reserve them on the staff desk and ask my students in groups to work on them. [Inst. 9]

Q5. How often do you think your students use the SSSC?

The instructors were not happy with the fact but they all agreed that the students use SSSC once a week in their scheduled hour. Even, one of the instructors said that s/he forces them to go SSSC in that scheduled hour. Only two of them stated that some of the students rarely visit SSSC after class hours, especially before exams.

For this question, Instructor 10 stated that:

Not often I am afraid to say. Once a week we take them to the SSSC, under our guidance. Apart from that, certain students does use, but the others unfortunately don't. [Inst. 10]

Q6. Does the SSSC help them to develop autonomy? If yes, why? And if no why not? Please explain how.

For this question only one instructor has a totally positive idea that it is helpful for students to develop autonomy. The rest of the instructors believe that the learners need to be guided and need to be motivated or have the willing to get benefit from SSSC. They mentioned that if the students know what is SSSC for and use it properly, then they will develop autonomy with the help of SSSC.

In response to this question, Instructor 5 said:

SSSC dose help some students improve their level of autonomy in learning English. If the student himself is autonomous to learning, then he tends to use the SSSC more frequently. The reason been that, if the student is autonomous in any way he will know that there are listening, reading and writing activities awaiting him, hence the need for extra lessons aside normal lecture periods. So he goes there to improve those aspects of English language he find himself deficient. SSSC is a place or an environment that create a perfect opportunity for learning autonomy to be improved but not all the students are ready for this. [Inst. 5]

Q7. What is the rationale behind establishing the SSSC in the FLEPS?

For this question, nine of the instructors responded similarly that it was to give students an area to work on their own and foster autonomous learning. By using the materials and facilities provided in SSSC on their free time and on their own, the students were expected to become autonomous learners. Only one of the instructors stated that it was aimed to help students.

For instance, Instructor 9 responded as:

The rationale behind it was the autonomy, increasing the students' autonomy. But with the development of the technology, I think it needs updating to reach to that target. [Inst. 9]

Q8. What kinds of resources, tasks and activities are available in the SSSC?

All the instructors stated that there are a lot of useful materials in the SSSC. They mentioned the paper based materials and computers with internet connection, reading materials, exam type tests, listening activities, movies, TV with English channels and on-line materials to practice. One of them said that there are answer keys for all practice materials that the students can check their own performance and reflect according to their results.

Instructor 5 responded to this question as:

It's been long that I visited the SSSC last, but never the less, I am quite sure that there are actually quite good stuff that I personally observed and noticed. The books as well as the practice materials are there and more so, there is TV showing English channels for the benefit of the users. If students go there at least once a day, they may just watch something interesting for 10-20 minutes, which will obviously be of good benefit to them. There are DVDs for them to watch film and I think there are tasks related to these. There is a listening room so that they can practice listening such as dialogs, completing tasks. [Inst. 5]

Q9. Are the SSSC resources, tasks and activities in your school sufficient and effective? Please explain.

Half of the instructors think that the resources, tasks and activities in SSSC are good enough but can be improved. Other half believed that there is an urgent need to updating the materials. Two of the instructors stated that there should be staff members to guide students and help them while practicing when they need. One of

them mentioned the electronic problems that all the computers and their accessories like speakers, microphones should be working properly, with a good internet connection.

For this question Instructor 3 replied as:

The students say they are not. The paper based resources are out of date. To be honest I don't really know what is available on the computers, but I think they may need to update the resources in them too. [Inst. 3]

Q10. What can be improved in the SSSC to enhance English language learning?

Two of the instructors replied this question stating that the teachers or the staff in SSSC needs to be more motivating and knowledgeable to be able to guide and give advices to students successfully. One of them mentioned that there is need to provide follow-up activities to practice materials. Six instructors said that there is need to updating materials. In addition to paper based materials, one of the instructors mentioned the need for technological improvement and one of them stated that there is need for authentic materials and real life skills like critical thinking should be encouraged.

The answer of Instructor 5 is as follows:

I think more up to date materials should be used there, mostly computer work. Because that's how they learn these days. More technology should be used. May be interactive data bases can be used. [Inst. 5]

Q11. Do you think that the students who use the SSSC more are more autonomous learners?

Half of the instructors gave the answer of 'yes' to this question with a condition mentioning the reason they visit SSSC. They think it depends on why the students go there. If they are going there to get benefit from the materials and facilities, their answer is positive. Four of them directly accepted that the ones using SSSC more are more autonomous and only one of them thinks that it doesn't mean that they are more autonomous if they go to SSSC more. S/he mentioned that it is possible to be more autonomous by doing extra practice on their own at other places like; in their home, library or even in a cafe.

In regards with this question Instructor 10 said that:

Depends on how they use it. If we just take it from the way they are using it at the moment because they are forced to use it and also because of attendance, No. I don't think we are getting the fruit of the centre well. We just take them there and pass the time. They are just passing the time I am afraid. May be only few are gaining but the rest are wasting their time there. [Inst. 10]

Q12. Do you think that the students who are more autonomous in learning are more successful in language learning?

All the instructors accepted that autonomous learners are more successful language learners. After stating that autonomy makes learners more successful in language learning, one of them added that it is also possible to be successful by studying hard, having the talent to learn or being regularly in contact with the teacher.

For this question, Instructor 1 responded as:

Yes, definitely more successful. Because they are likely to be researching, looking, taking further steps before been told or steps to understand the lesson and concept better. [Inst. 1]

The results of the instructors' interviews and their responses for the semi-structured interview questions were as given above.

4.3 Summary

In this chapter students' questionnaire and teachers' interview results were presented. First section showed the results for student questionnaires with tables and second section gave the results of the teacher interviews by referring to the transcriptions of interviews. The results showed that both students and the instructors have positive feelings towards learner autonomy in theory, but having problems with putting it into practice. Also the findings proved that the SSSC is a good resource center but needs to be updated and renewed in order to reach its goals.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the results of the study under the research questions by referring to the relevant literature. It also explains the pedagogical implications of the study. Finally, it focuses on the limitations of the study and presents some suggestions for further studies.

5.1 Discussion of Results

In this section, the research questions are answered one by one according to the results obtained from the analysis of data which were gathered through student questionnaires and instructor interviews in relation to the relevant literature.

5.1.1 Research Question 1: What do the EPS students do outside the classroom to develop learner autonomy?

The results obtained from the student questionnaire reveal that the students are willing and trying their best to learn outside the classroom. They reported different kinds of activities that they do outside the classroom towards language learning.

Most of the items which mention doing extra practice outside the classroom towards learning English, have agreement from majority of the participants. For example, item 2 (I go to the lessons well prepared.) with 58.1% positive responses either 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree' showed that the students get prepared for the lessons by studying before coming to school, item 6 (The teacher gives homework that helps me learn English on my own outside the classroom.) with 70.5% positive responses

reported that students spend time to do their homework outside the classroom before coming to school, item 7 (Out-of-class tasks, which make me use additional books or materials, help me develop my English.) with 71.5% positive responses stated that the students are using extra materials to practice English outside the classroom, item 8 (Out-of-class tasks, which make me use the Internet, help me learn English.) with 78.1% (the highest) positive responses and item 27 (How often do you use the Internet outside the classroom in your English language studies?) with 46.7% ‘Most days’ responses and item 28 (When using the Internet outside the classroom to help you practice or learn English where do you prefer to work?) with 68.6% ‘At home’ responses showed that the students are happy to use the internet most of the days towards their language practices at home, item 10 (I use the SSSC in the English Preparatory School.) with 65.7%, item 11 (Doing self-study in the SSSC is an activity which helps me learn English outside the classroom.) with 54.3%, item 12 (I use the *multi-media facilities* in the SSSC.) with 38.1%, item 13 (I use the *listening facilities* in the SSSC.) with 48.5%, item 15 (I use *the self-study materials section* (e.g. grammar, reading, vocabulary, etc.) in the SSSC.) with 28.6%, item 16 (I use *the speaking section* in the SSSC.) with 33.3% and item 17 (I use *the satellite and video section* in the SSSC.) with 37.1% positive responses proved that students go to the SSSC and make use of the variety of materials and facilities to practice and improve their English.

All the information coming from the student questionnaire above proves that the students are trying to do self-study outside the classroom but there is a huge barrier between them and being autonomous, which is the lack of knowledge. They need to be guided very well to be able to look for what they need, how they can reach it and what is the way of dealing with these questions. As Chan (2001) found out that even

the students are already acting and performing as successful autonomous learners, they are still depending on their teacher to guide them towards autonomy.

5.1.2 Research Question 2: What do the EPS instructors do to foster learner autonomy outside the classroom?

According to the results obtained from instructor interviews, although they all know what learner autonomy is, they are struggling while fostering it. As a proof, for the instructor interview question 2 (What can a teacher do to promote autonomous learning outside the classroom?), half of the instructors stated that assigning homework promotes autonomy, four of them claimed that guidance has an important role in promoting learning autonomy and a couple of them mentioned technology and on-line materials to promote learner autonomy. These all can be helpful for fostering learner autonomy, but without giving the students the freedom, the opportunity to be able to make decisions on their learning process, these suggestions will not work as expected. Three instructors mentioned the curriculum and the limited time during the interviews, which is a big barrier for instructors to be more flexible and give students more freedom. This is a similar result to Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012a) that they stated the fixed curriculum and lack of understanding about independence among students as the biggest limitation to encourage autonomy even they are interested in and put importance on learner autonomy. This comes up with the idea that it is not only about the knowledge, but more emphasis should be on actions towards autonomy and encouraging students to become autonomous throughout their educational lives which will lead to success. The instructors should be aware of the steps to be taken to become autonomous and also ready to share their experiences.

5.1.3 Research Question 3: What are the EPS students and instructors' perceptions of the SSSC at EPS and its role in promoting learner autonomy?

In general, according to the results obtained from both the student questionnaire and instructor interviews, it can be said that students are using the SSSC and trying to get benefit from it. Students also believe that the resources and facilities are good in SSSC but there are useless sections and sections to be updated and/or organized. In contrast, the instructors think and reported that the SSSC must be renewed and materials should be up to date in order to motivate students and be beneficial for them. And also there is need for improvement in staff to be better in guidance. One of the interviewee explained his/her perceptions towards SSSC and its facilities by stating “the idea of English Language Learning has changed so much from just doing structured questions. It’s now so much different. The emphasis is on production rather than receptive skills. The students who go to the SSSC don’t really have the chance to experience real life like speaking with someone or producing a piece of writing and then showing it to someone. In my head the idea of SSSC is where there are a couple of people that students actually engage with. Students can get help, guidance from these people. Right now to an extent, to get them prepared to the exam; yes they are sufficient but to learn English, no, not sure”. Another reply to an interview question shows the instructor’s feelings towards the SSSC’s effectiveness on promoting learner autonomy, which is “SSSC is so paper based. Most of the resources are paper based. For this new generation technology is more important. We don’t really have a lot of learning tools on the computers apart from the internet. But students again don’t know where to look on the internet to learn. So because of that may be right now the way it is doesn’t help students develop learner autonomy”. It has been agreed and repeated in literature that the technology has an undeniable

effect on motivating students towards language learning. For example it is stated in Schmenk (2005) that the enlarging importance of computers in language learning environments and developing technology in education world, has a positive impact on learner autonomy. Another study by Bax (2003) on the same issue mentions the importance of technology and computers in education in future as the usage of coursebooks, pen and pencil in classrooms now. We will get used to them and will not realize the computers in classroom as something interesting.

5.1.4 Research Question 4: What do they suggest for the improvement of the SSSC at EPS?

The students and the instructors have some similar suggestions for improving SSSC and also they have a couple of different ideas as well. Almost all of the participants agree that the materials, especially the paper based materials need to be updated. Another point which they both agree that need to be improved is the computer based facilities. There are both students and instructors who believe that the idea of changing the design of the SSSC and the sitting arrangement would be a good improvement. At the same time they mentioned that the staff should be better facilitators and guiders. Regarding the issue of staff, they suggested a continuous improvement programme.

The fifth item (What can be done to make the SSSC better? Please give your suggestions.) in the open-ended questions section of the student questionnaire, is directly related to this research question and the highest percentage (34.3%) of agreement among students was on the suggestion of allowing refreshments in SSSC, which means the student want to be able to eat and drink in there. Second highest agreement was on redesigning the SSSC, which proves that the students are not happy with the physical organization of sections in SSSC. Other suggestions were

adding more recent paper/computer based materials, staff continuous improvement and the need for more computers. Jarvis (2012) found out that the students' needs, preferences and learning styles must be taken into consideration while organizing a place and preparing or choosing materials for them. Some may be happy with learning on papers, others may prefer to work on computers.

On the other hand, in instructor interview questions, number 10 (What can be improved in the SSSC to enhance English language learning?) was focusing on the same area. The responses were differentiated according to the instructors' observations on SSSC's resources and facilities. Half of the instructors directly mentioned that the materials need to be updated. Another suggestion was to put more computer-based activities and also computers in SSSC to make students work on them more often. Moreover, real-life skills like critical thinking were mentioned to be targeted by adding some authentic materials and tasks in the SSSC facilities in order to make students gain real life skills. There was another suggestion which is different from the rest, indicating the need for follow-up activities for the paper based practice materials.

To sum up, both students and the instructors have complaints about SSSC and its facilities in some ways. They are all unique individuals who interpret different situations according to their own perspectives. That is why there are divergent suggestions for same problems. There are inspiring and promising suggestions which can be taken into consideration by administration.

5.2 Practical Implications

The findings of the study clearly show that there is an urgent need for updating the materials, resources and facilities of the SSSC. The students are not happy with the paper based materials because they are out dated and they are not getting benefit from computer based materials because they are not familiar with the useful, beneficial sources on computers.

The design of the SSSC needs to be changed as well because both the students and the instructors are not happy with it, so the place itself does not motivate them.

There should be a staff continuous improvement programme in order to make the staff more knowledgeable, better guider and more successful facilitator. They also need to be good organizers and managers to be able to manage some instant activities for the students.

Also the instructors should be informed and practiced about how to encourage students and foster learner autonomy.

5.3 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations for this study was the small number of participants. Only 10 instructors volunteered to participate in the study, and the students who participated were only from EPS 103, EPS 104 and EPS 114 levels. Another limitation was the lack of observations which could have given the researcher a chance to observe the students while using the facilities in the SSSC. On the other hand, the researcher did not analyze the materials and resources in the SSSC so the lack of document analysis can be considered as another limitation.

5.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The first and the most important suggestion for further research is to use all the data collection instruments possible in order to be able to triangulate the data and gather more comprehensible results. In this regard, observations in SSSC, student interviews, student and instructor diaries or self-reports can be used in future studies as data collection instruments. Secondly, it would be better for the researchers to conduct similar studies with larger sample size of participants and include student participants from all levels of EPS in their studies. Also instructors of all levels would be better to participate in the study in addition to the staff of SSSC. Lastly, in future studies the results obtained from different levels of students and also instructors can be compared to investigate into whether or not students' proficiency level affects their study habits or what they do outside the classroom to develop their autonomy in learning English.

5.5 Conclusion

The findings of the study clearly show that both the students and the instructors of EPS have positive feelings towards autonomy as a term. When it comes to giving a definition to the term the instructors are very successful, but they have big problems when it comes to encouraging and/or promoting autonomy. In other words, while the instructors have sufficient theoretical knowledge about autonomy and how to promote it, they experience some difficulties in putting this theoretical knowledge into practice. In contrast, the learners may not be as good as instructors to give a speech about autonomy, but in performance they reported that they are doing their best. Actually they are heavily depending on the instructors' guidance but at least they do some positive activities outside the classroom. Watching movies or listening

to music in English might be funny or enjoyable for them, but it makes them get used to the real usage of the target language.

The SSSC is a perfect place for students to practice and improve themselves with variety of materials and resources. In fact, even most of the materials are out-dated, it is still a useful and beneficial place for students. The point for the instructors is to find a way to make them realize the benefits of using a self-study center regularly. At this point, the staff of the SSSC has an important role. They need to organize weekly schedules for students to make them wonder about next week. They can organize instant competitions except the ones already on the students' time-table. They can find useful links for students and suggest them to check. They can easily download or upload sample tests, reading, listening or writing activities. They can organize a role-play scenario for students to work in groups and perform every week etc.

Another improvement for the SSSC might be a chat room, where a group of staff or instructors are responsible to chat with students in English for a limited time. They can regulate some rules for this room that if you use another language you will have to leave and cannot get in for the rest of the day.

These above mentioned issues are some possible improvements that can be done in the SSSC to make the students more willing to visit it or use the facilities in the SSSC more effectively and more frequently.

On the other hand the instructors must be informed and trained in order to foster autonomy. The teachers usually use assignments issued to students to encourage autonomous learning, which is a real proof that they are not aware of the approaches,

techniques and ways of encouraging learners to be autonomous and take the responsibility of their own learning.

In conclusion, the materials and resources of the SSSC should be updated, renewed or improved in order to get the students' attention when they go there. The use of technology might be increased. The instructors in the SSSC need to be trained to be able to guide, facilitate and manage the students. The instructors must be trained towards fostering learner autonomy. With all these improvements and changes, and the raised willingness of students, FLEPS and the SSSC can work more effectively towards their vision and foster autonomy as expected and indicated in their vision.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Student Questionnaire

Dear student,

I am an MA student, and as my MA thesis I am carrying out a research study entitled *Fostering Learner Autonomy Outside the Classroom at an English Preparatory School*. The purpose of this questionnaire is to find out how you study English outside the classroom, your views about the SSSC in the English Preparatory School, and how you use it for your English language studies. Your individual responses will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. Please be informed that you can withdraw from the study anytime you want to. Also, if you need further information, you can contact with me or my thesis supervisor.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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--- **CONSENT FORM**

Upon reading the information given above, I have understood the purpose of this research study and how my responses will be used; so, I agree to participate in this study by answering the questions in the student questionnaire.

Name-surname: -----

Signature: -----

Date: -----

Questionnaire for Students

I Background information

1- Age: (please specify)

2- Gender: Male Female

3- Nationality: (please specify)

4- Native language: Turkish Arabic Other: (please specify)

5- Level: EPS 101 EPS 102 EPS 103 EPS 104 Other: (please specify)

II The Questionnaire

Directions: Please give your opinion about the following statements by putting a cross (X) as appropriate for each item.

STATEMENT	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Unsure 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
1. I study English outside the classroom on my own.					
2. I go to the lessons well prepared.					
3. Doing self-study outside the classroom has a positive effect on my success as a language learner.					
4. I feel I am learning English outside the classroom on my own.					
5. The teacher has an important role in supporting me to learn English outside the classroom.					
6. The teacher gives homework that helps me learn English on my own outside the classroom.					
7. Out-of-class tasks, which make me use additional books or materials, help me develop my English.					
8. Out-of-class tasks, which make me use the Internet, help me learn English.					
9. Studying on my own outside the classroom makes me a better language learner.					
10. I use the SSSC in the English Preparatory School.					

	STATEMENT	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Unsure 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
11.	Doing self-study in the SSSC is an activity which helps me learn English outside the classroom.					
12.	I use the <i>multi-media facilities</i> in the SSSC.					
13.	I use the <i>listening facilities</i> in the SSSC.					
14.	I use the <i>graded readers and reference books</i> in the SSSC.					
15.	I use the <i>self-study materials section</i> (e.g. grammar, reading, vocabulary, etc.) in the SSSC.					
16.	I use the <i>speaking section</i> in the SSSC.					
17.	I use the <i>satellite and video section</i> in the SSSC.					
18.	The SSSC helps me reinforce the language learning we do in class.					
19.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my English.					
20.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my reading skills.					
21.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my listening skills.					
22.	Spending time in SSSC helps me develop my speaking skills.					
23.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my writing skills.					
24.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my grammar.					
25.	Spending time in the SSSC helps me develop my vocabulary.					
26.	The SSSC personnel are supportive when I am in the SSSC.					

27. How often do you use the Internet outside the classroom in your English language studies?

- Most days
 Two or three times a week
 Once a week
 Hardly ever
 Never

28. When using the Internet outside the classroom to help you practice or learn English where do you prefer to work?

- At home In the university library In the SSSC No preferences
 Other (please specify)

29. How often do you visit the Student`s Self-Study Center (SSSC)?

- Most days Two or three times a week Once a week Hardly ever
 Never

30. I spend _____ hour(s) a week in the SSSC.

III Open-ended Questions

1. What do you do outside the classroom to learn English? Please list them.

2. What do you do when you go to the SSSC? Please list them.

3. Does the SSSC help you to develop your English? If no, why not? If yes, please explain how.

4. Are the SSSC resources, tasks and activities sufficient and effective? Please explain.

5. What can be done to make the SSSC better? Please give your suggestions.

Appendix B: Instructor Interviews

Dear instructor,

I am an MA student, and as my MA thesis I am carrying out a research study entitled *Fostering Learner Autonomy Outside the Classroom at an English Preparatory School*. The purpose of this interview is to identify your views about fostering learner autonomy outside the classroom, and the SSSC's effectiveness on promoting learner autonomy in Eastern Mediterranean University, English Preparatory School. Also, this interview aims to obtain your suggestions for the improvement of the SSSC in your school (FLEPS). The interview will be audio-recorded, and your individual responses will be kept confidential and used for research purposes only. Please be informed that you can withdraw from the study anytime you want to. Also, if you need further information, you can contact with me or my thesis supervisor.

Thank you for your cooperation.

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- **CONSENT FORM**

Upon reading the information given above, I have understood the main purpose of this research study and how my audio-recorded responses will be used; so, I agree to participate in this study by responding to the questions in the instructor interview.

Name-surname: -----

Signature: -----

Date: -----

Semi-structured Interview Questions for Teachers

Part I – Background information

Age:

Gender:

Years of teaching experience:

Nationality:

Mother tongue:

The last qualification received:

Part II - Questions

1. How can you describe learner autonomy or autonomous learning?
2. What can a teacher do to promote autonomous learning outside the classroom?
3. Do you think that you promote learner autonomy in your teaching? If no, why? If yes, please explain how (by focusing especially on what you do outside the classroom).
4. How do you encourage your students to use the SSSC in the FLEPS?
5. How often do you think your students use the SSSC?
6. Does the SSSC help them to develop autonomy? If no, why? If yes, please explain how.
7. What is the rationale behind establishing the SSSC in the FLEPS?
8. What kinds of resources, tasks and activities are available in the SSSC?
9. Are the SSSC resources, tasks and activities in your school sufficient and effective? Please explain.
10. What can be improved in the SSSC to enhance English language learning?
11. Do you think that the students who use the SSSC more are more autonomous learners?
12. Do you think that the students who are more autonomous in language learning are more successful in language learning?

Appendix C: Transcription of Interviews

Interview 1:

Q1. It involves students' thinking, evaluating, taking charge of their learning and thinking about next steps and this is where we guide them.

Q2. We need to first help students to realize that they could learn outside the classroom. We need to promote and show them what these are first. And then take a step back and hopefully they will continue to keep searching and looking into and then following up on what they need.

Q3. I'd like to think that I do. When I go into the class I have an objective in my mind. And after my 2-3 class hours I have a checklist, I expect students to turn around and at the end when I believe we achieved this, I expect them to reflect and see if they can do it. And then they look at the objective and evaluate themselves and then they can say yes they can do or no they can't do. Then we see the problem and put a question mark there and we start to think what we can do to understand this better. And then they give some references (grammar) from their book. Or they use the main course book. They don't really mention anything except their course books, nothing from internet or SSSC.

Q4. We tell them what's available but how much we actually promote is a question as teachers. Because there are a lot of resources there. There is resources on computers or materials which they need to touch and feel. But do we promote it enough, question mark.

Q5. They definitely use it once a week because they have a scheduled hour. I am not sure how much they use it after that. Maybe we could be promoting it more like I said when they have for example reading problems, I've told them that they can go to the SSSC but then I left it there, haven't actually followed or asked them anything.

Q6. There is so much there. They just don't know how to use it and how to benefit from it, so it's not in the actual nature of them to go and look and find something for themselves. It's more like OK tell me. I think they need more steps to take like if you have this problem go check this part to know what is where. Right now there is so much in there but they just go and sit on the computers and do something there. I think they need a bit more guidance.

Q7. Autonomy. To encourage autonomy, to put resources in one place for students and teachers. So we can use together. That's it.

Q8. Lots. We have got everything separated into skills. So if they want to focus on a specific area, skill like I said there are materials they can touch and feel if they prefer. We have exam type materials for ones who want to look and evaluate themselves. Everything has answer keys so they can do the tasks, check them and then reflect to it. We have got lots of materials on-line. We have British Council Corners also and computers as well.

Q9. Sufficient, yes. Effective, no. Because we have so much but we don't make use of them. Students are not really aware of how to make use of them and benefit from them. They know that they are there. I think we have issues with promotion or in terms of the center itself guiding the students.

Q10. Like I said, if the students would like to do test, they do the test and see what the problem is but don't follow up. That's where the problem is. They need some kind of guidance. At the end OK, how many problems are there and what should you do next. There is no next step. That's my personal opinion.

Q11. If they obviously know how to get benefit from SSSC, yes.

Q12. Yes, definitely more successful. Because they are likely to be researching, looking, taking next steps.

Interview 2:

Q1. I can say that students who can learn and study without the help of teacher, are autonomous learners.

Q2. To tell your students to go to the centers like SSSC and do the tasks there alone.

Q3. I guess so. I am not sure, because the students that I am teaching now are not autonomous and it is very difficult to promote learner autonomy now.

Q4. I always tell them to use the resources in the SSSC, in the open-access hour and by looking at their achievement results to find out their weak areas and focus on those areas. If they are weak in listening, go there find the listening materials appropriate for their level and do the tasks.

Q5. Now, never. Because they are repeat students and the motivation is very low.

Q6. Yes, if they can use it appropriately, yes it helps.

Q7. We organized the center for students to use without any help of the teachers. To be able to find the materials by themselves, to be able to do the practice and then check their results.

Q8. We have a lot of resources, like practice materials. All skills, speaking, listening, writing, vocabulary. We have reading books, graded reader, we have DVDs.

Q9. Right now, we need some more resources because they are not up to date, like listening or speaking materials are not exam type but they are effective.

Q10. Maybe the listening and speaking materials can be updated.

Q11. Of course.

Q12. Of course, because they are aware of their weak areas and they can improve their weak areas by themselves.

Interview 3:

Q1. I think that something which should come from inside the student. They should want to leave the classroom and go and do some extra learning and know what the extra learning they need to do. They shouldn't need to be told by the teacher. They should want to improve themselves in the areas they need. And also continuous assessment and homework is important. If the teacher gives them homework they should be completing this task and not just leaving it there.

Q2. I think to promote autonomous learning as I just said before by giving them homework, by giving them continuous assessment tasks. In the Prep School here, we have a portfolio and we have some teachers that control that portfolio a lot. They do every task in class. I don't believe in doing every task in class. I believe in doing initial tasks in class, I will check their work and when it comes to writing a second draft some teachers do this in class but I tell them it's their responsibility to do it at home on their own time. So I believe that not doing everything in class, not trying to control the students and giving them some responsibility. That's also the same giving them homework but not saying have you done it, have you done it. It's their responsibility to go and do their homework.

Q3. Yes, I try to. I try to not to being too controlling. I do believe in letting them get on with things and not interfering too much, giving them the choice to do what they want to do. So yes I do try and promote it to the best that I can.

Q4. Sometimes we have an on-line resource which the students need to use called My English Lab. We encourage them to do this in the SSSC because (Actually I

know that this is not really learner autonomy) if they are going to be autonomous in the SSSC then you let them do what they want. And then if I believe in learner autonomy then I should be letting them do what they want. But there are students who lost in SSSC who just sit and chat or use their phone. Then I try to guide them by giving options like My English Lab, Portfolio, watch movie, to do tasks on computer, do exam practice. I don't tell them do this, I give them options to guide them if they are lost but I don't force them to do a particular thing.

Q5. Well, they have 1 scheduled hour on their time-table and I think this is most probably only time they use the SSSC once a week, because they don't like being in the SSSC.

Q6. I don't think so. They see it as the hour where they have to go as part of their schedule. They are being there for attendance and passing that 1 hour. That's why I try to guide them and give them a variety of options that they can do in the SSSC.

Q7. It was to give students a place to go and study after class. Not all the students have access to computers or internet. So it gives them the opportunity to use the computer and the internet. If they have a free class, if their teacher is absent they can go to the SSSC. We as teacher have a task in the SSSC we can take them there, we can schedule an extra hour. So it's a bit of variety from being in the classroom all the time for students. It's like being in a lab in department.

Q8. Well there are resource books, story books, films on the computers, magazines, tasks on the computers, example exams, TV. They can't change the channel, it is BBC all the time. They can do listening activities.

Q9. The students say they are not. The paper based resources are out of date. To be honest I don't really know what is available on the computers. I think they may need updating, too.

Q10. The resources need to be updated.

Q11. Yes and no. If the student is using the SSSC in their free time they are more autonomous. But if the students don't use the SSSC, it doesn't mean that they are not autonomous. It could be that they are doing additional study in the main library or in their bedroom. Even chatting in a café with their friends is beneficial because everyone has a different way of studying autonomously according to their personality. Someone may prefer to study in a café with a group of friends and that's autonomous, too.

Q12. Yes, I do believe that. Because they know how to take responsibility and they know what they need to work on.

Interview 4:

Q1. Autonomous learning is when students take responsibility of their own learning. They realize the responsibility on their shoulders. Outside the class, when they are on their own they do extra work to learn.

Q2. I suppose guidance is important. To show the students how they can learn outside the classroom. Where to go and what sources they can use to learn outside the classroom. I think guiding the students is very important because they don't know how they can learn on their own.

Q3. To an extent yes. But I do struggle, because the students are always dependent on the teachers to learn especially here, I don't know other countries. Here the students are full dependent on the teachers to learn. They don't recognize that they can learn on their own, English especially. So to an extent I try but I don't know if I am successful, to tell the truth.

Q4. Right now, we have a scheduled SSSC hour. Apart from that I don't encourage my students which I should. Because I am not so familiar about the things that are available in the SSSC. Considering the fact that the students have on-line access to internet 24 hours a day, I usually encourage them to do on-line activities at home on their own time. That's why physically going to SSSC is not a priority but getting students to do on-line things and not structured activities. May be structured reading but I prefer reading magazines and newspaper. That's what I encourage my students to do. I don't think I put enough emphasis on SSSC.

Q5. Well they go once a week for sure which is a scheduled hour. Apart from that I don't hear them talking about using the SSSC or finding material in the SSSC. They never come to me and say I found this material in the SSSC. I don't know if they should, if they find something in the SSSC I don't know if they should come and consult me. Even when we go to the SSSC they are not really interested in the materials around them, they are more interested in doing on-line stuff. And I kind of understand that students don't really know how to use the SSSC, because if one of them need a grammar practice they don't know where to look. I assume that they don't use the SSSC, often.

Q6. I think it would, but SSSC is so paper based. Most of the resources are paper based. For this new generation technology is more important. We don't really have a lot of learning tools on the computers apart from the internet. But students again don't know where to look on the internet to learn. So because of that may be right now the way it is doesn't help students develop learner autonomy.

Q7. It is to promote autonomous learning. Back in the time when it was established, it was a place for autonomous learning. But now it's kind of outdated, I think.

Q8. All kinds, like mechanical. I think reading activities, listening activities. They can record their voice. Grammar activities.

Q9. They are good exam practices, I think. The idea of English Language Learning has changed so much from just doing structured questions. It's now so much different. The emphasis is on production rather than receptive skills. The students who go to the SSSC don't really have the chance to experience real life like speaking with someone or producing a piece of writing and then showing it to someone. In my head the idea of SSSC is where there are a couple of people that students actually engage with. Students can get help, guidance from these people. Right now to an extent, to get them prepared to the exam; yes they are sufficient but to learn English, no, not sure.

Q10. Like I said, tasks and materials could be improved. Not so mechanical may be, there aren't any activities to encourage real life skills like critical thinking. These are so important in this new millennium and these are some of the life skills which are the targets of our school. I think the SSSC should also support these activities, by using authentic stuff to encourage critical thinking may be.

Q11. Yes, because it is a place that if the students goes there and even does a reading activity and does the question, it means that he takes that responsibility on his own learning. So, yes it does.

Q12. Yes, they are. That's why we have scheduled SSSC hours to show the students what SSSC is and that's why apart from the SSSC we also encourage students to use an on-line component for their own learning. All of this we do think that apart from in class hour there should be outside of class hours that students spend on their own time for learning. And that would improve their success rate.

Interview 5:

Q1. Learner autonomy is when learners are responsible for their own learning. And may be in a way how to become aware of learning strategies and their learning styles. How to deal with language classroom itself. Doing homework, project work, constantly being aware of what they are doing. How well they are doing and reflecting on their learning. I think that's all I can say about learner autonomy.

Q2. A teacher has several ways to deal with this. I think to promote this, first of all we assign homework to our students. And we do My Lab as an on-line platform in our class to encourage autonomous learning, at least get them to do something outside of the classroom. Basically we give suggestions to them. I constantly suggest my students to listen to the target language, to find a way to get in touch with the language. They can go to a restaurant find some native speakers, watch a film or listen to music. That's how I try to promote autonomy in my class.

Q3. I try to. You know sometimes it's difficult. Because you are the teacher and you want to control and know if they are doing it well or not. We have to also encourage ourselves to be autonomous. Not to really think of try not to control students all the time. Especially focusing on what they do outside the classroom. I try my best I can say.

Q4. At the school we have got a scheduled SSSC hour but apart from that I tell my students to get a book and read it. Normally what I do is to ask them to read a graded reader book and do a task on it. It's a component in the portfolio, too. So they do it. SSSC is a bit outdated so it's difficult to encourage them or get them use it. They have got internet and they check their Facebook account. That's what they do there.

Q5. Only on their scheduled hours, once a week unfortunately.

Q6. It aims to. If the student himself is autonomous already, there is more of use. Because if the student is autonomous in any way he knows that there are listening, reading or writing activities. So he goes there to improve this. SSSC is a means of autonomy encourage place but not all the students are ready for this.

Q7. It is to get them to learn to be autonomous.

Q8. Long time not been there. Been there but not used resources. There is actually quite good stuff that I observed. The books as well as the practice materials are there. Most importantly there is TV which shows English channels. If students go there for once a day may be just watch 10-20 minutes it would be good. There are DVDs for them to watch film and I think there are tasks related to these. There is a listening room so that they can do listening practice like dialogs, completing tasks.

Q9. There is some variety but I don't want to be prejudice, I want to say yes they are sufficient. But, because I didn't use them at all especially this semester. The SSSC hour is not on my schedule, so I didn't make use of the materials. When I go there I usually use the My Lab.

Q10. I think more up to date materials should be used there, mostly computer work. Because that's how they learn these days. More technology should be used. Maybe interactive data bases can be used.

Q11. Yes actually. Because if the student is autonomous in any way probably he benefits more from using SSSC hours. So maybe going there on his own time apart from the scheduled hour and suggests it to other students.

Q12. Well, I guess the answer for this question is yes. But I think that there is also some sort of gap. It can't be said that more autonomous students are more successful. Maybe a student is very hardworking or he has the talent to learn. So it's not just about being autonomous, you can learn by being regularly in contact with the teacher. Being autonomous has a good room definitely which leads to success but it's not the only thing.

Interview 6:

Q1. I believe that it is something like you know your weak points, strong points. And then you are aware of your weaknesses and strengths.

Q2. Nowadays there are on-line materials a lot. Especially thanks for internet and also nearly all course books have on-line materials. Teachers may help, ask students to improve their weak skills by using internet.

Q3. Actually I try my best to promote learner autonomy in my teaching. Because the things we do in class are not enough. That's why I may ask them to do exercises related to their levels outside or I just give them texts to read outside the classroom.

Q4. When we go to the SSSC I ask them what we have in SSSC. I ask them to go around and check the materials first. Usually they don't find materials they want to study. Because they are not autonomous learners. Therefore they need our help.

Q5. Just only 1 hour I believe. Because every week we have 1 hour in SSSC.

Q6. I believe yes. Because once they are aware of their weaknesses they can go there and find materials. But if they are not aware of their weaknesses they just go and watch films.

Q7. Just to help the students. That was the aim actually.

Q8. There are lots of tasks and activities available in the SSSC, listening tasks, reading tasks, reading books.

Q9. Actually in some cases yes, in some cases no. But thanks god we have an SSSC team now and they are going to re-new the materials according to our syllabus. Because the materials there are not related to the syllabus. Students sometimes find it difficult.

Q10. In SSSC actually first of all teachers have to make students aware of their weaknesses and then we can manage the resources. And also all the materials there need to be updated.

Q11. No, I don't think so. Because nowadays the new generation don't like places like SSSC. Especially in Prep School. Instead of that they go to home and do the exercises there. Because they have got computers. They can borrow a book from SSSC. So it doesn't mean that students who use SSSC more are more autonomous learners.

Q12. Yes. Because if you are autonomous, you know what you're looking for, what you want. Therefore language learning is similar, it's a kind of learning. So autonomous learners are better language learners.

Interview 7:

Q1. Learner autonomy is the way that students learn by themselves. The way that they are responsible from their own learning.

Q2. Firstly teachers should stop spoon-feeding, this is the major problem of all of us, especially in Cyprus. Because we all grow up by spoon-feeding from our parents. If we stop doing this and if we give more responsibilities to children or the students, I think the autonomy of them will be increased.

Q3. Yes, sure. Generally instead of giving them the answer I try to show them how to find the answer by themselves. My answer is a bit general but, this is my way.

Q4. Once a week SSSC is reserved for our class. When we go there generally students prefer to work on My Lab in which they have many activities to do. Additionally, if they have done their My Lab outside of the school, at home I ask them to watch films or sometimes they use the activities on the computer, especially listening activities. It is difficult to find good quality listening task outside the classroom. So SSSC is good listening place I think.

Q5. Unfortunately once a week.

Q6. Yes, absolutely. I think so.

Q7. Main idea here is to foster learner autonomy, basically.

Q8. Many kind of resources, like all skills can be practiced in the SSSC. For all levels we have tasks and activities. Also they can do speaking, listening. Even we have a speaking room to do the recordings. We have films updated. Books, anything you are looking for learning English.

Q9. I think so. But sometimes the people who are working there should be giving more guidance.

Q10. Guidance is the main point. I am not saying that the people there are not working but may be they can find more ways of motivating students.

Q11. Why not. Possible, but generally all students have less than 1 hour to use the SSSC in a week. That's a big problem I think, because whenever they want to go there, SSSC is full. It is difficult to find out the empty SSSC.

Q12. Of course, because as I told you the spoon-feeding thing. What I believe is that I am not going to be with them for all their life, so I find out that they want to learn more by practicing English outside the classroom. For example they try to find foreign friends to speak more. Not only SSSC, they use the internet to learn more. I always recommend them to use YouTube, some channels on YouTube are really useful to learn more English, in a better way. So I think they become good language learners if they are autonomous.

Interview 8:

Q1. Learner autonomy is a very nice sophisticated term to describe learners who are enough motivated to study on their own.

Q2. Actually as we passed and we are experiencing the new method of teaching, like communicative and we are in the new era of these methods and we passed the Grammar Translation and the others, teachers should motivate their students to learn a new language. In case if it is English, there are a lot of examples and samples to motivate the students to learn. In that case the students can go after their learning and they can find in a way.

Q3. I try to do my best but sometimes it is impossible because of the syllabus and the curriculum the school force you to follow. So sometimes you cannot do that. Sometimes you have to teach what is going to be tested. In that case it's impossible. But for the students who ask for further information or they have interest or they are

enthusiastic towards learning the language I do my best. I give them information about some movies, some activities that they can do some kind of music that help them to learn and find themselves in the target culture.

Q4. Actually SSSC as a student self-study center, it's a very nice center that we have this center in many big organizations, institutions all over the world. And there are good facilities around but the problem is that the school and the teachers found it as a compulsory lesson hour which shouldn't be like this. There are many facilities, free internet, they can watch movies, and they can listen to music, and there are many prepared materials listening, reading, writing or other skills. There are grammar books and also different activities like newspapers, magazines. But when you find it as a compulsory lesson, then you just want to finish it. That's the problem with the students and also with the teachers. Taking something very serious, it goes that way. To encourage students, I am trying to use that SSSC hour not in a very compulsory way but just to practice what we have learned during our hours in classroom. SSSC is for practice actually.

Q5. As compulsory, 1 hour a week which is in their schedule. Few of them may use SSSC after their lesson hours but mainly towards the exam. They go there and find the materials related to their exam, test and try to practice. Not for being autonomous learner. Very rare.

Q6. I think yes. If they want to do that but not to very high extent. For learning some basic and academic stuff because students here are here to learn academic English not the street English. So if they want to learn some skills yes, to very high extent they can learn it but the problem is that if they are enough motivated to go there and use it for their own sake. They are using SSSC materials for the exam sake.

Q7. To give students another opportunity that if they want to study on their own, if they want to use some extra materials, if they want to sit and study with their classmates they find somewhere and that's a very good place. The rationale is good but the way they run that center is not good and it's all about the limitations that exist.

Q8. In fact, SSSC has different resources. If we make a division like academic resources and non-academic; for academic students can find all language skills materials like reading, writing, listening or speaking and also in different parts like vocabulary or grammar. There are around 60-70 computers that students can sit and use the internet. They can watch movie, listen to music, search for any information

and also there is a speaking room separated. So they can sit and practice with their friends. They can watch movies, read newspapers. These are materials.

Q9. In academic life yes I think. But more than academic life if they are very interested may be some resources need to be updated according to the needs of the students as we are moving very fast to the technology century. I think some of the materials need to be updated, actually I know that there are attempts but I think it needs to be faster.

Q10. The materials need to be updated according to the students' needs.

Q11. In fact that's the idea of the question. Of course if the student use the SSSC he must be more autonomous learner than the others. But the question is that why do they use SSSC. If they use it for only academic support, their exams I am afraid not. But if they are trying to learn more, motivated and the teachers have very important role to motivate the students to go to such places and search for extra information to find and if they find their way yes.

Q12. %100 sure, yes.

Interview 9:

Q1. Learner autonomy in a dictionary meaning or as we teachers try to use is leaving or letting the students to learn in their own learning styles.

Q2. First of all teachers should know what their students' needs are. And then try to find out the needs, spot the needs and then assign may be some tasks on those areas.

Q3. Yes actually. I try to set my students freer than ten years ago let me say. I usually talk with my students, try to figure out what their needs are. Like, if they are having a problem with the vocabulary I try to assign them some vocabulary tasks. Now we have on-line document called My English Lab, so I try to set them task from there.

Q4. Before SSSC was working differently, now as you know we are in a computer age. The materials in the SSSC are all paper based and students usually get bored. And it's difficult to take photocopies of them. What I usually try to do in my SSSC hour is, beforehand I go to the SSSC, find some materials useful for them, reserve them on the staff desk and ask my students in groups to work on them.

Q5. Before they were using it a lot but now I don't think they use it much. They have 1 scheduled hour of SSSC. Actually I try to force them to go there and they go just for 1 hour.

Q6. By itself no. If we as teachers guide them yes, SSSC is a useful place for them. But if they want to go there alone, I don't think it is a really helpful place for them now.

Q7. The rationale behind it was the autonomy, increasing the students' autonomy. But with the development of the technology, I think it needs updating to reach to that target.

Q8. There are grammar books, listening tasks, speaking tasks a lot of things actually. But as I said before they are all paper based. Students are not happy, in 21. Century, to work on paper based materials. They like using computers, so mostly they are working on My Lab.

Q9. Not really, for now. They need to be updated.

Q10. They need to be updated.

Q11. The students who are using it effectively, yes they are. But I am repeating myself, the teacher should guide them to be more autonomous.

Q12. Definitely yes, because it's not easy for the student to learn the language itself, by themselves. We as teachers need to guide them and teach them how to find their way and be more autonomous. Then they can continue with their learning.

Interview 10:

Q1. Learner autonomy for students to sit on the wheel and take charge to set their own goals and do the things in their own way. But when you talk about autonomous learning, they still rely on the teacher to set the goals for them and maintain the environment for them.

Q2. Many things actually. First of all teachers can advise the students to make friends outside with other English speaking people. And also direct them to use the technology outside the classroom from blogs, internet sites that do the English teaching or learning. There are a lot of practice and information there to use.

Q3. Oh yes, always. I make them set goals. Actually I do more because we are tight with the time in our classrooms. And they have a set syllabus that they need to cover. But outside I push them to do extra work, become autonomous learners. I give them links to certain webs and also I make them find it themselves all these useful sites that they can use. Go to library, get the information wherever you can, but I just open the door, they have to enter.

Q4. Well, I tell them what there are, what we have in the SSSC, how useful it would be for them if they go and use it. I also show them now and then what is what and what is where. And I let them visit and then I check if they make use of it. For example I ask them if they have read any graded reader books there and so on.

Q5. Not often I am afraid to say. Once a week we take them to the SSSC, under our guidance. Apart from that certain students do use but the others unfortunately don't.

Q6. It would, if it was used properly. And if we had better facilities, materials there, I am sure it would.

Q7. To create autonomous learners.

Q8. At the moment some paper based tasks and activities. Also listening activities, some films, videos on CDs. There are computers which they can reach the internet. They can find all the English Language Teaching/Learning sites.

Q9. I think they are. For the levels that we teach yes they are but they need to be guided first. And also some of the things in the SSSC probably need to be changed. For example the sitting arrangement of the computers can be sorted. Their technical sides like the speakers, microphones should be all in working order all the times. And there should be something properly working like internet connection, because it is really slow.

Q10. All the technologic tools need to be working properly, including the internet connection and some of the materials need to be updated, changed.

Q11. Depends on how they use it. If we just take it from the way they are using it at the moment because they are forced to use it and also because of attendance. No, I don't think we are getting the fruit of the center. We just take them there and pass the time. They are just passing the time I am afraid. May be only few are gaining but the rest is wasting their time there.

Q12. Yes, because language learning all starts with yourself, as a learner. As I said I believe this as a teacher. I haven't got a magic wand, I open the door and they need to enter. I guide them, I try to make them like the language, but if you don't then you are not going to get anywhere. And also I make them believe in themselves, because if you don't believe in yourself teacher can do anything but still they won't get the message.