An Investigation into Learner Autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani

Airin Shwan Ibrahim

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Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

———————————————————
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Acting Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching.

———————————————————————
Assoc. Prof. Dr. Javanshir Shibliyev
Chair, Department of Foreign Language Education

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in English Language Teaching.

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Asst. Prof. Dr. Fatoş Erozan
Supervisor

Examining Committee
————————————————————————————————————

1. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Javanshir Shibliyev   ———————————————————

2. Asst. Prof. Dr. Fatoş Erozan   ———————————————————

3. Asst. Prof. Dr. Özge Razı Çelik   ———————————————————

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to investigate the beliefs and practices of the instructors and the students regarding learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani (UoS) in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG). For this purpose, the instructors' and students' beliefs as well as their practices of learner autonomy in general, and specifically in the Department of English at the UoS were identified.

This case study follows a descriptive approach, and it is a mixed-method study in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected through student and instructor questionnaires and instructor interviews. The participants of the study are 150 undergraduate students and 18 instructors in the Department of English at the Uos in KRG.

The findings of the study show that both groups of participants have positive perceptions about learner autonomy. Also, they both recommend the involvement of students in decisions about their learning, and they think that generally students have the necessary abilities to develop learner autonomy and become autonomous learners. Yet, they state that involving students in all the decisions regarding their learning such as the place and time of the lesson, the materials used, the pace of the class, the objectives of a course, and the teaching methods used in the Department of English is not very feasible. In addition, both the instructors and the students think that the students in the Department of English specifically do not have the necessary abilities to develop learner autonomy. Moreover, the majority of the instructors state

that they always attempt to promote learner autonomy in their classes. They point out different ways of doing so such as encouraging their students to depend on themselves, giving them tasks to be done either in pairs, group or individually, involving their students in classroom discussions, and giving them opportunities to present seminars.

To conclude, the results of this study show that learner autonomy is not promoted much in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani, as both the instructors and the students think that it is not completely feasible (i.e. realistically achievable) in the Department at the moment, although both the instructors and students claim to be ready for it (i.e they have the desire for it) and they express positive ideas about it.

Finally, the results of the study have some pedagogical implications for fostering learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani, and some recommendations for future studies.

Keywords: Learner Autonomy, Autonomous Learners, Students' Beliefs, Teachers' Beliefs, Desirability, Feasibility.

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada, Irak Kürdistan Bölgesi'nde bulunan Süleymani Üniversitesi'nin İngilizce Bölümü'nde olan öğrenci ve öğretim görevlilerinin öğrenci özerkliği konusunda algılarının ve bunların uygulanmasının araştırılması amaçlanmıştır. Bu nedenle, Süleymaniye Üniversitesi İngilizce Bölümü'nde olan öğrenci ve öğretim görevlilerinin öğrenci özerkliği konusunda görüşleri ve uygulamaları belirlenmiştir.

Bu çalışma, tanımlayıcı yaklaşımı izleyen bir durum çalışmasıdır. Bu çalışmada, hem nitel hem nicel olmak üzere karma yöntem yaklaşımı kullanılmış olup veriler öğrenci anketi, öğretmen anketi ve öğretmenlerle görüşme tekniği ile elde edilmiştir. Bu çalışmaya Süleymaniye Üniversitesi İngilizce Bölümünden 150 lisans öğrencisi ve 18 öğretim katılmıştır,

Çalışmanın sonuçları, Süleymaniye Üniversitesi İngilizce Bölümü'ndeki öğrenci ve öğretim görevlilerinin dil eğitimi ve öğretiminde öğrenci özerkliğine ilişkin olarak olumlu tutumlarının olduğunu göstermiştir. Ayrıca her iki grup da öğrencilerin kendi öğrenmesine ilişkin kararlarda kendilerinin de söz sahibi olması gerektiğini savunmuş ve öğrencilerin öğrenmeleri konusunda özerk olabilmek için gerekli yeterliliklere sahip olduklarını dile getirmiştir. Bununla beraber İngilizce Bölümünde kendi öğrenmelerine yönelik tüm kararlarda, örneğin dersin saati ve yeri, derste kullanılacak materyaller, dersin lokasyonu, dersin amacı ve öğretimde kullanılacak olan yöntemler, öğrencilerin dahil edilmesini az uygulanabilir veya uygulanamaz bir durum olarak nitelendirmiştir. Buna ek olarak, İngilizce Bölümü'ndeki öğretmen ve öğrenciler, bu bölümdeki öğrencilerin özerk olabilmek için gerekli yetkinliklere

sahip olmadıklarını düşünmüşlerdir. Ayrıca, öğretmenlerin çoğu, derslerinde öğrenci özerkliğini sağlamaya her zaman gayret ettiklerini vurgulamıştır. Bunu sağlamak için, öğrencilerin kendine güvenmesi için onları cesaretlendirme, çift olarak ya da grup halinde veya bireysel olarak çalışmaları için öğrencilere ödev verme, öğrencilerin sınıfiçi münazaralara katılmasını sağlama ve seminerlere katılmaları için onlara fırsat tanıma gibi çeşitli yollara başvurduklarını dile getirmişlerdir.

Özetle, çalışmanın sonuçları, hem öğretim görevlileri hem de öğrenciler öğrenci özerkliği için bölümdeki öğrencilerin hazır olduklarını ve bununla ilgili olarak olumlu düşüncelere sahip olduklarını dile getirseler de, bunun bölüm içerisinde tam olarak uygulanabilir (gerçekçi bir şekilde yapılabilir) olmadığı için öğrenci özerkliğinin Süleymani Üniversitesi, İngilizce Bölümünde henüz desteklenmediğini göstermiştir.

Son olarak, Süleymani Üniversitesi, İngilizce Bölümünde öğrenci özerkliğinin geliştirilmesine yönelik olarak bazı eğitimsel çıkarımlar ve daha sonraki çalışmalar için bazı öneriler çalışmada yer almıştır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Öğrenci Özerkliği, Özerk Öğrenciler, Öğrenci Algıları, Öğretmen Algıları, Istenilirlik, Uygulanabilirlik.

DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this study to my beloved parents, Srwa Ali and Shwan Ibrahim. Their all the time support and love gave me more power and patience during my MA journey. I would also like to dedicate this study to my fiancé, Ranj Ahmed, for his never ending tolerance, understanding, caring and encouragement in this process.

AKOWLEDGMENT

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is the introduction of the thesis. First it gives information about the study's background. Then, it presents the problem statement and the purpose of the study. Finally, the research questions and the significance of the study are explained.

1.1 Background of the Study

Learner autonomy has become increasingly essential in the process of language teaching and learning for more than three decades. Learner autonomy refers to students' ability to take responsibility or control of their own learning, but still autonomous learners need teachers to provide them with learning environments that support the development of learner autonomy. In the literature, the concept of learner autonomy has been referred to by using different terms such as, 'learner autonomy', 'self-direction', 'autonomous learning', 'learner independence', and 'independent learning' have been used to refer to this concept (Ivanovska, 2015).

Accordingly, there are a number of definitions of learner autonomy. For instance, Holec (1981) defines the term 'learner autonomy' as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p.3). He further states that autonomous learners have the ability to set their own goals, to monitor their learner progressions, and to choose their own methods and techniques in their learning processes. Benson (2001, cited in Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012, p.4) argues that, sometimes the word 'ability' in Holec's definition has been replaced with 'capacity' and 'take responsibility for' or 'take

control of' or 'take charge of'. Additionally, Dickinson (1987) describes autonomy as the situation when the learner is taking the whole control in all the decisions about his learning.

According to Little (2003), learner autonomy needs insight, a positive attitude, and ability for reflection, and willingness to be proactive in self-management. However, Gardner (2000) has somehow a different perspective. He states that, learner autonomy is the process of taking personal responsibility for one's own progress and this process needs self-assessment for evaluating individuals' level of knowledge and skills. Regarding the role of learner autonomy in language teaching and learning, Little (1995) puts forward that those learners who take charge of their own learning presumably reach their learning goals better than those who are mostly dependent on others, and when they reach their learning goals, they do attain a good motivation for their future learnings.

 Little (1995) further claims that autonomous learners accept to take responsibility of their own leaning, and accepting this responsibility has socio-affective and cognitive implications: it requires positive attitudes to learning and a capacity to consciously reflect on learning in terms of content and process.

According to Benson and Voller (2014), learner autonomy in language learning has been used in five various ways. First, it is used in the situations when the learners depend only on themselves while studying. Second, through the practice of learner autonomy, learners can learn a set of skills. Third, learner autonomy can be useful for developing the innate capacity owned by a student that is repressed by an institutional education. Fourth, it can be utilized to get learners to practice on how to

take charge of their learning. And lastly, learner autonomy can be helpful to encourage learners to take the responsibility of their own learning.

There is a growing interest in promoting autonomy in language learning and teaching generally, and in English language teacher education programs particularily. It is important to develop learner autonomy for all language learners, but it is especially important to foster it in English Language Teaching (ELT) departments because the students in ELT departments will be future teachers, and to be autonomous learners can help them become future autonomous teachers.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

It is very important to promote learner autonomy in teacher education programs, but unfortunately most of the teachers have never had a chance to learn themselves autonomously; for that reason they find it very hard to promote it and apply it in their own classrooms. Therefore, it is very essential for teachers to experience learner autonomy first as learners and then to apply it in their classrooms (Camilleri, 1999).

According to Camilleri (1999), one of the ways of fostering autonomy in teacher education is designing and evaluating pre-service and in-service teacher training programs for applying autonomy, as it provides opportunities for teachers to experience learner autonomy by themselves, and then to foster it in their classrooms. Similarly, Little (1991) points out that as learner autonomy and teacher autonomy are interlinked, for promoting learner autonomy, teachers should first experience it themselves by reflecting on their own beliefs and practices regarding learner autonomy. Then, for fostering learner autonomy among the students, teachers should take individual differences into account as students have different background and

competence, and they should pay attention to every variable and foster autonomy accordingly.

In the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani, one of the ultimate learning goals of the BA program is to make students become autonomous future teachers, however unfortunately based on the researchers' informal observations there is not much effort to achieve this goal. It is very important to identify students' (student teachers) and instructors' beliefs about learner autonomy as it can strongly affect their selection of methods, materials, and activities and so forth (Shahsavari, 2014).

As a result, this study was conducted to determine the instructors' and students' beliefs regarding learner autonomy and to explore to what extent they are aware of this issue and how they put it into practice.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The present study, which was conducted in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani (UoS) in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, aims to investigate the instructors' and students' beliefs about learner autonomy. The study also aims to identify their practices of learner autonomy in the classes of the Department of English.

Overall, the present study attempts to investigate to what extend autonomous learning is promoted in the English Department at the UoS, as perceived by the instructors and students. To this aim, it focuses on identifying their beliefs about learner autonomy, as well as their practices of it.

1.4 Research Questions

To the above explained purposes, the study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the students' and instructors' beliefs regarding learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani?

2. What are the students' and instructors' practices of learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani?

3. To what extent learner autonomy is promoted in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani?

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study can be considered significant because the results of the study can increase the instructors' and students' awareness of learner autonomy and its benefits. It may also encourage the instructors to create a more learner-centered teaching-learning environment in their classes. In addition, the results may help the student teachers to understand the advantages of learner autonomy and to be autonomous teachers in the future.

1.6 Summary

This chapter has introduced the study by giving the background of the study, stating the problem, providing research questions, and discussing the significance of the study. In the next chapter, the relevant literature about learner autonomy is reviewed. In the third chapter, the methodology of the study is discussed and in the fourth chapter the results of the study are presented. And in the last chapter the results of the study are discussed under the research questions and some implications for practice

are given. Moreover, the limitations are explained and some recommendations for future research are presented.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter firstly deals with the relevant literature about the clarifications of the concept of 'learner autonomy'. Also it presents some characteristics of autonomous learners. Furthermore, the teachers' role in learner autonomy, and the impact of autonomy on language teaching and learning are explained. Moreover, some literature about the ways of promoting learner autonomy in language classrooms is presented. And finally, some studies about teachers' and students' perceptions regarding learner autonomy are reviewed.

2.1 Learner Autonomy

Benson (2013) in his book *Teaching and Researching: Autonomy in Language Learning* describes the development of autonomy as follows: The first appearance of the 'autonomy' concept in the field of language teaching was through the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project launched in 1971. In this project, one of the main outcomes was founding Centre de Recherched et d' Applications en Langues (CRAPEL) at the university of Nancy in France. The founder of CRAPEL was Yves Chalon and he is considered to be the father of autonomy. However, because of his early death his position in CRAPEL as a leader went to Henry Holec, who is well-known to be a significant character in the field of autonomy. In December 1976, a seminar was held on self-directed learning and autonomy by CRAPEL scholars Philip Riley and Caroline Stanchina at the University of Cambridge, and it was considered to be a significant event in the field. After that, Holec in 1981 wrote a

report about learner autonomy for the Council of Europe, and he defined autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (p.3).

In language learning and teaching the term 'autonomy' is often represented basically by learner-centered idea, and it has been interpreted in many different ways by different scholars, and the most frequent definition is that of Holec (1981) who defines autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning." (p.3). Taking control of one's own learning means one should take the responsibility to decide on every aspect of their learning.

Likewise, Dickinson (1987) states that autonomy is a type of learning in which the learner takes responsibility for all the decisions related with learning as well as putting these decisions into practice. In addition, Joshi (2011) stands at the same line and describes learner autonomy as the one's ability to decide on the rules for oneself. Crabbe (1993) shares the same argument with the above definitions and argues that any individual possesses a right to decide on his or her own choices regardless of the choices made by social institutions.

Finally, Widdowson (1990) and Little (1991) define learner autonomy, and they warn people against five "misconceptions" of the concept of learner autonomy. These misconceptions are: (1) autonomous learners reduce the teachers' role in the learning process; (2) teachers' interference may ruin the students' autonomy; (3) autonomy is a recent methodology; (4) autonomy represents easily described behaviour; and, finally, (5) autonomy is a situation attained only by specific learner.

2.2 Autonomous Learners and Their Characteristics

In foreign language teaching and learning a concern with the nature and benefits of learner autonomy has been well-established over the last 20 years (Chan, 2003). According to Littlewood (1996), an autonomous learner can be defined as someone who has the ability to decide on their own choices independently and this ability consists of two major things: ability and willingness.

Furthermore, an autonomous language learner, as stated by Dam (1995, cited in Phan, 2012), is someone who can independently define his or her aims and purposes and set goals, has the ability to choose materials, methods and tasks, and is in a position to manage his or her choices and choose criteria for evaluation. On the other hand, Demirtaş and Sert (2010) describe an autonomous learner as "someone who possesses the capability to observe their learning process, by identifying their own goals and take steps towards it" (p.160). Moreover, Joshi (2011) claims that an autonomous learner is "one who independently make his or her choices regarding their actions" (p.14).

Regarding the characteristics of autonomous learners, Karababa, et al (2010) state that autonomous learners are aware of their choice of strategies and how to use them appropriately in their learning process. In addition, they explain that autonomous learners have the capacity to transfer their strategies to other learning practices.

 Furthermore, Dogan (2015), describes autonomous learners as active learners in every step of their learning process, in that firstly they have plan for what they need to learn, then they observe their process of learning, and finally they evaluate themselves. He also explains that learners who are autonomous are aware of their

needs, and they set learning goals for themselves. And when they experience difficulties in their language learning process, they can deal with them by finding appropriate solutions. Autonomous learners can also be considered as life-long learners.

2.3 Teacher Autonomy

Teacher autonomy is defined by Little (1995) as the capacity of teachers to engage in self-directed teaching. Some other researchers also attempt to conceptualize teacher autonomy. For instance, Smith (2000) defines teacher autonomy as teachers' ability to develop appropriate skills, knowledge, and Thavenius (1999) describes teacher autonomy as a "teacher's capacity to support their learners to take control of their own learning" (p. 160). Similarly, Lamb and Reinders (2008) defined teacher autonomy as the ability to improve one's own teaching through one's own efforts, therefore it includes both the teacher's ability to make decisions about teaching and their own professional development.

However, Thavenius (1999) have different opinion from both Little (1995) and Smith (2000), regarding defining the relationship between teacher autonomy and learner autonomy. Thavenius (1999) think that teacher autonomy and learner autonomy occur concurrently and support each other since for promoting learner autonomy, it is important for teachers to be autonomous while working with their learners' learning process.

Cotteral (1995) points out the significance of teachers' influence on learners' beliefs in language learning, and claims that when learners see the help and guidance of their teachers, they become more ready for developing autonomy. Moreover, Cotteral

(2000) states that for fostering learner autonomy, it is the teachers' responsibility to help their learners in "setting their goals, monitor their performance, and adjust their learning process" (p.116). Additionally, Joshi (2011) claims that "teachers' role in autonomous learning is to be a facilitator, a provider of support and feedback, and to create a learning atmosphere, so a teacher's job is to a guidance and initiator rather than to be an authority" (p.16).

Likewise, Reinders and Balcikanli (2011) state that for promoting learner autonomy, there are two crucial aspects that teachers need: "one has to do with the teacher's own autonomy and the other with a set of teaching skills relevant for developing autonomy" (p.16). They also emphasize that the most crucial context for learners to experience autonomy and develop their skills is through the language course, and therefore the classroom teacher has a major influence on students' development of autonomy.

To conclude, teacher autonomy and learner autonomy are interconnected as Yan (2010) states that it is teachers' autonomy is very important to provide a good environment for learners to learn autonomously.

2.4 Impact of Autonomy on Language Teaching and Learning

Autonomy has been considered as a very important concept in the language teaching and learning field (Little, 1991). As claimed by Benson (2011), autonomy is a "genuine goal of language education" (p.2). Benson (2007) mentions about some effects of autonomy on language learning by stating that autonomy makes learners more passionate about their learning because they have the control of their learning and they take the responsibility of their learning, and learning can be more intensive

and focused which lead them right toward the objectives they targeted to achieve. Furthermore, through encouraging students' abilities toward autonomous learning, they become critical and responsible people, not only in their classrooms but in their social life because learner autonomy has the effect on the entire society.

Moreover, Ahmadzadeh and Zabardast (2014) states that those learners who take control of their own learning have more ability to regulate realistic goals, to have prior plans, to compensate unusual problems and to evaluate and assess their own learning process. Therefore, they have the ability to learn from their own strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, Little (1991) explains the significance of fostering learner autonomy by stating three main factors. Firstly, when learners take part in setting the agenda, they will be more focused and motivated, also their learning process is going to be more effective both in long and short term. Secondly, through learner autonomy, learners take charge and control for their own learning and those barriers between learning and living would be minimized regardless of traditional teacher-centered classrooms. Finally, autonomous learners face less difficulty in transferring their ability to other aspects in their lives in which it helps them to become effective members of society in general.

Likewise, Little (2006) emphasizes the importance of learner autonomy by explaining how it solves the issue of learner motivation. When learners decide to take control of their learning, gradually they use their intrinsic motivation, and their intrinsic motivation increases once they succeed in their learning.

Similarly, Wang (2016) explains some significant effects of learner autonomy by referring to some levels. He states that learner autonomy provides active and

proficient language learning and using, learner autonomy is useful for the learning process in general and it is beneficial for self-growth, and finally for providing a healthy society. Correspondingly, Dickinson (1995) indicates that "it is very important for learners to be self-decision makers and independent learners because it helps them with more effective learning" (p.165).

In addition, Sunar (2016) conducted a study about the impact of autonomy on language learning, and the researcher pointed out that the higher the autonomy level the higher the language learning performance or self-confidence is.

In conclusion, many researchers emphasized on the effects of autonomy on language teaching and learning, by stating that autonomy makes learners more passionate about their learning, also they claimed that those learners who take control of their own learning have more ability to regulate realistic goals, to evaluate and assess their learning processes and so forth.

2.5 Different Approaches to Promoting Learner Autonomy in Language Classrooms

Recently, many approaches have been used in fostering learner autonomy in language classrooms, and it is the language educators' responsibilities to help their students to become autonomous learners and to provide them with opportunities for developing it (Yagcioglu, 2015). In the relevant literature, a number of approaches to promoting learner autonomy are available. For instance, Benson (2013) categorizes six approaches to promoting learner autonomy: *resource-based, technology-based, learner-based, classroom-based, curriculum-based*, and *teacher-based approaches*.

1) Resource-Based Approaches

In resource-based approaches, it is essential for learners to use learning resources independently, and this happens when teachers let the students practice autonomy by giving them chances to plan for their learning, to choose their learning materials by themselves, and giving them opportunities to make the evaluation of their own learning. In this approach, learners are motivated to develop autonomy through the sources they get by themselves or by those sources their teacher gives them. Therefore, learner choice is crucial in this approach. And according to Benson (2013), learning process can be done through experimentation and discovery by the learners. A good example of this approach is self-access since they offer learners different learning materials and the students will have the chance to do self-study with a number of sources such as videos, audios, software, and some printed material. Therefore, resource-based approach is a significant approach in fostering learner autonomy.

2) Technology-Based Approach

In this approach, technologies are used to reach the sources in order to foster learner autonomy, and a variety of learning approaches are given to the learners like the Internet and Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). This approach includes videos produced by students, electronic environments for writing emails, and computer simulations. This approach is important because it gets students to practice autonomy and develop it.

3) Learner-Based Approach

The third approach is learner-based approach. This approach focuses on providing opportunities for better learner control. The focal point of this approach is on the psychological and behavioral changes that make the learner take the responsibility of their own learning (Benson, 2013). This approach emphasizes language learning strategies, in which for guaranteeing learner autonomy, it is important to provide ways of learning strategies. Therefore, it is necessary to provide learners with strategy-based instruction, and to train them with language learning techniques and strategies, as it helps them to discover their own way of learning.

4) Classroom-Based Approach

The fourth approach is classroom-based approach. The focus of this approach is on the classroom environment which needs to be supportive and cooperative, in which learners are helped to make decisions by themselves and they are provided opportunities to take part in arranging and evaluating the classroom learning (Benson, 2013). Consequently, learners can develop autonomy more when they have control over their own learning through practicing independence.

5) Curriculum-Based Approach

In this approach, learners are expected to be involved in planning the curriculum; in that they are allowed to decide on the syllabus of their learning (the content and processes of learning) with their peers and teachers (Benson, 2013). Furthermore, Cotteral (2000) states that in language curriculum, the roles of teachers and students need to be changed, in other words, the learners should take the responsibility in choosing their learning strategies, and evaluating their learning progress.

6) Teacher-Based Approach

According to Benson (2013), the sixth approach is teacher-based approach, in which the fundamental emphasis is on the professional development of teachers. In this approach, teachers' role changes from only passers of knowledge to being helpers, advisers, facilitators, and resource people. Teachers can work with their students, collaborate with them and help them in their learning process. Furthermore, learners can get help from their teachers in evaluating their learning and acquiring new skills and knowledge through making them aware of their learning process.

Moreover, Thanasoulas (2000) identifies some other ways for promoting learner autonomy: self-reports, diaries and evaluation sheets, persuasive communication as a means of Altering learner beliefs and attitudes.

Self-Reports

According to Wenden (1998, cited in Thanasoulas, 2000), assigning a task for the students and asking them to report about their beliefs and thoughts is a good technique for promoting learner autonomy also it makes them aware about their own learning. Wenden (1998) further states that self-reports consists of two types: introspective self-reports and retrospective self-reports. In introspective self-reports

learners are requested to introspect on their learning by giving information about the strategies they use at the time of writing the report. However, in retrospective self-reports, learners are requested to think back or retrospect on their learning. This type of report is totally open ended, and it consists of semi-structured interviews and structured questionnaires.

Diaries and Evaluation Sheets

Writing diaries and evaluation sheets are other ways of promoting students' autonomy as they provide students with opportunities to organize, plan, and evaluate their learning; also it helps them to identify their own problems and find possible solutions for them. Also they can write down their beliefs regarding the course, also they can fill in the evaluation papers, or they can write the outcomes of a course, in the end of the course. (Thanasoulas, 2000).

Persuasive Communication as a Means of Altering Learner Beliefs and Attitudes

This is the other way of promoting learner autonomy, in which information will be given through discussions and arguments for the sake of changing the learners' perceptions of a topic, or a task. These kinds of arguments can happen when the topic is considered to be important, and they could be either explicit or implicit.

Furthermore, Cotterall (2000) provides five principles for designing language courses to develop learner autonomy as fostering learner autonomy considered to be an important and appropriate goal in language course design, but that principles to guide the design of such courses were currently lacking. As a result she suggests five course design principles for language courses which seek to foster learner autonomy

as they are: (1) learner goals, (2) the language learning process, (3) tasks, (4) learner strategies, and (5) reflection on learning.

2.6 Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy

This section deals with the studies that have been conducted in literature concerning the perceptions of students and teachers about learner autonomy. The studies are reviewed under three sub-headings namely, *studies on teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy*, *studies on students' perceptions of learner autonomy and studies on* both *teachers' and students' perceptions of learner autonomy*.

2.6.1 Studies on Teachers' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy

Teachers' perceptions have a significant role in fostering learner autonomy in teaching and learning process. Bingimlas and Hanrahan (2010) state that "one of the factors that is believed to influence the implementation and establishment of new activities in the classroom is teacher beliefs" (p. 416). Furthermore, Borg and Al-busaidi (2012) claim that "teachers' belief is very important as it affects the teachers' actions, and also what learners receive" (p.6). Similarly, Richards (1998) points out that "teacher belief is a fundamental source of teachers' classroom practices" (p. 66).

This section deals with studies that are about teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy. Nguyen, (2014) conducted a case study research with 188 EFL teachers to investigate Vietnamese teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy and to discover how they put it into their teaching practices. For this study, the researcher collected data both quantitatively and qualitatively. The findings showed that teachers mostly lacked understanding about learner autonomy; they had different beliefs regarding learner autonomy containing misconceptions as they were confused in identifying the real meaning of learner autonomy with self-study or independent learning. They

thought that learner autonomy means learning without teachers' help and support. Regarding teachers' practices of learner autonomy, the findings indicate that there was an alignment between teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices about learner autonomy. They stated that their classrooms were teacher-centered with the absence of such teaching practices that would develop learner autonomy.

Similarly, Doğan (2015) conducted a study to identify teachers' beliefs and practices of learner autonomy in the foreign language departments at nine Turkish universities. The participants of the study were 96 EFL teachers. In the study, the researcher used mixed method approach by giving questionnaires and doing interviews with the teachers. The researcher found that the teachers had positive insights towards learner autonomy, and they suggested that learner autonomy be fostered by getting learners involved in the learning process, by allowing them to decide on their own but in practice, they were not that much positive about it and they didn't find it feasible as they found it desirable.

Additionally, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) conducted a study with 61 experienced English language teachers at a large university language center in Oman, and mixed-method approach was used through questionnaires and interviews. Regarding the study's findings, the teachers had positive beliefs about learner autonomy and they were aware of main concepts usually used in describing it. However, they were not optimistic about the feasibility of it in their classrooms and the possibility of promoting it with their learners. Furthermore, the teachers believed that their students have opportunities to practice learner autonomy inside and outside the classrooms, but they thought that their learners did not have the ability and willingness to get benefit of these opportunities and develop learner autonomy. Also, they named some

huge barriers that prevent the promotion of learner autonomy such as lack of enthusiasm, not understanding about independence in the classroom and fixed curricula.

Moreover, Duong (2014) did a study to examine the EFL teachers' perceptions of the concept of learner autonomy and their practices in a Thai University. The participants of the study were thirty English teachers in a Thai University. The research was quantitative, so the data were collected via close-ended questionnaires. The findings indicated that the participants were aware of learner autonomy and their role as a teacher in autonomous language learning, but they found it difficult to put into their teaching practices.

Balçıkanlı (2010) also worked on the beliefs of 112 student teachers about learner autonomy at the ELT Department in Gazi University in Turkey. He used mixed-method approach for collecting data, in which he administered a questionnaire to all the students and conducted interviews with twenty volunteer student teachers. Regarding the results of the study, the participants were positive about promoting learner autonomy, and they thought that the students need to be motivated to take responsibility of their own learning. However, the majority of the participants disagreed with the idea of involving their future students in decisions about the time and place of the course and the textbooks to be used.

To sum up, in this section, five studies about teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy are reviewed, concerning their methodologies and their major findings.

2.6.2 Studies on Students' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy

In this part some work about students' beliefs of learner autonomy are reviewed.

Sakai, Takagi, and Chu (2010) did a study to identify Japanese and Taiwanese university students' perceptions about the concept of learner autonomy. For data collection, mixed method approach has been used. For collecting quantitative data, the researchers administered a close-item questionnaire to 902 students and for the qualitative data, they gave an open-ended questionnaire to 73 students. The researchers found that the students were positive about learner autonomy and in the open-ended questionnaires they stated that East Asian students have capability to become autonomous learners with the support of their teachers in various ways.

Similarly, Gamble et al (2012) conducted a study to investigate the beliefs of Japanese university students' about their responsibilities and capacity of autonomous language learning and their capability outside and inside the classroom. In the study, 399 students participated from seven universities in Japan, and for data collection, they were administered a 22-item questionnaire. The results indicate that that the students hold similar beliefs of responsibility to practice autonomous learning tasks. They also found that those students who have higher motivation consider themselves as autonomous learners more than unmotivated students.

Additionally, Koçak(2003) conducted a study to examine students' readiness of being involved in autonomous learning process at Başkent University. In the study, 186 preparatory school students at Başkent University participated. The researcher found that a vast majority of the students had high motivation. In addition, the students believed that their teachers are more responsible for their learning than themselves despite their use of metacognitive strategies as self-evaluation and self-monitoring. Moreover, the results revealed that most of the students spend very little time for improving their English outside the classrooms.

Furthermore, Chan (2001) did a research to examine the perceptions of 20 English language students in Polytechnic University in Hong Kong about autonomy. For data collection, the researcher used mixed method approach through questionnaires and interviews to identify students' beliefs of learner autonomy. The study attempted to identify students' beliefs of language learning in general and specifically learner autonomy, also about teacher and learner roles. The findings of the study show that although students indicated that they have great ability to be autonomous learners, they still need teachers' guidance to be autonomous.

Lastly, Porto (2007) worked with 95 Argentine, and Caucasian students at the National University of La Plata in Argentina. The participants were mostly female, Spanish-speaking college students and their age ranged between 19 and 21 years. This study aimed at examining the learners' beliefs of classes and developing learner autonomy. Regarding the findings, the researcher found out that in foreign language learning, it is important to provide learners with opportunities for critical thinking and reflection.

To conclude, in this section five studies about students' perceptions of learner autonomy are reviewed, regarding their methodologies and their final results.

2.6.3 Studies on Teachers' and Students' Perceptions of Learner Autonomy

This section deals with some studies which aim to investigate into how teachers and students perceive learner autonomy.

Krisztina (2016) conducted a study to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions and their classroom practices of learner autonomy at a secondary comprehensive school in Hungary. In the study, the researcher used mixed-method approach for data collection. The findings of the study indicate that although learner autonomy was an

educational goal in their curriculum, and teachers had positive thoughts about learner autonomy, they did not put it into practice and teachers did not think that their students have high level of autonomy. The students also had the same opinion about themselves and they did not consider their school as a place to foster autonomy.

Additionally, Farahi (2015) conducted a case study to examine students' and teachers' beliefs about the concept of learner autonomy in the Department of ELT at EMU (Eastern Mediterranean University). The researcher collected data both quantitatively and qualitatively. In the study, 69 ELT students and 11 instructors took part. The findings of the study showed that both teachers and students were positive about learner autonomy, and both the students and their instructors thought that it is desirable or ideal to promote learner autonomy, and they stated that students should be provided with opportunities to decide about their learning. Also, they stated that the students possess the necessary abilities for becoming autonomous learners. However, both the students and their instructors did not find it feasible or realistic to promote autonomy in the ELT Department.

Moreover, Ostrowska (2015) did a study to investigate how teachers and students respond to learner autonomy at a tertiary level preparatory program in the United Arab Emirates. The results of the study show that in the teachers' point of views the students were considered to have passive roles and they thought that they do not have responsibility and they are always in need of control. The teachers were considered as controllers. And under the light of the study's findings, the researcher thought that in order to make learner autonomy feasible, educators should think again about how to organize language learning processes.

On the other hand, Shahsavari (2014) conducted a study with 150 learners in Gooyesh Language institute in Isfahan, Iran. The data were collected both quantitatively and qualitatively through questionnaires and interviews. The findings of the study indicate that both students and teachers were positive about learner autonomy, but both teachers and students did not find it feasible in their teaching practices.

Lastly, Baghbankarimi (2014) conducted a study in the ELT Department of EMU to investigate the extent in which the three skill-based language improvement courses promote learner autonomy. To this purpose, the researcher administered a questionnaire to eighty-seven students who were taking these courses and conducted interviews with 4 instructors teaching these courses in order to explore their beliefs of learner autonomy in these courses. Furthermore, to discover whether learner autonomy was really fostered in the classes or not, class observations were conducted. The results obtained from the study indicate that the students believed that the three skill-based language courses promote learner autonomy. However, the results show that the instructors' were not so much positive about learner autonomy in these courses, as they indicated that they attempt to foster autonomy, but because of some factors such as course materials, students' background, etc., they fail in fully promoting learner autonomy in these courses.

To sum up, in this section five studies about teachers' and students' perceptions of learner autonomy are reviewed, dealing with their participants, their data collection procedures, and their major findings.

2.7 Summary

Autonomy is a situation when the learner is mainly taking charge of their own learning. In this chapter, the literature on autonomy, autonomous learners and their characteristics has been explained. In addition, the teachers' role in promoting learner autonomy and the impact of autonomy on language teaching and learning has been illustrated. There are many ways of promoting learner autonomy and in this study some different approaches of promoting learner autonomy has been clarified. Finally, some studies have been reviewed about the perceptions of teachers' and students' about learner autonomy.

Chapter 3

METHOD

This chapter presents the method that was used in this study. The chapter consists of seven sections. The first section presents the overall research design. The second and the third sections are about the setting and the research questions. In the fourth section, the participants of the study are introduced. The fifth section focuses on the data collection instruments, which is followed by the explanation of the data collection procedures in the sixth section. Finally the seventh section is about the data analysis.

3.1 Research Design

This study has been designed as a case study, and it follows a descriptive approach. It is conducted to examine the perceptions and practices of ELT instructors and students as regards learner autonomy.

Case study is "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the 'case') in depth and within its real-world context" (Yin, 2014, p. 16). Furthermore, Mackey and Gass (2005) indicate that "case studies provide detailed descriptions of specific learners within their learning setting" (p.171). According to Dulock (1993), on the other hand, descriptive research "describes systematically and accurately the facts and characteristics of a given population or area of interest" (p.154).

Mixed-method approach to research was used in this study, and both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Combining two approaches together shows strength while avoiding them shows weaknesses. In the literature, five major purposes of using mixed-method research have been proposed by researchers: Triangulation, complementarity, development, initiation, and expansion (Riazi & Candlin, 2014). One of the purposes of using mixed-method research is triangulation. Denzin (1978) and Greene (1989) (as cited in Riazi & Candlin, 2014, p. 144), described triangulation as making use of more than one data collection and analysis method to work on a social phenomenon in order to search for "convergence and corroboration between the results" and "eliminating the bias inherent in the use of a single method." Another benefit of mixing both qualitative and quantitative data is to gain complementarity. Mixed-method increases the power of the study as many sorts of data could be suitable for various research questions and processes. (Riazi & Candlian, 2014). Also by mixed method research, the results of one method develop the other one; for instance, the results of an interview can be used to develop a questionnaire. Furthermore, mixed method research provides initiation through finding contradiction and paradox. And finally it expands the scope of the study (Riazi, & Candlin, 2014).

3.2 Setting

The present study was conducted with undergraduate students and their instructors in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani in Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG), in the Fall Semester of 2017-2018 Academic Year.

The University of Sulaimani (UoS) was established in 1968. Its campus is placed in the city of Sulaimani in Kurdistan Region of Iraq. At first the university contained

only three colleges but soon after the number of the colleges increased dramatically due to growing demands of higher education in the country (University of Sulaimani, 2018). The university has many schools, including the school of Basic Education, in which they have English Department as one of their departments. This department was established in the academic year 2003-2004 in the city of Sulaimani. The English Department provides a four-year undergraduate major in English language. The department's goal is to train the student teachers to become basic school teachers in the future to teach young and adolescent learners. So many courses are provided in this department such as linguistics, English literature, speaking, English grammar, writing, principles of education, English language teaching methods, developmental psychology, evaluation and measurement, testing and/or assessment, etc. The faculty members have specialization in TESOL/TEFL. (College of Basic Education, 2017).

3.3 Research Questions

Understanding the instructors' and students' perceptions about the concept of 'learner autonomy' is an important step for promoting it. As a result, the present study aims to investigate both students' and instructors' beliefs about learner autonomy. The study also aims to identify practices of learner autonomy in the classes of the Department of English. To this purpose, the study attempts to answer these questions:

1- What are the students' and instructors' beliefs regarding learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani?

2- What are the students' and instructors' practices of learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani?

3- To what extend learner autonomy is promoted in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani?

3.4 Participants

The present study consisted of 150 students, who were second, third and fourth year students in the English Department at UoS in KRG. In addition to these students, 18 instructors of the Department agreed to take part in this study. The participants of the study can be categorized into two groups and they are introduced in detail in the following sub- sections.

3.4.1 Students

The student participants in this study were undergraduate students in the English Department and they all agreed to take part in the study. The number of the student participants was 150 students and they were in their second, third and fourth year: 71 second year students (47.3%), 40 third year students (26.7%), and 39 fourth year students (26.0%). As regards gender distribution, 24.7% of the participants were male and 75.3% of them were female. Their ages ranged between 18 to 29 years old, but the majority of them were between 20 and 21 years old, (23.3% 20 years old, and 23.3% 21 years old). Almost all (99.3%) of the students were Iraqi and only 0.7% of them was from another country, namely Germany. Also, almost all the students (98.7%) had Kurdish language as their native language and only 1.3% of them had Arabic as their native language.

3.4.2 Instructors

The instructors who participated in this study were 18 instructors, and they were all teaching at the English Department at the University of Sulaimani. Regarding their gender, 55.6% of them were female and 44.4% of them were male. Their ages were between 28 to 49 years old. All the instructors were Iraqi citizens and all of them had

Kurdish language as their native language. Their years of teaching experience were between 2 to 27 years, and regarding their years of experiences as instructor at the University of Sulaimani, the range was between 2 to 10 years. As to their qualifications, 33.3% of them were lecturers and 66.7% were assistant lecturers.

3.5 Data Collection Instruments

In this study, the data were collected by the researcher through student and teacher questionnaires in addition to teacher interviews. The data collection instruments of the present study were adapted from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), Chan (2001), Farahi (2015), Joshi (2011), and Littlewood (1999).

3.5.1 Student Questionnaire

The questionnaire given to the students in this study (Appendix B) had five sections. It was developed by the researcher by adapting tools from various sources (Borg& Al-Busaidi 2012; Chan, 2001; Farahi, 2015; Joshi, 2011; Littlewood, 1999). For the reliability of the students questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha value was obtained to be .837. The aim of the questionnaire was to investigate the students' beliefs and practices of learner autonomy in language teaching and learning generally and in the Department of English particularly. The questionnaire consisted of five main sections.

The first section focused on the students' personal information regarding their gender, age, nationality, native language and their class.

The second section focused on the students' beliefs regarding learner autonomy. This section consisted of 28 five point Likert-scale type of closed-items [*Strongly agree (5), Agree (4), Unsure (3), Disagree (2), Strongly disagree (1)*].

The third section was related with the desirability of learner autonomy among the students. This section tried to investigate the students' desire for and interest in learner autonomy, to examine whether they want to get involved in decisions about their learning process, and to identify what they think about their ability to develop learner autonomy. This section consists of twenty-one 5-point Likert-scale type of closed-items: (*Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), Always (5)*).

The fourth section was related to the practicability (i.e.feasibility) of learner autonomy in the English Department. Respectively, this section intended to investigate the students' beliefs about learner autonomy in the department. The section consisted of 21 closed-items in the form of 5- point Likert scale: Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Often (4), Always (5). In this section, the focus was on whether or not learner autonomy was realistically achievable in the English Department at the University of Sulaimani.

The fifth section consisted of 5 open-ended questions regarding the students' beliefs and practices of learner autonomy.

3.5.2 Teacher Questionnaire

The questionnaire given to the instructors in this study (Appendix C) had four sections, and the researcher designed this questionnaire by adapting the instruments from the same sources used for designing the student questionnaire (Borg& Al-Busaidi 2012; Chan, 2001; Farahi, 2015; Joshi, 2011; Littlewood, 1999). For the reliability of teacher questionnaire, the Cronbach's Alpha value was obtained to be .821. The aim of this questionnaire was to find out the instructors' beliefs and practices of learner autonomy.

This questionnaire consisted of four main sections. The first section was related to the instructors' background information, i.e. their age, nationality, gender, native language, teaching experience, and their academic title.

The second section focused on the teachers' overall beliefs of learner autonomy in language learning-teaching. This part consisted of 36 closed-items in the form of 5 point Likert scale.

The third section deals with the instructors' perceptions about the desirability and practicability/feasibility of learner autonomy in the English Department. This section consists of 21 statements. The first twelve statements were about the decisions that learners might be involved in, such as the objective of the courses, materials used, types of activities, etc. The remaining statements focused on the abilities that learners might have in promoting learner autonomy such as identifying their own needs, strengths, weaknesses, etc. There were two parts in this section: Part A was about the desirability of leaner autonomy among the instructors, and it attempted to find out about their beliefs concerning the desirability of learner autonomy in the given statements. And the second part sought to find out about whether the given statements were feasible (i.e. realistically achievable) in the English Department of UoS, as perceived by the instructors.

Lastly, the fourth section consisted of two open-ended questions, and the instructors were asked to explain their own teaching practices in the Department of English at the UoS.

3.5.3 Teacher Interviews

The teachers were interviewed by the researcher (Appendix D) for identifying their perceptions and practices of learner autonomy both in general, and particularly in the English Department at the University of Sulaimani. The interview questions were adapted from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012).

The teacher interview consisted of 11 questions and there were two main parts. The first part contained five questions related to the instructors' beliefs about learner autonomy in general, their interpretation of learner autonomy, and etc. However, the second part consisted of six questions to investigate the instructors' beliefs regarding learner autonomy in the English Department. More specifically, the instructors were asked if the learners in the Department were autonomous or not, what their attempts are to promote learner autonomy, and the desirability and feasibility of learner autonomy. Also they were asked to state some challenges they face in helping their students to become autonomous learners, as well as their recommendations for better promotion of learner autonomy in the Department of English.

3.6 Data Collection Procedures

The data were collected during the Fall semester of the Academic year 2017-2018. The researcher followed several steps to collect the data. Firstly, the researcher got permission from both the Department of Foreign Language Education at EMU and the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani for conducting the research (Appendix A).

Secondly, the students were asked to sign a consent form, then they were administered a questionnaire. Each student spent approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Thirdly, consent forms were given to the instructors and they were asked to sign it. Then they were requested to respond to the teacher questionnaire. Lastly, the researcher took appointment from 10 teachers for conducting interviews with them individually. Again before doing the interview, consent form was given to each instructor and they were asked to sign it. Each interview took 20 minutes, and the researcher audio recorded the interviews.

3.7 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in several phases. This study contained both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data were collected through student questionnaire and teacher questionnaire in the form of closed-items, and they were analyzed by using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The data were analyzed through descriptive statistics, and then the frequencies and means were calculated.

Regarding the qualitative data, both the student and teacher questionnaires as well as teacher interviews contained open-ended questions. For analyzing the qualitative data, the researcher put all the responses under each question, then identified the similar answers and key words for each question and gave codes. Finally, the frequencies were calculated after arranging the data into codes. and

For analyzing the teacher interviews, the researcher transcribed all the audio recordings. Then, the researcher analyzed the data in the same way as the open-ended questions were analyzed as explained above.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter, the methodology of the present study was presented. The first two sections were about the research design and the setting. The third and fourth sections were related to the research questions and the participants of the study. After that, the data collection instruments and procedures were introduced. Lastly, the data analysis procedures in the study were explained.

Chapter 4

RESULTS

In this chapter, the results of the study are presented. First, the results of the student questionnaire are examined. Next, the results of the teacher questionnaire are explained, and lastly, the teacher interviews' results are shown.

4.1 Student Questionnaire

A questionnaire was administered to the students of the Department of English to identify their beliefs and practices of learner autonomy. The questionnaire contains four sub-headings, and the results are presented under these sub-headings.

4.1.1 Learner Autonomy in Language Learning and Teaching

The findings of this part reveal the beliefs of the students about learner autonomy. This part of the questionnaire consists of 28 closed type items (five-point Likert scale). The findings of the study show that the great majority of the students had positive beliefs about learner autonomy in language learning and teaching as a large number of students strongly agreed or agreed with almost all the items in section 2. The results of this section can be seen in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Students' Beliefs about Learner Autonomy in Language Learning and Teaching

Items		SA+ A %	Unsure %	D + SD %	Mean
1	Students should make decisions and set goals of their learning.	92.7	5.3	2.0	4.53
2	Students should make good use of their free time in studying English.	90.7	6.0	3.3	4.22
3	Students should make preview before the class.	81.3	13.3	5.3	4.12
4	Students should try to use every opportunity in class to participate in the activities where and when they speak in English.	82.79	11.3	6.0	4.12
5	Students should make notes and summaries of their lessons.	82.0	14.0	4.0	4.12
6	Students should talk to their teachers and friends outside the classroom in English.	78.7	12.7	8.7	4.07
7	Students should practice English outside the class such as: record their own voice; speak to other people in English.	82.7	14.0	3.4	4.21
8	Students should use library to improve their English.	62.0	26.7	11.4	3.69
9	Students should take risks in learning the English language.	60.7	26.7	12.7	3.66
10	Students should note their strengths and weaknesses in learning English and try to improve them.	88.0	8.0	4.0	4.35
11	Besides the contents of the course, students should read extra materials in advance.	74.0	19.3	6.7	3.93
12	When students make progress in learning, they should reward themselves such as: buy new things, celebrate parties, etc.	51.4	34.7	14.0	3.51
13	Students should use the Internet to study and improve their English.	86.0	11.3	2.7	4.35
14	Students have to be responsible for finding their own ways of language learning.	78.6	13.3	8.0	4.03
15	Students should use self-study materials to learn English.	72.0	20.7	7.4	3.90
16	Students should evaluate themselves to learn better.	81.3	14.0	4.7	4.08
17	Students should be involved in selecting learning tasks and activities.	62.6	29.3	8.0	3.73
18	Students should take control of their own learning.	78.0	12.9	10.0	3.91
19	Students should plan their time while learning English.	83.3	12.7	4.0	4.17

Items		SA + A %	Unsure %	SD + D %	Mean
20	Students should exchange ideas with their friends and/or teachers on how to learn English.	78.7	17.3	4.0	4.15
21	A lot of learning can be done without a teacher.	53.3	28.0	18.6	3.53
22	Teachers have to be responsible for making students understand English.	75.3	16.0	8.6	4.01
24	Teachers not only have to teach 'what' but should also teach 'how' to learn English.	81.4	10.0	8.6	4.18
25	Teacher should let students find their own mistakes.	68.0	18.7	13.4	3.77
26	Teachers should engage students in group work activities in which they work towards common goals.	72.0	18.7	9.4	3.88
27	The teacher is an authority figure in the classroom.	50.7	33.3	16.0	3.44
28	Knowledge is something to be 'transmitted' by teachers rather than 'discovered' by learners themselves.	48.7	36.7	14.7	3.46

As can be seen in Table 4.1, nearly all the students (92.7%) showed agreement (SA/A) with item 1 (*Students should make decisions about their goals in English language learning*), and the highest agreement among all the items went to item 1, and the mean for this item was 4.53. Furthermore, the majority of the students agreed (SA/A) with item 2 (*Students should make good use of their free time in studying English*) with 90.7%, item 10 (*Students should note their strengths and weaknesses in learning English and try to improve them*) with 88.0%, item 13 (*Students should use the Internet to study and improve their English*) with 86.0%, item 19 (*Students should plan their time while learning English*) with 83.3%. The mean for item 2 was 4.22, it was 4.35 for item 10, and item 13, and 4.17 for item 19. These results show

that the students agreed with most of the above-given statements which are related to the roles of learners in language learning and teaching.

Additionally, a great majority of the students showed agreement (SA/A) with item 4 (*Students should try to use every opportunity in class to participate in the activities where and when they can speak in English*) with 82.7%, item 7 (*Students should practice English outside the class such as: record their own voice; speak to other people in English*) again with 82.7%, item 5 (*Students should make notes and summaries of their lessons*) with 82.0%, item 24 (*Teachers not only have to teach 'what' but should also teach 'how' to learn English*) with 81.4%, item 3 (*Students should make preview before the class*) with 81.3%, item 16 (*Students should evaluate themselves to learn better*) with again 81.3%, item 6 (*Students should talk to their teachers and friends outside the classroom in English*) and item 20 (*Students should exchange ideas with their friends and/or teachers on how to learn English*) with 78.7%, item 14 (*Students have to be responsible for finding their own ways of language learning*) with 78.6%, and item 18 (*Students should take control of their own learning*) with 78.0%. Regarding the means, the mean for item 4 was 4.12, for item 7 it was 4.21, 4.12 for item 5, 4.18 for item 24, 4.12 for item 3, 4.08 for item 16, 4.07 for item 6, 4.15 for item 20, 4.03 for item 14, and 3.91 for item 18.

On the other hand, there are few items in which comparatively fewer students expressed agreement with. To exemplify, 48.71% of the students strongly agreed or agreed with item 28 (*Knowledge is something to be 'transmitted' by teachers rather than 'discovered' by learners themselves*), 51.4% expressed agreement (SA/A) with item 12 (*When students make progress in learning, they should reward themselves such as: by new things, celebrate parties and etc.*), and 50.7% with item 27 (*The*

teacher is an authority figure in the classroom), but still over and above of the students showed agreement. Moreover, about these items, a number of students were unsure. For instance, for item 28 (*Knowledge is something to be 'transmitted' by teachers rather than 'discovered' by learners themselves*) 36.7% were unsure while it was 34.7% with item 12 (*When students make progress in learning, they should reward themselves such as buy new things, celebrate parties, etc.*) 33.3% with item 27 (*The teacher is an authority figure in the classroom*), 29.3% with item 17 (*Students should be involved in selecting learning tasks and activities*), and 28.0% with item 21 (*A lot of learning can be done without a teacher*).

Regarding the percentages of disagreement, the highest disagreement (D/SD) among all the items went to items 21 (*A lot of learning can be done without a teacher*) with 18.6%, item 28 (*Knowledge is something to be 'transmitted' by teachers rather than 'discovered' by learners themselves*) with 14.7%, and item 25 (*Teacher should let students find their own mistakes*) with 13.4%. And the lowest mean was in item 27 (3.44). Finally, as it can be seen from the results, the students generally had positive attitudes toward learner autonomy in language teaching and learning , and the mean for these items ranged between 3.44 and 4.53.

4.1.2 Desirability of Learner Autonomy

In the student questionnaire section 3 focuses on the desirability of learner autonomy, and it consists of two parts. In the first part, the students were asked to indicate whether or not they want to be involved in making decisions about various aspects. And in the second part, they were asked to express their beliefs about their abilities to do certain activities to develop learner autonomy. The results can be seen in table 4.2 below.

Table 4.2: Students' Beliefs about Desirability of Learner Autonomy

No.	Items	Never %	Rarely %	Sometimes %	Often %	Always %
	I want to be involved in decisions about:					
1	The objectives of a course	9.3	15.3	31.3	20.0	24.0
2	The materials used	10.0	14.0	28.7	36.7	10.7
3	The kinds of tasks and activities I do	6.7	15.3	32.7	20.7	24.7
4	The topics discussed	4.0	17.3	26.0	27.3	25.3
5	How learning is assessed	8.7	19.3	29.3	27.3	15.3
6	The teaching methods used	10.7	16.7	30.7	20.7	21.3
7	Classroom management	11.3	15.3	30.0	24.7	18.0
8	The course content	11.3	17.3	30.7	26.7	14.0
9	The choice of learning tasks	9.3	16.7	38.0	19.3	16.7
10	The time and place of the lesson	8.7	17.3	24.0	21.3	28.7
11	The speed of the lesson	11.3	13.3	26.0	22.7	26.7
12	The homework tasks	10.7	12.0	35.3	23.3	18.7
	I have the ability to:					
13	Identify my own needs	8.7	9.3	25.3	32.7	26.0
14	Identify my own strengths	3.3	15.3	33.3	27.3	20.7
15	Identify my own weaknesses	6.7	12.7	26.7	31.3	22.7
16	Monitor my progress	7.3	14.7	41.3	25.3	11.3
17	Evaluate my own learning	7.3	14.0	35.3	26.7	16.7
18	Learn co-operatively	12.7	14.0	44.7	18.0	10.7
19	Learn independently	7.3	13.3	25.3	28.0	26.0
20	Assess myself, rather than be tested	12.0	14.0	32.0	22.0	20.0
21	Find out learning procedures by myself	6.7	16.0	33.3	24.0	20.0

As it can be seen from the results, many students had the desire to be part of decisions about their learning, since they generally chose options other than *rarely* and *never* for their answers. For instance, a great number of students wanted to decide about *the topics discussed* (25.3% always, 27.3% often, 26.0% sometimes, 17.3% rarely, and only 4.0% never).

Similarly, nearly all the students indicated that they desired to be part of decisions about the *tasks and activities* (24.7% Always, 20.7% Often, 32.7% Sometimes,

15.3% Rarely, 6.7% Never). In addition, most of the students wanted to decide about *how learning is assessed* (15.3% Always, 27.3% Often, 29.3% Sometimes, 19.3% Rarely, 8.7% Never), *the time and place of the lesson* (28.7% Always, 21.3% Often, 24.0% Sometimes, 17.3% Rarely, 8.7% Never), *the objectives of a course* (24.0% Always, 20.0% Often, 31.3% Sometimes, 15.3% Rarely, 9.3% Never), and *the choice of learning tasks* (16.7% Always, 19.3% Often, 38.0% Sometimes, 16.7% Rarely, 9.3% Never).

However, comparatively fewer students stated that they wanted to take part in decisions about *the course content* (14.0% Always, 26.7% Often, 30.7% Sometimes, 17.3% Rarely, 11.3% Never), and *classroom management* (18.0% Always, 24.7% Often, 30.0% Sometimes, 15.3% Rarely, 11.3% Never).

Similarly, regarding the second part of section 3, which is related to students' abilities, almost all the students indicated that they have all the abilities that are given in section 3. For instance, nearly all the students stated that they have the ability to *identify their strengths* (20.7% Always, 27.3% Often, 33.3% Sometimes, 15.3% Rarely, 3.3% Never), *identify their own needs* (26.0% Always, 32.7% Often, 25.3% Sometimes, 9.3% Rarely, 6.7% Never), *identify their weaknesses* (22.7% Always, 31.3% Often, 26.7% Sometimes, 12.7% Rarely, 6.7% Never), *find out learning procedures by themselves* (20.0% Always, 24.0% Often, 33.3% Sometimes, 16.0% Rarely, 6.7% Never), *monitor their progresses* (11.3% Always, 25.3% Often, 41.3% Sometimes, 14.7% Rarely, 7.3% Never), *evaluate their learning* (16.7% Always, 26.7% Often, 35.3% Sometimes, 14.0% Rarely, 7.3% Never), *learn independently* (26.0% Always, 28.0% Often, 25.3% Sometimes, 13.3% Rarely, 7.3% Never), *assess themselves* (20.0% Always, 22.0% Often, 32.0% Sometimes, 14.0% Rarely, 12.0%

Never), and *learn co-operatively* (10.7% Always, 18.0% Often, 44.7% Sometimes, 14.0% Rarely, 12.7% Never).

Overall, the results obtained for this section indicate that most of the students desired to be part of decision making processes regarding their learning, and they thought that they possess the necessary abilities to perform different activities for autonomous learning.

4.1.3 Learner Autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani

In the questionnaire, section 4 is related to the feasibility of learner autonomy in the English Department of the UoS. In this section, the aim is to discover the students' beliefs about how feasible it is to promote learner autonomy in the English Department at the UoS. The results can be seen in Table 4.3.

Table 4.3 Students' Beliefs about Feasibility of Learner Autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani

No.	Items	Never %	Rarely %	Sometimes %	Often %	Always %
	In my department, students are involved in decisions about:					
1	The objectives of a course	47.3	22.7	14.7	8.7	6.7
2	The materials used	32.0	30.7	24.7	10.7	2.0
3	The kinds of tasks and activities they do	21.3	29.3	32.7	10.0	6.7
4	The topics discussed	26.7	16.0	32.7	15.3	9.3
5	How learning is assessed	26.7	22.7	36.7	5.3	8.7
6	The teaching methods used	28.7	24.0	27.3	14.0	6.0
7	Classroom management	29.3	29.3	18.7	14.7	8.0
8	The course content	40.7	22.7	22.0	9.3	5.3
9	The choice of learning tasks	29.3	26.0	24.0	15.3	5.3
10	The time and place of the lesson	36.0	22.7	23.3	10.7	7.3
11	The speed of the lesson	30.7	29.3	17.3	14.0	8.7
12	The homework tasks	29.3	23.3	29.3	8.7	9.3

No.	Items	Never %	Rarely %	Sometimes %	Often %	Always %
	In my Department, students have the ability to:					
13	Identify their own needs	20.0	31.3	28.7	12.7	7.3
14	Identify their own strengths	18.7	24.0	36.0	16.0	5.3
15	Identify their own weaknesses	21.3	24.0	31.3	18.7	4.7
16	Monitor their progress	16.0	30.0	30.7	18.0	5.3
17	Evaluate their own learning	12.7	26.7	42.0	14.7	4.0
18	Learn co-operatively (together)	11.3	26.0	46.7	9.3	6.7
19	Learn independently	13.3	29.3	32.7	18.0	6.7
20	Assess themselves, rather than be tested	22.7	28.0	26.0	18.0	5.3
21	Find out learning procedures by themselves	19.3	23.3	29.3	18.7	9.3

Contrary to the results of section 3, the results of this section indicate that the students thought that they are barely involved in decision making about their learning, as the majority of the students chose either Never or Rarely for the items of this part. For example, more than 50% of the students believed that they are Never or Rarely asked to decide about *the objectives of a course* (47.3% Never, 22.7% Rarely, 14.7% Sometimes, 8.7% Often, 6.7% always), *the course content* (40.7% Never, 22.7% Rarely, 22.0% sometimes, 9.3% Often, 5.3% Always), *the materials used* (32.0% Never, 30.7% Rarely, 24.7% Sometimes, 10.7% Often, 2.0% Always), *the speed of the lesson* (30.7% Never, 29.3% Rarely, 17.3% Sometimes, 14.0% Often, 8.7% Always), *the time and place of the lesson* (36.0% Never, 22.7% Rarely, 23.3% Sometimes, 10.7% Often, 7.3% Always), *classroom management* (29.3% Never, 29.3% Rarely, 18.7% Sometimes, 14.7% Often, 8.0% Always), *the teaching methods used* (28.7% Never, 24.0% Rarely, 27.3% Sometimes, 14.0% Often, 6.0% Always). However, some students stated that they are to some extent involved in some decisions about their learning as they chose Sometimes, Often, and Always as

appropriate answers. For instance, some students indicated that they are involved not much in decisions about *the topics discussed* (26.7% Never, 16.0% Rarely, 32.7% Sometimes, 15.3% Often, 9.3% Always), and *how learning is assessed* (26.7% Never, 22.7% Rarely, 36.7% Sometimes, 5.3% Often, 8.7% Always).

Regarding the students' abilities in the Department of English, surprisingly, almost half of the students thought that the students in the department have not much ability to *identify their own needs* (20.0% Never, 31.3% Rarely, 28.7% Sometimes, 12.7% Often, 7.3% Always), *assess themselves, rather than be tested* (22.7% Never, 28.0% Rarely, 26.0% Sometimes, 18.0% Often, 5.3% Always), and *monitor their progress* (16.0% Never, 30.0% Rarely, 30.7% Sometimes, 18.0% Often, 5.3% Always).

However, comparatively more students believed that they partly have some abilities which help them to develop autonomy (they mostly chose Sometimes). For instance, they reported that the students at the Department of English have to some extent the ability to *learn co-operatively* (6.7% Always, 9.3% Often, 46.7% Sometimes, 26.0% rarely, 11.3% never), *evaluate their learning* (4.0% Always, 14.7% Often, 42.0% Sometimes, 26.7% Rarely, 12.7% Never), *identify their strengths* (5.3% Always, 16.0% Often, 36.0% Sometimes, 24.0% Rarely, 18.7% Never), and *find out learning procedures by themselves* (9.3% Always, 18.7% Often, 29.3% Sometimes, 23.3% Rarely, 19.3% Never).

Finally, the results in this section regarding the feasibility of learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani indicate that almost all the students thought that they are not so much involved in making decisions about their

learning, and concerning their abilities, they felt that they don't have much ability to do certain things which help them to develop learner autonomy.

4.1.4 Students' Beliefs and Practices of Learner Autonomy

In the fifth section of the questionnaire, the students were asked to state their beliefs about leaner autonomy, as well as their own practices of learner autonomy in their Department.

In the first question ("What is your interpretation of learner autonomy?"), 70.6% of the students defined learner autonomy as 'to learn independently', 'to take charge of your own learning', 'to be responsible for your own learning', etc. For instance, S50 answered this question by stating "I think learner autonomy means when students are controlling their own learning". Moreover, 14.0% of the students defined learner autonomy as 'being able to evaluate your learning', or 'to assess your own learning'. For example, S63 defined learner autonomy as: "Learner autonomy is when the students evaluate their own learning". However, 15.3% of the students were not aware of the concept of learner autonomy. For instance S79 stated that 'I don't know much about it'.

Concerning the second question ("What are the characteristics of autonomous learners?"), the students stated the characteristics of autonomous learners in a variety of ways such as 'they have self-confidence', ' they take the responsibility of their own learning', 'they can assess their learning', 'they are good readers', 'they dare to take risks', 'they are enthusiastic to learn new things', 'they have prior plans', 'they have passion' and etc. For instance, S30 defined the characteristics as "they have passion for what they study" while S5 stated that "they have self-confidence, and they can assess their own learning".

Regarding the third question ("Do you consider yourself as autonomous learner"?), 28.6% of the students expressed that they consider themselves as autonomous learners since they have passion for what they study, they are mostly dependent on themselves rather than depending on their teachers, and they take control of their own learning. In addition, 13.0% of them stated that they somehow consider themselves as autonomous learners (not completely) as they cannot depend on themselves only. However, 54.0% of the students said that they do not consider themselves as autonomous learners and they explained this by arguing that their environment is not supportive to develop autonomy. And, 13.0% of them stated that they do not know or they are not sure whether they are autonomous or not.

In response to Question 4 ("How do you learn or study? Please explain the methods, techniques or strategies you use."), the students explained many methods and techniques that they use for their learning. For instance, 26.0% of the students claimed that through reading extra materials and watching movies they improve their learning abilities and it helps them to learn better, In addition, 19.3% of them stated that they use the Internet for better learning and they mentioned some websites such as Google, YouTube, and some Facebook pages.

Moreover, 18.6% of them reported that they prefer memorization technique the most as they believe that by memorization they can learn better, especially for examinations. Furthermore, 12.0% of them claimed that they use note-taking technique while in class, and then rereading their notes help them for better learning. Also, 9.3% of the students reported that doing preview of the lessons before their classes and doing reviews after their classes are good techniques for their learning process. Meanwhile, 6.6% of them preferred writing technique; by this way they will

not forget the information. And 4.6% of them indicated dictionary use as a good technique, and finally 3.3% of them stated that feeling pressure and force is a good way that helps them to study more otherwise they will not study as S11 said: "The way that I always use is forcing myself to study, otherwise I won't study".

Regarding the last question ("In your opinion, Do the teachers in your department help students to become more autonmous learners? If yes, please explain how? If not, explain why?"), most of the students were not happy and they did not share positive beliefs about this question. For instance, only 10.6% of the students reported that their teachers help them to become autonomous, and 13.3% of them stated that only some of their teachers help them to become autonomous learners. On the other hand, 76.0% of the students believe that their teachers do not help them to become autonomous learners and they even do not provide opportunities for their students to develop autonomy, More specifically, S64 said "They even don't try, they just come to class, explain the lesson, then go", while S75 stated "I believe that still our teachers follow traditional ways of teaching", S121 said "Since we don't have autonomous teachers, so they don't care about autonomous learners", and S123 uttered "No, it is been three years I'm here, and I have never seen a teacher talk about autonomy".

To sum up, the majority of the students defined leaner autonomy as independent learning, and taking charge of students' own learning. Also they stated that autonomous learners have confidence, they take the responsibility of their own learning, they can assess their learning, they dare to take risks; they can assess their learning; they are enthusiastic to learn new things, etc. However, only 28.6% of the students considered themselves as autonomous learners, 13.0% of them considered

themselves partially autonomous learners, and the rest, 54.0% did not consider themselves as autonomous learners at all. In addition, the students mentioned different methods and techniques they use for their learning, such as watching movies, using the internet, and memorization and so on. Lastly, concerning the role of the teachers in fostering learner autonomy, most of the students were unhappy about teachers' role and they generally believed that their teachers do not help them to become autonomous learners.

4.2 Teacher Questionnaire

The teacher questionnaire aimed at examining the instructors' beliefs about learner autonomy in language teaching and learning as well as their practices in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani. The findings reached from the questionnaire are given under four subheadings below.

4.2.1 Learner Autonomy in Language Learning and Teaching

This second section of the questionnaire concerns the instructors' beliefs about learner autonomy and it contains 36 items. The results of section 2 can be seen in Table 4.4.

Table 4.4 Teachers' Beliefs regarding Learner Autonomy in Language Teaching and Learning

Items		SA + A %	Unsure %	SD + D %	Mean
1	Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.	66.7	22.2	11.2	3.61
2	Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.	88.9	5.6	5.6	4.17
3	Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.	94.5	5.6	0	4.22
4	Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	77.8	16.7	5.6	4.00
5	Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.	44.4	27.8	27.8	3.22
6	Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.	72.3	16.7	11.1	3.67
7	Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	88.9	0	11.1	3.94
8	Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	38.9	27.8	33.3	3.11
9	It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.	27.8	22.2	50.0	2.72
10	It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.	77.8	16.7	5.6	3.89

Items		SA + A %	Unsure %	SD + D %	Mean
11	Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.	100	0	0	4.56
12	Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	72.3	27.8	0	3.89
13	Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.	72.2	16.7	11.1	3.72
14	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	83.4	16.7	0	4.00
15	Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centered classrooms.	55.5	22.2	22.3	3.50
16	Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	77.8	22.2	0	3.94
17	Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.	83.3	0	16.7	3.89
18	Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.	44.4	22.2	33.3	33.3
19	Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.	66.7	33.3	0	3.83
20	Learner Autonomy is only possible with adult learners.	5.6	16.7	77.7	1.94
21	Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access center.	50.0	38.9	11.1	3.50
22	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.	33.4	50.0	16.7	3.17
23	Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.	11.2	22.2	66.6	2.06
24	Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.	27.8	38.9	33.4	2.94
25	Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.	88.9	5.6	5.6	4.11
26	Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.	44.5	22.2	33.4	3.11
27	Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.	77.8	16.7	5.6	4.11
28	Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.	88.9	5.6	5.6	4.11
29	Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.	61.6	22.2	16.7	3.56
30	Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy.	72.2	22.2	5.6	3.89
31	The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.	66.7	22.2	11.1	3.67

Items		SA + A %	Unsure %	SD + D %	Mean
32	Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	94.4	5.6	0	4.28
33	The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.	33.4	38.9	27.8	3.11
34	The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	83.3	11.1	5.6	4.28
35	Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as language learner.	94.4	5.6	0	4.28
36	To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	88.9	0	11.1	3.94

The findings show that the great majority of the instructors had positive beliefs about learner autonomy in language learning and teaching as they strongly agreed or agreed with almost all the items in section 2.

As it can be seen in Table 4.4, all the instructors (100%) strongly agreed or agreed with item 11 (*Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack autonomy*), this was the item with the highest agreement and the mean was 4.56 for this item. Furthermore, 17 out of 18 teachers (94.4%) strongly agreed or agreed with items 3, 32, and 35. They all thought that learners are provided with regular opportunities to complete tasks individually to develop autonomy, and motivated learners are better at developing learner autonomy compared to learners who are not motivated. Also, they believed that learner autonomy has a positive effect on learner success.

In addition, 16 out of 18 teachers (88.9%) expressed agreement (SA/A) with items 2 (*Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy*), 7 (*Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy*), 25 (*Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy*), 29 (*Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy*), and 36 (*To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning*). Similarly most of the instructors strongly agreed or agreed with items 14 (*Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do*), 17 (*Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching*), 34 (*The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy*), 4 (*Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn*), 10 (*It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults*), 16 (*Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other*), and 27 (*Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy*).

Regarding the proper age for students to be autonomous learners, most of the instructors believed that learner autonomy can be promoted in all ages. For instance, 14 of the instructors (77.8%) believed that learner autonomy can be promoted with both young language learners and with adults (item 10). Also, 12 of the instructors (66.7%) thought that language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy (item 1), and 14 of the instructors expressed disagreement (SD/D) with the idea that learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners with 77.7% (item 20).

Concerning the impact of culture on students' ability to become autonomous learners, 13 instructors (72.2%) believed that learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds (item 13), and 66.6% of the instructors Strongly disagreed or disagreed with the idea that learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners (item 23).

To sum up, the majority of the instructors were generally positive about learner autonomy in language learning-teaching.

4.2.2 Desirability and Feasibility of Learner Autonomy

Section 3 in the teacher questionnaire attempts to find out about the instructors' beliefs regarding desirability and feasibility of learner autonomy in the Department of English. The instructors were asked to specify how desirable (i.e. ideally) they think learner autonomy is and how practicable or feasible (i.e. realistically achievable) they feel it is in the Department of English. This section consists of two parts: The first part deals with decisions students might be involved in, and the second part deals with abilities learners might have. The findings of this section are given under two separate sub-headings below.

4.2.2.1 Desirability of Learner Autonomy

The results regarding the desirability of learner autonomy in the Department of English as perceived by the instructors can be seen in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5 Teachers Beliefs Regarding Desirability of Learner Autonomy

Items		Undesirable %	Slightly Desirable %	Quite Desirable %	Very Desirable %
	Learners are involved in decisions about:				
1	The objectives of a course.	11.1	33.3	22.2	33.3
2	The materials used.	11.1	22.2	38.9	27.8
3	The kinds of tasks and activities they do.	0	22.2	38.9	38.9
4	The topics discussed.	5.6	16.7	38.9	38.9
5	How learning is assessed.	5.6	33.3	22.2	38.9
6	The teaching methods used.	5.6	27.8	33.3	33.3
7	Classroom management.	5.6	22.2	27.8	44.4
8	The course content.	16.7	11.1	27.8	44.4
9	The choice of learning tasks.	11.1	22.2	38.9	27.8
10	The time and place of the lesson.	5.6	22.2	33.3	38.9
11	The pace of the lesson.	5.6	27.8	50.0	16.7
12	The homework tasks.	11.1	27.8	22.2	38.9
	Learners have the ability to:				
13	Identify their own needs	5.6	16.7	55.6	22.2
14	Identify their own strengths	11.1	27.8	38.9	22.2
15	Identify their own weaknesses	11.1	22.2	44.4	22.2
16	Monitor their progress	16.7	27.8	27.8	27.8
17	Evaluate their own learning	11.1	44.4	22.2	22.2
18	Learn co-operatively	11.1	33.3	27.8	27.8
19	Learn independently	5.6	22.2	44.4	27.8
20	Assess themselves, rather than be tested	22.2	22.2	27.8	27.8
21	Find out learning procedures by themselves	11.1	38.9	33.3	16.7

The above results indicate that most of the instructors had positive feelings about involving learners in decision making as most of them selected Quite Desirable or Very Desirable as appropriate responses. For instance, 14 out of 18 instructors (77.8%) thought that it is quite desirable or very desirable to involve learners in decisions about the kinds of tasks and activities they do and the topic discussed. Moreover, most of the instructors (13 out of 18) found involving learners in decisions about classroom management, the course content, and the time and place of

the lesson is quite desirable or very desirable. Similarly, the majority of the instructors (12 out of 18) thought that learners should take part in making decisions about the materials used, the teaching methods used, the choice of learning tasks, and the pace of the lesson.

Likewise, regarding the learners' abilities, most of the instructors expressed positive beliefs about learners' abilities. For instance, 14 out of 18 instructors believed that the learners have the ability to identify their own needs. Moreover, 13 out of 18 instructors thought that it is quite desirable or very desirable that learners have ability to learn independently. Furthermore, most of the instructors selected quite desirable or very desirable for the statement that states that learners have ability to identify their own weaknesses (66.6%), identify their own strengths (61.1%), and monitor their progress (55.6%). On the other hand, comparatively fewer instructors thought that the learners have the ability to evaluate their own learning (8 instructors), and to find out learning procedures by themselves (9 instructors).

Finally, the findings show that most of the instructors think that it is *quite* or *very desirable* to involve students in decision making process and they generally believed that the learners have the ability to develop learner autonomy.

4.2.2.2 Feasibility of Learner Autonomy

The results regarding the instructors' perceptions on the feasibility of learner autonomy in the Department of English at the UoS can be seen in Table 4.6

Table 4.6: Teachers' Beliefs Regarding Feasibility of Learner Autonomy

Items		Unfeasible %	Slightly Feasible %	Quite Feasible %	Very Feasible %
	Learners are involved in decisions about:				
1	The objectives of a course	27.8	27.8	44.0	0
2	The materials used	27.8	33.3	27.8	11.1
3	The kinds of tasks and activities they do	27.8	11.1	55.6	5.6
4	The topics discussed	11.1	33.3	33.3	22.2
5	How learning is assessed	33.3	16.7	33.3	16.7
6	The teaching methods used	22.2	33.3	33.3	11.1
7	Classroom management	33.3	16.7	38.9	11.1
8	The course content	5.6	33.3	44.4	16.7
9	The choice of learning tasks	27.8	16.7	50.0	5.6
10	The time and place of the lesson	27.8	44.4	27.8	0
11	The pace of the lesson	33.3	27.8	38.9	0
12	The homework tasks	22.2	27.8	38.9	11.1
	Learners have the ability to:				
13	Identify their own needs	27.8	27.8	27.8	16.7
14	Identify their own strengths	16.7	50.0	22.2	11.1
15	Identify their own weaknesses	16.7	50.0	22.2	11.1
16	Monitor their progress	16.7	61.1	11.1	11.1
17	Evaluate their own learning	16.7	61.1	11.1	11.1
18	Learn co-operatively	22.2	55.6	16.7	5.6
19	Learn independently	16.7	50.0	22.2	11.1
20	Assess themselves rather than be tested	38.9	44.4	5.6	11.1
21	Find out learning procedures by themselves	27.8	38.9	33.3	0

Concerning the results in Table 4.6, the instructors shared different beliefs regarding the type of decisions they want their students to take part in. While they selected *quite feasible* or *very feasible* for some items, they marked *unfeasible* or *slightly feasible* for others. For example, 11 out of 18 instructors (61.1%) believed it is *quite feasible* or *very feasible* to get students to decide about *the course content*, *and the task/activity types*. Furthermore, for decisions about *the topics discussed*, and *the choice of learning tasks* 10 instructors (55.5%) thought that it is *very feasible/quite feasible*, however 8 of them thought that it *is slightly feasible/unfeasible*.

On the other hand, regarding the rest of the items, most of the instructors selected *slightly feasible* or *unfeasible* as suitable responses. For instance 13 instructors (72.2%) thought that it is not feasible to involve students in decisions about *the time and place of the lesson*. Also, 11 instructors found it not feasible to make students get involved in decisions about *the materials used*, and *the pace of the lesson*. Additionally, 10 instructors found it not feasible to involve students in decisions about *the objectives of a course*, and *the teaching methods used.*

As regards the learners' abilities in the Department of English, most of the instructors' believed that the students in the Department of English do not have most of those abilities as they marked *slightly feasible* or *unfeasible* in most of the items. For instance, 15 of the instructors thought that the learners do not or have very little ability to do *self- assessment rather than be tested* by as they marked *slightly feasible* or *unfeasible*. Similarly 14 of them thought that it is not feasible or *slightly feasible* or *unfeasible* for students to *monitor their progress*, *evaluate their own learning,* and *learn co-operatively*. In addition, 13 instructors stated that the students in the Department of English do not have the necessary ability (*Slightly Feasible* or *Unfeasible*) to *identify their own strengths, identify their own weaknesses, find out learning procedures by themselves*, and *learn independently.*

To conclude, the instructors had different beliefs regarding the type of decisions they want their students to take part in, and they believed that their students in the Department of English do not have enough abilities to be autonomous learners.

4.2.3 Learner Autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani

This section consists of two open-ended questions, in which the instructors were asked to state their beliefs about leaner autonomy in the Department of English at the UoS and specifically comment on their teaching practice concerning learner autonomy.

In response to the first open-ended question ("Do you consider your students in the Department of English at University of Sulaimani as autonomous learners? Please explain."), twelve instructors indicated that their students are not autonomous; four of them believed that some of their students are autonomous, and some of them are not, however only two instructors considered their students as autonomous learners. Generally, most of the instructors in the Department of English did not consider their students as autonomous learners and they had various opinions concerning this issue. Most of the instructors stated that their students do not have enough opportunities and facilities to help to become autonomous learners, and they think that Kurdish students in general are taught to be guided and motivated all the time by their teachers and they are mostly dependent only on their teachers, as T9 said that "Actually my students are not independent and autonomous learners, my experience taught me that Kurdish students should guided and motivated as they don't actually know how to make progression". Similarly, T7 said "Students in the Department of English are not autonomous learners and they want you to lead them and explain everything they want and to memorize what you explain." Also some teachers connected this issue to the country's education system as it is mostly teacher-centered classrooms. For instance, T12 indicated: "No, because the system of my country is teacher-centered and students don't have self-confidence." In addition T17

made some suggestions for promoting learner autonomy as he stated "Learners need to reform their learning method from an earlier age."

Regarding the second question, ("To what extent do you promote learner autonomy in your teaching? If you promote it, how do you do that? If you don't promote it, please explain why."), nearly all the participants indicated that they always try to promote learner autonomy in their classes. And when they were asked how they do it, they mentioned various ways as by encouraging their students to depend on themselves, or giving them tasks to be done either in pairs, group or individually. For instance, T5 said "I promote it by giving them some tasks to be done either in pairs, groups, or individually, plus providing some sources and guidance. I monitor them and direct them in their assignment". Similarly T13, indicated

> I do promote learner autonomy in my textbook analysis. To illustrate, the students have a group work project who are going to analyze an educational textbook for their own students. My students work independently and effectively on their projects with my monitoring. By the end of their projects they will be able to analyze and evaluate a book for their learners.

Additionally, another way they mentioned about promoting autonomy is involving their students in classroom discussions and giving them opportunities to present seminars as T10 stated "Sometimes I give time to students to participate in the explanation of simple tasks and sometimes I dedicate time to develop their learner autonomy via giving them opportunities to present seminars about relevant topics of what I teach." T17 stated that he is promoting learner autonomy by "applying critical thinking and reading, along with open book discussion and one's own subjective interpretation."

To sum up, most of the instructors in the Department of English did not consider their students as autonomous learners, and they all stated that they always try to foster learner autonomy in their classes in various ways.

4.3 Teacher Interviews

Teacher interviews were done to obtain in-depth data about the instructors' beliefs regarding learner autonomy generally and their beliefs about learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani specifically. The interview consists of two major parts: the first part was about learner autonomy in general, and the second part was about learner autonomy specifically in the Department of English at the Uos. Ten instructors in the Department of English agreed to take part in the interviews and each interview took 15 to 20 minutes.

4.3.1 Teachers' Beliefs about Learner Autonomy

This section contains the answers of the first five questions in part 1 of the teacher interview.

The responses to the first question ("What is your interpretation of learner autonomy?") reveal that the instructors interpreted the concept in various ways. For instance T5 stated that "Learner autonomy means allowing students to learn by themselves, depending on themselves." Additionally, two of the instructors indicated that learner autonomy means when students work together either in pairs or in groups. And the other two instructors explained it as getting the responsibility of their own learning. For example, T7 pointed out that "Learner autonomy means the learner himself takes responsibility of his own learning, independently. I think instead of spoon feeding the student, the learner himself takes the spoon and firmly feeds himself."

Concerning Question 2, ("What are the characteristics of autonomous language learners?"), four of the instructors believed that autonomous learners are independent learners who mostly depend on their skills and on their abilities. For instance, T2 said "Autonomous learners are independent, they don't want to depend only on their teachers, they always depend on themselves when they want to learn new things and when they practice new language". Two other instructors thought that autonomous learners have self-confidence and self-esteem as they always believe in their abilities and talents. Additionally one of the instructors indicated that autonomous learners always search for information apart from their studies, outside the classrooms. And the rest of the instructors believed that autonomous learners are those learners who have a huge desire to learn the language and they have passion for it. As T6 stated "Autonomous learners are those learners who really wants to learn the language and have desire to learn the language".

In response to the third question ("Do you think that the students who are more autonomous are better L2 learners?"), seven of the instructors believed that autonomous learners are better L2 learners. For instance, T3 said that "Yes, strongly agree, generally when a student has plan for what he or she is doing, how to develop skills, I think they can be more professional learners". Similarly T6 stated that "Yes, I think they are because in most of the cases they can depend on themselves and they don't shy." However, only one instructor (T10) thought that being an autonomous learner is not a pre-condition for being a better second language learner, and he said that according to Krashen, exposure and acquisition are more important.

Concerning the fourth question ("How does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?"), the majority of the instructors thought that learner autonomy mostly

contributes to L2 learning and they mentioned the great role of learner autonomy in second language learning. For instance, T8 stated that "It contributes to L2 learning, because through autonomy students can learn the language by themselves and they can become good language learners".

When asked the fifth question ("How does learner autonomy contribute to English language teacher education?") most of the instructors pointed out that it is very necessary to promote learner autonomy in English language teacher education programs. Four of the instructors thought that it is very essential to have learner autonomy in English language teacher education programs, as they deal with pre-service teachers, and their graduates will be future English language teachers, For instance T10 stated that "learner autonomy contributes to English language teacher education because if we promote learner autonomy we can let students stand on their own and depend on themselves." In addition, two of the instructors believed that a teacher cannot develop his or her learners' autonomy if he or she is not autonomous. Also, two of the instructors claimed that it facilitates the teachers' job because the students will mostly depend on themselves rather than their teachers. Additionally, T8 and T9 suggested that learner autonomy be integrated into the teacher education program and some training courses be organized and offered after the graduation for the teachers to be more aware of the concept of learner autonomy.

4.3.2 Learner Autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani

This section contains the answers of the six questions in part 2 of the teacher interview.

Regarding the first question ("Do you think that your students in the Department of English are autonomous? Please explain."), three of the instructors claimed that the majority of the students are not autonomous and they always want to be guided by their teachers completely. For instance, T1 said that they are not autonomous at all because they do not have interest in learning the language by themselves and they all the time want to be spoon fed. Additionally, five of the instructors stated that only a limited number of students are autonomous and they connected this issue to the students' educational background; T4 stated "I can say just a limited number of them are autonomous, may be this is due to the educational background specially in primary and secondary school, the education system here is so down that is why we cannot make the students to depend on themselves as still we have teacher-centered classrooms." However, T7 and T8 pointed out that they can consider their students as autonomous learners because they think that most of them are independent as they mostly depend on external materials rather than just teachers.

When asked the second question, ("To what extend do you promote learner autonomy in your teaching? If you promote it, how do you do this? If you don't promote it, please explain why?"), six instructors stated that they do their best to foster it in their classes. For instance, T4 stated that "I promote it as much as I can, I'm sacrificing time for this purpose. I don't care about the time as much as I care about their performance as autonomous learners" They also mentioned some ways for promoting it; for example, T7 said that she distribute topics among the students and in groups of four or five they work together. More specifically, T7 stated that "I'm teaching English through Literature to my fourth year students, I give them more than eleven to twelve literary texts, various texts in Drama, Poetry and Novel, I distribute these topics and they are free to work on their favorite topic." On the other

hand T2, T8, T9 and T10 believed that it depends on the subject, as there are some subjects they cannot promote learner autonomy much. For instance T9, stated that "I'm teaching three subjects, methodology, grammar, and textbook analysis, I cannot promote autonomy in my grammar class as much I do in my methodology or textbook analysis classes."

As to the third question ("Based on your experience, how desirable (i.e. ideally) is it to promote learner autonomy in the Department of English?"), almost all the instructors found it very desirable in the Department of English. For example, T9 stated that "Yes, I have desire for it, because our students will become future teachers so it's very important to make them autonomous, and at the end of the day they become future teachers as well." Similarly, S7 said that "It's desirable, I like students to teach themselves, not only stick to teachers' ways."

In response to the fourth question ("Based on your experience, how feasible (i.e. realistically achievable) is it to promote learner autonomy in the Department of English?"), half of the instructors thought that it is slightly feasible due to some factors. More specifically, T2 mentioned the problem with the Department's library, and he stated that the department does not have a good library as there are not enough books and sources so it is almost empty. Also they mentioned about the department's educational system, as it is not so much supportive for fostering autonomy. However, the other half stated that it is feasible if the instructors really want to promote it. For example T10 said "It is very feasible to promote it" He further explained:

> When you give them assignments and if you give them rewards, they try to do their best. In my translation class, I asked them present a documentary with subtitles with either Kurdish or English, I assign 10 marks to it, and I give bonus to those who wants to present their videos in front of audience.

Furthermore, T9 said that it is feasible but they need to train the teachers for better promotion of learner autonomy in the Department of English.

Concerning the fifth question ("What are the challenges that you face in helping your students become more autonomous? Please explain."), three of the instructors claimed that the education system is the biggest obstacle as they find it not supportive to promote learner autonomy. For instance, T10 stated that "The biggest problem is with those who supervise education system, they are they don't upgrade themselves." Furthermore, five of the instructors mentioned lack of the sources as a big challenge for them, especially library and internet problems. In this regard, T4 explained:

> When I assign them a task, I'm sure they can't find a good source for it neither in internet nor in library, since the university has not have access to the world's universities and there is not enough books in the library.

The other two instructors claimed that the biggest obstacle to them is the students themselves, because they do not have desire to learn and they do not have willingness to be autonomous. When answering the final question, ("What are your recommendations for more effective or better promotion of learner autonomy in the Department of English?"), most of the instructors suggested to have internet access to the World's libraries as T4 stated "In this department, it is a must to link the library to Europe or at least some nearby countries."

Also two of the instructors recommended having at least a course in the education program about the importance of learner autonomy in language teaching and learning. And one instructor suggested for having not so many slides, because she

thought that having slides make students lazy and dependent as she said "First thing is to put away the slides, and make students read by themselves." Finally, although most of the instructors had positive beliefs of learner autonomy, still it is not promoted in their department.

4.4 Summary

In summary, in this chapter the results of student and teacher questionnaires, as well as teacher interviews have been presented. The findings of the study indicate that both the students and instructors have positive beliefs about learner autonomy in general, but they think that it is not very feasible to be promoted in the Department of English at the Uos. The following chapter deals with the discussion of the results in relation to the relevant literature.

Chapter 5

DISSCUSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter consists of three parts. The first part deals with discussion of the major findings under the three research questions. The second part contains the conclusion of the study, and in the last part pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and recommendations for further research are explained.

5.1 Discussion of the Results

In this section, the major findings of the study are discussed by relating to the relevant literature and the research questions are answered.

5.1.1 Research Question 1: What are the students' and instructors' beliefs regarding learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani?

The findings obtained from student questionnaire show that most of the students were positive about learner autonomy in the Department of English. However, although the great number of students had positive attitudes towards learner autonomy, surprisingly still half of the students considered their teachers as authority figures in their classrooms. For instance, in item 27 (*The teacher is an authority figure in the classroom*), only half (50.7%) of the students expressed agreement with this item. Similar findings can be seen in other studies, such as Farahi (2015), in which the researcher stated that "students always want to depend on their teachers, despite of the students positive attitudes towards learner autonomy" (p.69). Likewise,

Koçak(2003) found that the students believed that the teacher has more responsibility in the learning and teaching.

In the present study, the students were asked to express if they desire learner autonomy in their Department. The findings show that nearly all the students had the desire to take part in taking decisions regarding their learning. To exemplify, they wanted to be part of decisions about the topics discussed, the task and activity types, how learning is assessed, the place and time of the lesson, the objectives of a course, and the choice of learning tasks. Similarly, Farahi (2015) found out that most of the students were positive about being involved in decision making processes. They had desire to be active in making decisions re the tasks and activities, the homework, the discussion topics, the materials, the teaching methodology, and assessment. Moreover, in a study by Balçıkanlı (2008) involving students in decision making regarding their learning considered to be very essential in the promotion of learner autonomy in the language classrooms.

Concerning the students' abilities, almost all the students indicated that they have the necessary abilities to identify their strengths and weaknesses, identify their own needs, find out learning procedures by themselves, monitor their progress, and evaluate their learning. Cotterall (1995) also stated that, autonomous learners can have control of their own learning through deciding about aims and objectives, planning practice opportunities, or evaluating their progress.

Concerning the results of the instructor questionnaire, the findings show that the great majority of instructors were positive about promoting learner autonomy. All the instructors thought that confident and motivated language learners are more likely to

develop autonomy than those who lack confidence and who are not motivated. Such finding is supported by other studies, such as Dogan (2015), where the researcher found that a vast majority of the instructors believed that those learners who have confidence and motivation could promote autonomy more easily than those learners who do not have much.

Additionally, most of the instructors believed that providing opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone, and to study independently in the library are good ways for promoting learner autonomy. Similarly, Dogan (2015) found out that most of the instructors considered independent study in a library and independent work in a self-access center and out-of-class tasks as important factors in developing learner autonomy.

Furthermore, majority of the instructors believed that doing co-operative group work activities is a good way for promoting learner autonomy; also they indicated that learner autonomy has a positive effect on success of a language learner. With regard to the importance of group work activities, Dogan (2015) also indicated that a majority of the instructors believed that "learning to work alone was as important as learning from each other for the development of learner autonomy" (p.103).

Regarding the proper age for students to be autonomous learners, most of the instructors believed that learner autonomy can be promoted in all ages of language learners. As they indicated, it is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.

Concerning the impact of culture on students' ability to become autonomous learners, most of the instructors (72.2%) believed that learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, 66.6% of the instructors showed disagreement with the idea that learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners item with 66.6%.

Regarding the instructors' beliefs about the desirability of learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani, most of the instructors had positive feelings about involving learners in decision makings. Also, most of the instructors showed positive beliefs about learners' abilities. The majority of the instructors believed that it is *quite desirable/very desirable* to get students to decide about the tasks and activities, the discussion topics, classroom management, the course content, and the time and place of the lesson.

Also they generally indicated that the learners have the ability to develop learner autonomy. Likewise, Dogan (2015) found out that the instructors had desire and they had positive attitudes towards involving students in decision making processes, and they believed that these opportunities could help them to promote learner autonomy. Therefore, the instructors and the students share the same beliefs about the desirability of learner autonomy, as they both thought that it is quite or very desirable to involve students in decision making processes regarding their learning. Moreover, they both believed that students have necessary abilities to become autonomous learners.

To sum up, both the students and the instructors had positive beliefs regarding learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani.

5.1.2 Research Question 2: What are the students' and instructors' practices of learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani?

Regarding the students' practices of learner autonomy, the great number of the students thought that they are barely involved in decision making about their learning in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani. They believed that their Department does not give them enough opportunities to get involved in decision making about the course content, the materials used, the speed of the lesson, the time and place of the lesson, classroom management, and the teaching methods used.

Likewise, almost half of the students felt that in the Department of English it is not realistically achievable for them to identify their own needs, assess themselves, and monitor their progress. However, a good number of students believed that they partly have some abilities which help them to develop autonomy. For instance, they reported that they partly have the ability to learn co-operatively and evaluate their learning.

Similarly, Farahi (2015) found out that most of the students in the Department of ELT at Eastern Mediterranean University believed that they are not involved in most of the decisions about their learning. . Additionally, Sakai, Takagi, & Chu (2010) conducted a research about students' perceptions and practices of learner autonomy, and they found out that the students felt hesitant to manage their classes as they believed that they were not well trained to use these strategies skillfully.

In addition, the students were also asked about the ways they learn or study, in other words how they practice learner autonomy, and in response they mentioned many methods and techniques that they use for their learning such as reading extra

materials and watching movies which improve their learning abilities and help them to learn better. Furthermore, they stated that they use the Internet for better learning as they mentioned some websites such as Google, YouTube, and some Facebook pages. Moreover, some of them claimed that they use note-taking technique while in class and then rereading their notes help them for better learning. Furthermore, they reported that doing preview of the lessons before their classes and doing reviews after their classes is a good technique for their learning process. Meanwhile, a good number of students consider writing technique and dictionary use as preferable techniques for better promotion of learner autonomy.

Concerning the instructors' practices of learner autonomy, they had various beliefs about the type of decision they ask their students to take part in. For example, most of the instructors thought that it is quite feasible or very feasible to get students to take part in decisions about the course content, the kinds of tasks and activities they do, the topics discussed, and the choice of learning tasks. On the other hand, they thought that it is slightly or not feasible to involve students in decisions about the time and place of the lesson, the materials used, and the pace of the lesson, the objectives of a course, and the teaching methods used. Similarly, Farahi (2015) in her study found out that most of the instructors thought that it is *slightly feasible/unfeasible* to involve students in decisions about the classroom management, the teaching methodology and the place and time of the class.

Regarding the instructors' beliefs about their learners' abilities in the Department of English, most of them thought that the students in the Department of English do not have the ability to assess themselves, to monitor their progress, evaluate their own

learning, learn co-operatively, to identify their own strengths, identify their own weaknesses, find out learning procedures by themselves, and learn independently.

Furthermore, nearly all the instructors indicated that they always try to promote learner autonomy in their classes. They mentioned various ways for doing so such as encouraging their students to depend on themselves, giving them tasks to be done either in pairs, group or individually, involving their students in classroom discussions, and giving them opportunities to present seminars. However, they mentioned some challenges that they face in practicing learner autonomy, such as the education system as they found it not supportive to promote learner autonomy, and lack of sources due to internet and library problems.

To sum up, the majority of the students believed that they are rarely involved in decisions about their learning, also they stated that in the Department of English it is not realistically achievable to identify their own needs, assess themselves, and monitor their progress. Regarding the instructors' practices of learner autonomy, they have got different attitudes towards the type of decisions they want their students to take part in, and they thought that their learners in the Department of English do not have necessary abilities to develop learner autonomy.

5.1.3 Research Question 3: To what extend learner autonomy is promoted in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani?

The results of the study show that learner autonomy is not promoted much in the Department of English at the UoS. Although both the instructors and the students claimed to be ready for it and expressed positive ideas about it, they indicated that it is very desirable for them to promote learner autonomy, but they did not find it very feasible to promote it in their Department. Such findings can be seen in literature, for

instance, Krisztina (2016) conducted a study to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions and their classroom practices of learner autonomy at a secondary comprehensive school in Hungary. And the findings of the study indicate that although learner autonomy was an educational goal in their curriculum, and teachers had positive thoughts about learner autonomy, they did not take it in to practice and the students also have the same opinion about learner autonomy and they did not consider their school as a place to foster autonomy.

5.2 Conclusion

The results of the study indicate that both the students and the instructors in the Department of English at the UoS had positive beliefs about learner autonomy. Regarding the desirability of learner autonomy, the findings of the study show that both the instructors and the students generally thought that it is desirable to get students to decide about their learning; also they claimed that the students possess the necessary abilities to be autonomous learners.

Yet, they believed that it is *slightly feasible or unfeasible* to engage students in all the decisions for their learning. The instructors had various beliefs about the type of decision they want their students to take part in. To exemplify, the majority of the instructors believed that it is *quite feasible* or *very feasible* to involve students in decisions about the course content, the tasks and activities, the topics discussed, and the choice of learning tasks. On the other hand, involving students in decisions about the time and place of the lesson, the materials used, the pace of the lesson, the objectives of a course, and the teaching methods used was considered *slightly feasible* or *unfeasible* by the instructors. In addition, both the instructors and the

students in the Department of English thought that the students in the Department do not have necessary abilities to promote learner autonomy.

Moreover, the majority of the instructors stated that they always attempt to promote learner autonomy in their classes. They pointed out different ways for doing so such as encouraging their students to depend on themselves, giving them tasks to be done either in pairs, group or individually, involving their students in classroom discussions, and giving them opportunities to present seminars.

Overall, both the instructors and the students shared positive beliefs about learner autonomy, but they thought that it is not very feasible to promote it in the Department of English at Uos.

5.3 Implications of the Study

In this section, the practical implications of the present study for promoting learner autonomy in the Department of English are presented. Firstly, the students should be given enough opportunities to take part in decision making about the course content, the materials used, the speed of the lesson, the time and place of the lesson, classroom management, and the teaching methods used. Moreover, in some courses in the teacher education program, the importance of learner autonomy in language teaching and learning should be focused on in order to make students aware of the concept.

5.4 Limitations of the Study

One of the limitations of the study is that the researcher could have done observations to see what the students and the instructors are actually doing in the classroom in terms of learner autonomy. Moreover, in the present study, the

researcher collected data through student questionnaire, teacher questionnaire, and teacher interviews, but not student interviews. So, another limitation of the study is the lack of student interviews. Furthermore, the researcher could only collect data with second, third, and fourth year students, not the first year students because while the researcher collected data in the Department, they did not register yet, and this can be considered as another limitation of the study.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

For future studies, it is recommended that researchers use some other data collection instruments, like student interviews, classroom observations and need analysis for more in-depth data. Also, other researchers can repeat the same procedures using all the levels (first, second, third, and fourth) year students in the Department.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Permission Letter

University of Sulaimani
Faculty of Physical and Basic Education
School of Basic Education
Department of English

To/ Eastern Mediterranean University-English Language Teaching Department

Reference: Permission Letter

This is to certify that Ms. Airin Shwan Ibrahim has contacted Department of English- School of Basic Education – University of Sulaimani and we have exchanged ideas about her project. The department gives her permission to conduct the research entitled (An Investigation into Learner Autonomy in the ELT Department at the University of Sulaimani) using information related to our department. It is our pleasure to be helpful since the research will have great benefit for our department as well.

Please, feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Yours Sincerely
Dr. Bakhtiar S. Hama
Chair of the Department of English
School of Basic Education
University of Sulaimani
Email: bakhtiar.hama@univsul.edu.iq
Tel: +964 (0) 7701565661

February 13, 2017

Appendix B: Student Questionnaire

Dear Students,

I am a Master's student and I'm currently doing my thesis on learner autonomy. The main purpose of this questionnaire is to find out your beliefs about learner autonomy in language learning and teaching. The questionnaire also aims to find out about learner autonomy in the English Department at the University of Sulaimani. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Please while responding to the questionnaire, express your opinion sincerely. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes. For further information you can contact me or my supervisor.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Airin Shwan Ibrahim	**Asst. Prof. Dr. Fatoş Erozan**
MA student	MA Thesis supervisor
Email: airinshwan1@gmail.com	Email: fatos.erozan@emu.edu.tr
Department of Foreign Language Education Education	Department of Foreign Language
Faculty of Education	Faculty of Education

_____

CONSENT FORM

Having read and understood the aim of this study, I agree to take part in it by responding to this questionnaire.

Name- Surname: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Student Questionnaire

Part 1: Background Information

Instructions: Please provide the necessary information

Your:

1. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

2. Age: _____

3. Nationality: ☐ Iraqi   Other _____ (Please specify)

4. Native language: ☐ Kurdish   ☐ Arabic   Other _____(Please specify)

5. Year of study: ☐ 1st Year ☐ 2nd Year ☐ 3rd Year ☐ 4th Year

Part 2: Language Learning and Teaching

Instructions: Please read each of the following statements about language learning and teaching, and mark (✔) as appropriate:

5- Strongly Agree (SA), 4- Agree (A), 3- Not Sure (NS), 2- Disagree (D), and 1- Strongly Disagree (SD).

		5 SA	4 A	3 NS	2 D	1 SD
1.	Students should make decisions about their goals in English language learning.					
2.	Students should make good use of their free time in studying English.					
3.	Students should make preview before the class.					
4.	Students should try to use every opportunity in class to participate in the activities where and when they can speak in English.					
5.	Students should make notes and summaries of their lessons.					
6.	Students should talk to their teachers and friends outside the classroom in English.					
7.	Students should practice English outside the class such as: record their own voice; speak to other people in English.					
8.	Students should use library to improve their English.					

		5	4	3	2	1
		SA	A	NS	D	SD
9.	Students should take risks in learning the English language.					
10.	Students should note their strengths and weaknesses in learning English and try to improve them.					
11.	Besides the contents of the course, students should read extra materials in advance.					
12.	When students make progress in learning, they should reward themselves such as: buy new things, celebrate parties, etc.					
13.	Students should use the Internet to study and improve their English.					
14.	Students have to be responsible for finding their own ways of language learning.					
15.	Students should use self- study materials to learn English.					
16.	Students should evaluate themselves to learn better.					
17.	Students should be involved in selecting learning tasks and activities.					
18.	Students should take control of their own learning.					
19.	Students should plan their time while learning English.					
20.	Students should exchange ideas with their friends and/or teachers on how to learn English.					
21.	A lot of learning can be done without a teacher.					
22.	Teachers have to be responsible for making students understand English.					
23.	Teachers should point out the students' errors.					
24.	Teachers not only have to teach 'what' but should also teach 'how' to learn English.					
25.	Teacher should let students find their own mistakes.					
26.	Teachers should engage students in group work activities in which they work towards common goals.					
27.	The teacher is an authority figure in the classroom.					
28.	Knowledge is something to be 'transmitted' by teachers rather than 'discovered' by learners themselves.					

Part 3: Learner Autonomy and YOU

Instructions: Please read each of the following statements and mark (✔) as appropriate for YOU.

I <u>want</u> to be involved in decisions about:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
The objectives of a course					
The materials used					
The kinds of tasks and activities I do					
The topics discussed					
How learning is assessed					
The teaching methods used					
Classroom management					
The course content					
The choice of learning tasks					
The time and place of the lesson					
The speed of the lesson					
The homework tasks					

I <u>have</u> the ability to:	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Identify my own needs					
Identify my own strengths					
Identify my own weaknesses					
Monitor my progress					
Evaluate my own learning					
Learn co-operatively					
Learn independently					
Assess myself, rather than be tested					
Find out learning procedures by myself					

Part 4: Learner Autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani

Instructions: Please read each of the following statements and mark (✔) as appropriate to indicate how feasible (i.e. realistically achievable) they are for you in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani.

In my Department, students <u>are involved in decisions about:</u>	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
The objectives of a course					
The materials used					
The kinds of tasks and activities they do					
The topics discussed					
How learning is assessed					
The teaching methods used					
Classroom management					
The course content					
The choice of learning tasks					
The time and place of the lesson					
The speed of the lesson					
The homework tasks					

In my Department, students <u>have the ability to:</u>	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Always
Identify their own needs					
Identify their own strengths					
Identify their own weaknesses					
Monitor their progress					
Evaluate their own learning					
Learn co-operatively (together)					
Learn independently					
Assess themselves, rather than be tested					
Find out learning procedures by themselves					

Part 5: Your Beliefs and Practices of Learner Autonomy

Instructions: Please answer the following questions to express your perceptions of Learner Autonomy, and comment more specifically on your learning experiences at the Department of English at University of Sulaimani.

1. What is your interpretation of 'learner autonomy'?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………

2. What are the characteristics of autonomous learners?
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………

3. Do you consider yourself an autonomous learner? Please explain.
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   ………………

4. How do you learn or study? Please explain the methods, techniques or strategies you use.
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   ……………

5. In your opinion, do the teachers in your department help students to become more autonomous learners? If yes, please explain how. If no, explain why.

   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………
   …………………………………………………………………………………………

End of the questionnaire

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire

Appendix C: Teacher Questionnaire

Dear Instructors,

I am a Master's student and I'm currently doing my thesis on *learner autonomy*. The main purpose of this **questionnaire** is to find out your beliefs about learner autonomy in language learning and teaching. The questionnaire also aims to find out about learner autonomy in the English Department at the University of Sulaimani. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Please while responding to the questionnaire, express your opinion sincerely. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes. For further information you can contact me or my supervisor.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Airin Shwan Ibrahim

MA student

Email: airinshwan1@gmail.com

Department of Foreign Language Education Education

Faculty of Education

Asst. Prof. Dr. Fatoş Erozan

MA Thesis supervisor

Email: fatos.erozan@emu.edu.tr

Department of Foreign Language

Faculty of Education

_____

CONSENT FORM

Having read and understood the aim of this study, I agree to take part in it by responding to this questionnaire.

Name- Surname: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Part 1: Background Information

Your

1. Gender: ☐ Male   ☐ Female
2. Age: _____

3. Nationality: ☐ Iraqi   Other _____ (Please specify)
4. Native language: ☐ Kurdish   ☐ Arabic   Other_____ (please specify)
5. Years of teaching experience: _____

6. Years of experience as an instructor in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani: _____

7. Academic title: _____

Part 2: Language Learning and Teaching

Instructions: Please give your opinion about the following statements by marking (✔) as appropriate.

5- Strongly agree (SA), 4- Agree (A), 3- Not sure (NS), 2- Disagree (D), 1- Strongly disagree (SD).

		5	4	3	2	1
		SA	A	NS	D	SD
1.	Language learners of all ages can develop learner autonomy.					
2.	Independent study in the library is an activity which develops learner autonomy.					
3.	Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone					
4.	Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.					
5.	Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.					
6.	Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.					

		5	4	3	2	1
		SA	A	NS	D	SD
7.	Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.					
8.	Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.					
9.	It is harder to promote learner autonomy with proficient language learners than it is with beginners.					
10.	It is possible to promote learner autonomy with both young language learners and with adults.					
11.	Confident language learners are more likely to develop autonomy than those who lack confidence.					
12.	Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would					
13.	Learner autonomy can be achieved by learners of all cultural backgrounds.					
14.	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.					
15.	Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher -centered classrooms.					
16.	Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.					
17.	Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.					
18.	Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.					
19.	Learner autonomy is promoted by activities that encourage learners to work together.					
20.	Learner autonomy is only possible with adult learners.					
21.	Learner autonomy is promoted by independent work in a self-access center.					
22.	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed					
23.	Learner autonomy is a concept which is not suited to non-Western learners.					
24.	Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.					
25.	Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.					

		5	4	3	2	1
		SA	A	NS	D	SD
26.	Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.					
28.	Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.					
29.	Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy					
30.	Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.					
31.	Out-of-class tasks which require learners to use the internet promote learner autonomy.					
32.	The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.					
33.	Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.					
34.	The proficiency of a language learner does not affect their ability to develop autonomy.					
35.	The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.					
36.	Learner autonomy has a positive effect on success as a language learner.					
37.	To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.					

Section 3: Desirability and Feasibility of Learner Autonomy

Below there are two sets of statements. The first gives examples of decisions **LEARNERS** might be involved in; the second lists abilities that learners might have. For each statement:

a. First say how **desirable** (i.e. ideally), you feel it is.
b. Then say how **feasible** (i.e. realistically achievable) you think it is **for the learners you currently teach in the Department of English.**

You should mark (✔) **TWO** boxes for each statement – one for **desirability** and one for **feasibility.**

	Desirability					Feasibility			
	Undesirable	Slightly desirable	Quite desirable	Very desirable		Unfeasible	Slightly feasible	Quite feasible	Very feasible
Learners are involved in decisions about:									
The objectives of a course.									
The materials used									
The kinds of tasks and activities they do									
The topics discussed									
How learning is assessed									
The teaching methods used									
Classroom management									
The course content									
The choice of learning tasks									
The time and place of the lesson									
The pace of the lesson									
The homework tasks									
Learners have the ability to:									
Identify their own needs									
Identify their own strengths									
Identify their own weaknesses									
Monitor their progress									
Evaluate their own learning									
Learn co-operatively									
Learn independently									
Assess themselves, rather than be tested									
Find out learning procedures by themselves									

Section 4: Learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani

Instructions: In this section you are given two open-ended questions and asked to comment more specifically on your teaching at the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani. Please answer the following questions by giving specific examples.

1. Do you consider your students in the Department of English at University of Sulaimani as autonomous learners? Please explain.
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………

2. To what extent do you promote learner autonomy in your teaching? If you promote it, how do you do that? If you don't promote it, please explain why.
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………………………………………………………………………
……………………………

End of the questionnaire

Thank you for filling in the questionnaire

Appendix D: Teacher Interview

Dear Instructors,

I am a Master's student and I'm currently doing my thesis on *learner autonomy*. The main purpose of this **interview** is to find out your perceptions about learner autonomy in language learning and teaching. The interview also aims to find out about learner autonomy in the English Department at the University of Sulaimani. Taking part in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. Please while responding to the interview, express your opinion sincerely. The interview will be audio-recorded, and your identity and individual responses will be kept strictly confidential and used only for research purposes. For further information you can contact me or my supervisor.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Airin Shwan Ibrahim   **Asst. Prof. Dr. Fatoş Erozan**

MA student   MA Thesis supervisor

Email:airinshwan1@gmail.com   Email: fatos.erozan@emu.edu.tr

Department of Foreign Language Education   Department of Foreign Language
Education

Faculty of Education   Faculty of Education

_____

CONSENT FORM

Having read and understood the aim of this study, and how my audio-recorded answers will be used, I agree to take part in it by responding to the interview questions.

Name- Surname: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Teacher Interview Questions

Part 1: Learner autonomy

1- What is your interpretation of 'learner autonomy'?
2- What are the characteristics of autonomous language learners?
3- Do you think that the students who are more autonomous are better L2 learners?
4- How does learner autonomy contribute to L2 learning?
5- How does learner autonomy contribute to English language teacher education?

Part 2: Learner autonomy in the Department of English at the University of Sulaimani

1- Do you think that your students in the Department of English are autonomous? Please explain.
2- To what extent do you promote learner autonomy in your teaching? If you promote it, how do you do this? If you don't promote it, please explain why?
3- Based on your experience, how **desirable (i.e. ideally)** is it to promote learner autonomy in the Department of English?
4- Based on your experience, how **feasible (i.e. realistically achievable)** is it to promote learner autonomy in the Department of English?
5- What are the challenges that you face in helping your students become more autonomous? Please explain.
6- What are your recommendations for more effective or better promotion of learner autonomy in the Department of English?