

From teacher dependency to learner independence: a study of Saudi learners' readiness for autonomous learning of English as a Foreign Language

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Abstract

This study attempts to assess the readiness of Saudi students for independent/autonomous learning, with a focus on learning of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The study used a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to gain insights from a population of 319 students (aged 15-24) about their perceptions of responsibilities, decision-making abilities, motivation, involvement in autonomy-related activities, and capacity to take charge of their own learning. The findings of the study confirmed the relatively low readiness of Saudi EFL learners for independent learning ($M = 3.06$ on a scale of 1 to 5, $SD = .31$). Learners demonstrated low responsibility levels, since only 17.27% of them perceived that they accept sole responsibility for their EFL learning. Respondents reported a moderate level of ability ($M = 3.63$) and motivation ($M = 3.70$) to learn English. A considerable percentage of participants (27.29%) reported that they are rarely involved in self-directed activities; they demonstrated high levels of teacher dependency and low levels of learner independence. Despite the participants' reasonable level of awareness of the nature of learner autonomy and its demands, their responses identified them as EFL learners with low autonomy. This study informs EFL learning stakeholders in Saudi Arabia that learners' readiness for such conditions must be developed before interventions aimed at promoting autonomy are implemented in this context.

تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تقيم مدى جاهزية الطلاب السعوديين لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية بصورة ذاتية. وظفت الدراسة استبياناً ومقابلات للحصول على وجهة نظر ٣١٩ طالباً حول مدى تحملهم المسؤولية للتعلم بشكل ذاتي، قدرتهم على اتخاذ القرار، الدافعية لتعلم اللغة الأجنبية، المشاركة في الأنشطة الذاتية، والقدرة على التعلم بشكل ذاتي. اثبتت نتائج الدراسة ضعف جاهزية الطلاب السعوديين لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية بشكل ذاتي (متوسط = ٣,٠٦، انحراف معياري = ٠,٣١). اثبت المشاركون ضعف تحملهم للمسؤولية للتعلم بشكل ذاتي حيث ادعى ما نسبته (١٧,٢٧%) من الجمالي المشاركين تحملهم لذلك في حين عكس المشاركون مستويات متوسطة للقدرة على التعلم (٣,٦٣) والدافعية لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية (٣,٧٠). تعكس نسبة كبيرة من المشاركين (٢٧,٨٣%) عدم مشاركتهم في أنشطة التعلم الذاتي والاعتماد بشكل كبير على المعلم وضعف الاعتماد على النفس. على الرغم من المستويات المتوسطة التي ابداهها المشاركون حول الاعتراف بأهمية التعلم الذاتي ومتطلباته الا ان اجاباتهم على الاستبيان واسئلة المقابلة اثبتت عدم جاهزيتهم للتعلم الذاتي. توصي هذه الدراسة المسؤولين عن تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية في المملكة العربية السعودية بتوفير البيئة المناسبة للتعلم الذاتي قبل محاولة دمج الطلاب في هذا النوع من التعلم.

Introduction

The notion of learner autonomy has increasingly attracted research interest in the field of language learning during recent decades. The world is currently heading toward a new educational horizon in which the primary issue involves preparing students to bear responsibility for their own in-class learning as well as for life-long learning beyond the borders of the classroom.

Literature review

The concept of learner autonomy

Many researchers have attempted to conceptualize the term 'learner autonomy'. Cotterall (1995) defined autonomy as "the extent to which learners demonstrate the ability to use a set of tactics for taking control of their learning". Likewise, Dam (1995) perceived learner autonomy as a *readiness* to take charge of one's own learning, proposing that autonomy entails both a *capacity* and a *willingness* of the learner to act independently and in cooperation with others as a socially responsible person. Scharle and Szabo (2000) argue that responsible learners are those who recognize the importance of making efforts to progress in learning, who use opportunities available for learning (e.g. classroom activities and assignments), and who consciously monitor their own progress.

Learner-centeredness

Chan (2001) argued that the fundamental principle of autonomous learning is that the locus of control and responsibility lies primarily in the hands of the individual learner. Tudor (2010) used the term 'learner-centeredness' for learners being more independent and responsible in learning a language. According to previous studies (e.g., Chan, 2001; Joshi, 2011), learner-centeredness is significant in that it leads the learner to experience different aspects of autonomy. In the light of the conclusions provided by these studies, the learner-centered approach enables the learner to assume a new role in which s/he takes charge of every stage of his/her own learning to become actively involved in setting learning goals, identifying and developing learning strategies to achieve such goals, defining learning content and materials, making choices in relation to the methods and techniques to be used, developing study plans, identifying and selecting relevant resources, monitoring and evaluating his/her own progress, etc.

In contrast to learner-centeredness, teacher-centeredness implies that teachers are viewed as sole authorities and controllers of the classroom. In teacher-centered learning environments, learners prefer teachers to be in charge and they rely heavily on teachers to explain everything to them, comprehensively guide them while learning, frequently identify and correct all their mistakes, provide them with learning strategies and learning materials, and give regular feedback on students' work.

Learner autonomy and motivation

Given the fundamental role of learner autonomy and motivation in learning foreign languages (most widely, English as a Foreign Language, EFL), the relationship between these two variables has been investigated and assessed in prior research. This relationship has been found to work in both directions. The findings of earlier research (see Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998; Koçak, 2003; Spratt, Humphreys & Chan, 2002) indicated that motivation is a key factor in the extent to which learners are ready to learn autonomously. Moreover, Dörnyei (2001a) hypothesizes that one important aspect of how motivation relates to the direction and magnitude of human behaviors is the *choice* or the reason *why* people decide to do something, which is a fundamental aspect of learner autonomy. Dickinson (1995) states that active and independent involvement of learners in their own learning, which refers to learner autonomy, increases motivation to learn and therefore increases learning effectiveness. He also maintained that motivation shares some aspects of autonomy, including learner choice, learner independence and learner responsibility. Additionally, Ushioda (1996) suggests that autonomous learners are motivated learners by definition.

Earlier research on readiness for EFL learner autonomy

Chan's (2001) study in Hong Kong is one of the seminal studies on readiness for learner autonomy. Using a questionnaire and follow-up interviews, the study investigated language learning attitudes of 20 second-year language major students with respect to four main areas of autonomous learning: motivation of language learning, perception of the teacher and learner roles in the language learning process, learning styles and preferences, and perceptions of autonomous learning. The study results suggested a highly positive attitude toward learning autonomously on the part of learners; the study also showed that those learners had definite views of the nature of learner autonomy and that they were highly aware of its demands. These findings were unexpected and somewhat surprising to the author, given that the study participants largely came from traditional and authoritative backgrounds that had little or no previous autonomous learning experience and no learner training in such a direction.

Another significant study of readiness for learner autonomy was conducted by Spratt et al. (2002) in the same context (Hong Kong). Using a questionnaire and interviews, the study had the primary goal of assessing the readiness of 508 students for language learner autonomy by examining their views of their responsibilities and those of their teachers, their confidence in their ability to operate autonomously, their level of motivation to learn English, and their stated practice of autonomous learning in the form of activities both outside and inside the classroom. The results of the study revealed that motivation, as a precondition for autonomy, is a key factor that influences the extent to which learners are ready to learn independently.

Farahani (2014) recruited 405 Iranian EFL learners through a questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and non-participant observations. The study identified a gap between learners' consciousness of autonomous learning and their preferred practice in the classroom. While they claimed to be motivated and disagreed that they face constraints when practicing autonomy, they perceived themselves to be dependent on their teacher as the main source of knowledge.

Reviewing the local literature on learner autonomy reveals that only one study has examined learners' perceptions of autonomy as a key indicator of their readiness in the Saudi EFL context. Tamer's (2013) study was designed to assess the readiness of 121 Saudi university students in a preparatory English program, involved in autonomous learning of EFL with respect to their perceptions of responsibilities, abilities, motivation, and inside/outside class self-directed activities. Similar to the findings of Farahani (2014), the results showed that the reported high levels of motivation and confidence in abilities were inconsistent with the lack of voluntary learning activities coupled with students' reluctance to assume responsibility for their own learning. The researcher attributed these inconsistent findings to students' over-reliance on teachers and the 'spoon-feeding' habit that is extremely dominant in the Saudi context. This study, however, was limited for a number of reasons. Participants were all males studying at the same school level, and they were recruited from only one institution. Moreover, the lack of qualitative data instruments in this study (e.g. a learner interview) to support the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaires is a major limitation. The author himself emphasized the narrow scope of his research, stating that because of this narrow scope, the findings of his research could not be generalized and that research with a wider scope is needed to reach conclusive results. The present study aims to meet this challenge.

Rationale of this study

The over-dependence of Saudi EFL learners on teachers typically results in teachers dominating the entire learning process and learners demonstrating a passive role in learning the foreign language. As a result of this 'spoon-feeding' education system, teachers typically encounter learners who are unconscious of their roles as EFL learners and unwilling to learn and, consequently, are low achievers in the target language. This study thus takes the initiative in addressing the issue of Saudi EFL learners' perceptions of learner autonomy as an important yet neglected variable in the English language learning process in the country. Gaining a better understanding of learners' perceptions and interpretations of their role in this process would reflect the degree of their readiness to take charge of their EFL learning. Such knowledge would in turn be enlightening and beneficial for both educational policy makers and teachers in the Saudi context in terms of pointing to any changes necessary for initiating, maintaining, and promoting Saudi EFL learners' autonomy.

Methods

Objectives

This exploratory study of learner autonomy was conducted in Saudi Arabia in 2016. Along the same lines as research in other contexts, this study aims to examine the issue of learner autonomy in the Saudi EFL context by exploring learners' perceptions in terms of the following:

- their opinions of their own and their teachers' responsibilities;
- their ability to behave autonomously;
- their motivation level;
- their views about their involvement in autonomy-related activities; and
- their capacity for independent EFL learning.

Sample and population

A sample of 319 Saudi EFL learners participated in this study, comprising 186 female and 133 male students with an age range of 15–24 who were studying English in Saudi Arabia at different levels, ranging from intermediate school to university levels, from different parts of the country; it represents a broad sample of EFL learners of this age in Saudi Arabia.

Instrumentation

To strengthen both the validity and the reliability of the findings, this study adopted a triangulation approach in terms of instrumentation. Dörnyei (2007) defined data triangulation as

combining quantitative and qualitative data sources that help reduce the inherent weaknesses of individual methods by offsetting them by the strength of another, thereby maximizing both the internal and external validity of the research. (pp. 43-44)

The quantitative data were gathered through a questionnaire, and the qualitative data were collected by means of semi-structured interviews.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire consisted of 81 Likert scale items designed to measure students' readiness for autonomous learning in five areas: perceptions of responsibilities in EFL learning (13 items), abilities for

EFL learning (12 items), motivation for learning English (14 items), autonomy-supportive activities (22 items), and independence in learning English (20 items). The final version of the questionnaire is available in Appendix A. Most items in this instrument were adapted from Cotterall (1995), Farahani (2014), Ming and Alias (2007), Spratt et al. (2002), and Swatevacharkul (2008); other items were newly designed for the purpose of the current study. To ensure the validity of the instrument for the study context, we submitted the questionnaire to experts from the English Department at King Khalid University. These experts were requested to evaluate the questionnaire in terms of content validity, face validity and item clarity. The questionnaire was then revised, and necessary changes were made. After the revision procedure was completed, the learners' questionnaire was translated into Arabic to avoid informants' failure to understand the questions and therefore to encourage them to respond appropriately. To test the reliability and validity of the Arabic version of the scale, we examined both the forward and backward translations of the instrument (i.e. the original English version of it was translated into Arabic, and then translated back into English) by experienced bilingual professionals. The verified, translated Arabic version of the questionnaire was also validated on a group of 43 students who were not among the participants in the main study, in order to check whether the Arabic wording, statements and instructions were clear to them. According to the comments from these students, some minor modifications were made to improve the clarity of the language in order to make it comprehensible to participating students and accordingly guarantee the cultural validation of the instrument. With regard to reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated to check the internal consistency of the instrument. The coefficient was found to be 0.87 for the entire scale (overall instrument) and for the sub-scales: Responsibilities (0.65), Abilities (0.83), Motivation (0.87), Autonomy-related Activities (0.87), and Capacity for Independent learning (0.61). Thus, the results indicated a high level of internal consistency.

Interview

A six-item semi-structured interview tool (Appendix B) was employed to explore learners' views regarding their interpretation of learner autonomy, the role of learner autonomy in language learning, the characteristics and language behavior of an autonomous learner, their evaluation of how autonomous they are, their perceptions of what teachers can do to help students to become more autonomous, and the factors that hinder learner autonomy. The interview schedule used in this study resembled similar instruments used in earlier studies (e.g., Chan, 2001; Spratt et al. 2002).

Data collection procedures

The questionnaire data were collected using an online survey accessed via an internet link. Participation was completely voluntary, and students were not offered any remuneration or reward for their participation. Participants who satisfied the ethical considerations and showed a willingness to participate were provided with a link to the survey. By clicking on the link, the participants were directed to an introductory section in which they received ample information about the aims of the study and the ways it would be conducted. They were reassured that the data collection procedure was intended only for the purpose of this research and not for any kind of evaluation or test. The confidentiality of their responses was also reassured. Before proceeding to the next section, every possible participant was asked to complete an online consent form to confirm his/her participation. Individuals who declined the option to participate were provided with a link to exit the survey. Those who gave their consent to participate were asked to proceed to the next section to begin responding to the first part of the questionnaire. After the introductory section, the online survey comprised five sections in which respondents were asked to express their perceptions regarding the five aspects of autonomous learning

examined in this study. Each section begins with information about the goal of the section, how to respond to the items in this section, and the approximate time expected to finish each section. In the final section of the survey, the respondents were asked to provide some demographic information (including gender, age range, school level).

To probe the questionnaire results and gain further insights, follow-up semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the term. Fifteen participants (4.7% of the entire study sample) volunteered to take part in the interviews. Interviews were conducted in a relaxed and informal atmosphere that encouraged interviewees to feel comfortable expressing themselves freely and, accordingly, to respond honestly. For this purpose, the researcher used a note-taking approach (transcribing) to gather interview data instead of audio recording, as note taking was considered the most direct and least invasive way of collecting this kind of data (Muswazi and Nhamo, 2013). The interviews were conducted primarily in Arabic, the mother tongue of the interviewees; the Arabic interviews were subsequently transcribed and translated into English. Face-to-face interview sessions were conducted by the researcher to interview male participants during the learners' break time after or before class in their own classrooms. Female participants were interviewed by the researcher over the phone because of cultural restrictions. At the beginning of each interview, the researcher briefly explained the research focus and aims and reminded the participants about the voluntary and anonymous nature of these interviews. Each participant was interviewed individually for approximately 10 minutes and was asked questions related to different aspects of learner autonomy (Appendix B).

Data analysis procedures

Because of the descriptive nature of this study, descriptive statistics (i.e., frequencies and percentages) were obtained for the questionnaire results. The scores of 5-point Likert scale questionnaires were computed to determine the mean score (M) and standard deviation (SD) for each questionnaire item. The mean scores of questionnaire items were computed further to determine the mean score for the sub-scales and for the entire scale.

The data collected from the interviews were transcribed, coded and categorized into themes and then analyzed and interpreted in light of the interviewees' answers to the six questions in the interview.

Findings

This section reports the results of both the quantitative and qualitative data analyses. The first part presents the results of the quantitative data gathered via the questionnaire. The findings of the student questionnaires are presented in five main parts: 1) learners' perceptions of their own responsibilities and those of their teachers, 2) their decision-making abilities, 3) their motivation level, 4) the use of self-directed activities, and 5) their assessment of the degree of independent learning that they experience.

The second part discusses the results of the qualitative data derived from the interviews that were conducted to develop a deeper understanding of the Saudi learners' autonomous behavior.

Learners' perceptions of their own responsibilities and those of their teachers

In section 1 of the questionnaire, 13 aspects of learning English in and out of the classroom were listed, and students were asked to indicate the locus of responsibility for these aspects (who they consider responsible for each aspect of EFL learning) by choosing one of three options: themselves, their teachers only, or both themselves and their teachers. The level of responsibility for each aspect is calculated

based on the percentage of students selecting each option. For example, in response to item 1 in Section 1 of the survey in Appendix A, 6.3% of participants stated that it is their sole responsibility to recognize how they are progressing in learning English; 18.5% of them considered the teacher as more responsible for this activity; and the majority of students (75.2%) appeared to have a notion of shared responsibility between themselves and their teachers in this regard. The overall responsibility level over all 13 aspects in section 1 is calculated by calculating the mean percentage of students responding that responsibility is “*Mine altogether*”, as well as the mean for “*Teacher’s and mine*”. Overall, an average of 17.27% of learners perceived that they bore sole responsibility for EFL learning. In fact, for almost half (7 out of 13) of the items listed in Section 1 (i.e. items 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8), no more than 10% of learners indicated that they hold sole responsibility. They considered most of these activities to be either their teachers’ responsibility alone, or a joint responsibility as theirs and their teachers together. The respondents in general did not see themselves as responsible for evaluating their progress, enhancing self-motivation, identifying weaknesses while learning, deciding on course objectives as well as course content, choosing the activities in which they engage in class, and determining the time necessary to complete each in-class activity. Given that each of these responsibilities represents an important aspect of learner autonomy, the responses to these items clearly show that these learners are highly dependent on their teachers.

The only item that the participants reported holding a high degree of responsibility for was related to deciding what to learn outside the classroom (item 13). While this finding might indicate that learners are highly independent in managing their out-of-class learning, it also reflects almost a complete absence of the teacher role in following up with learners outside of class. This absence greatly contrasts with the controlling nature of teachers within the classroom (e.g. deciding the objectives of the course). Since learning in the complete absence of teacher assistance is a frequent misconception about the concept of learner autonomy, this contradiction might explain the reason behind the high score for learners on item 13: perhaps teachers failed to take responsibility in the out-of-class learning process rather than learners taking responsibility independently in this regard. The high level of responsibility that learners claim to take in out-of-class learning in this study is consistent with the result observed by Tamer (2013), who found that 83% of learners made the same claim. He attributed his finding to the fact that the teacher is no longer physically available to lead students outside the classroom, who therefore claim responsibility for themselves; this explanation might apply to the population in the current study as well.

While acknowledging sole responsibility for only 17.27% of the EFL learning process designated by the thirteen cognitive and meta-cognitive aspects of learning English listed in Section 1 of the questionnaire, on average, 82.73% of the participants reported that the teacher should take full or partial responsibility for the aspects asked about, with an average of 36.35% of respondents holding the teacher alone responsible for the language learning aspects, and 46.38% considering the EFL process to be a joint responsibility held by themselves and their teachers. The participants hold the teacher primarily responsible for some of the aspects for which they assigned themselves the lowest levels of responsibility, such as identifying learners’ weaknesses, identifying course objectives, determining course content, and determining the time necessary to complete each in-class activity.

One major finding shown in the figures reported in Section 1 is that a minimum percentage of learners claimed sole responsibility for all aspects of EFL learning provided in the list, apart from item # 13. This key conclusion indicates that Saudi learners of English are typically dependent on their teachers because of the “spoon-feeding” practice that has caused them to act as passive learners. This finding is consistent with that of Abdool, Yahya and Unzueta (2009), who found that more than 80% of Saudi

students surveyed in their study stated that they should be dependent on their teachers for information. Learners' reliance on teachers could be primarily attributed to the centralized nature of EFL learning in Saudi Arabia. Al-Seghayer (2014) emphasized that the system of teaching English in Saudi Arabia is centralized and controlled by the Ministry of Education (MoE): English teachers are always equipped with an identical fixed syllabus with guidelines and deadlines that they are required to apply and follow. This strongly prescriptive nature of the curriculum likely reinforces student dependency on the teacher.

As Shah, Hussain and Nasseef (2013) asserted, this strong centralization mechanism for Saudi English language education administration suggests that Saudi English teachers themselves have less autonomy and teach within certain boundaries, which accordingly affects learners' autonomy. Little (1991) emphasized the mutual relationship between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy, arguing that learner autonomy does not result in a teacher's lack of responsibility in formal instruction.

Learners' perceptions of their decision-making abilities

In section 2 of the questionnaire, students were asked to rate their degree of ability for taking charge of 12 autonomy-revealing tasks given in this section based on five options: "Very Poor", "Poor", "OK", "Good" and "Very Good". Again, the overall ability level is calculated by calculating the mean percentage for each option over the 12 learning tasks. For example, an average of 52.45% of learners stated that they had a "Good" (30.11%) or "Very Good" (22.34%) ability to take charge of the facets of EFL learning as shown in this section. A small portion of learners (7.8%) claimed a poor ability to take charge of autonomous learning, and the smallest share (2.45%) demonstrated a very poor ability in this respect.

The good and sometimes very good levels of abilities stated by learners in this study are in clear contrast with their lack of acknowledgement of responsibility reported in the previous section. In this section, 90% of learners claimed to be highly confident in learning on their own, whereas in the responsibilities section, a high portion of participants (82.73%) reported that the teacher should take full or partial responsibility for their learning. For example, in Section 1, 62.1% of learners stated that identifying learner weaknesses is the responsibility of the teacher alone. In Section 2, 93.1% of respondents reported having the ability to identify their weaknesses on their own; of those, 53.9% even claimed to have a good ability to do so.

The good levels of ability stated by learners could be interpreted as strong confidence in their abilities and a readiness to claim almost full responsibility for independent learning. In contrast, the previously-demonstrated low degree of readiness for taking responsibility for their own learning suggests that they have low confidence in their ability to take charge of their own learning. One possible explanation provided by Tamer (2013), who had similar findings, for such an inconsistency is the mismatch between the hypothetical and the real, as students may find it easy to claim high ability and confidence without actually being challenged. He added that when learners are called to act upon those abilities, they are typically reluctant to meet such challenges. Another possible explanation for the largely similar responses of learners in this section could relate to the nature of learners' responses to the self-rated items in the questionnaire: perhaps they wanted to appear diligent to avoid losing face in reporting low abilities. Students' responses might have also been based on a belief that *if* the fundamentals of independent learning were met, they *would* demonstrate high ability in meeting the demands of this kind of learning.

Learners' perceptions of their motivational level

In section 3 of the questionnaire, learners were asked to rate the applicability of each statement in this section to themselves using the following rating scale: *Very untrue* – *Untrue* – *Uncertain* – *True* – *Very true*. The scoring values assigned to these options ranges from 1 for “Very untrue” to 5 for “Very true”. We used the following ranking to classify the motivational levels of learners:

Ranking	Mean Score
Highly motivated	4.50–5.00
Quite motivated	4.00–4.50
Moderately motivated	3.50–4.00
Slightly motivated	3.00–3.50
Poorly motivated	2.50–3.00
Not at all motivated	Below 2.50

The mean score for the motivation scale was 3.70. Based on this result, learners in this study can be classified as moderately motivated. In light of the above ranking, the majority of respondents are fairly evenly distributed into three categories: slightly motivated (28.21% of respondents), moderately motivated (27.27%), and quite motivated (26.96%). The remainder of them appears at the two extremes of the scale: either poorly motivated (7.84%) or highly motivated (8.15%). Only five students among the full sample (1.57%) reported being completely unmotivated. More than two-thirds of students (62.38%) considered that they had an above-average level of motivation (i.e., they were moderately to highly motivated). The moderate to high levels of motivation reported by learners in this section appear consistent with the levels of ability that learners presumed in the previous section. This consistency might indicate that learners are ready for autonomous learning in that they are sufficiently capable and motivated to take charge of their own learning.

Students' responses might be interpreted as a sign of motivation since learners scored highly on items that pertain to intrinsic interest in learning English, such as items # 3, 4, 5, and 6 in Section 3 of Appendix A. However, the results in this section are again quite misleading. As in the findings of Farahani (2014) in Iran, these results are in contrast with the low level of responsibility for independent learning reported earlier by learners, the low levels of involvement in self-directed activities, and the high levels of teacher reliance reported in subsequent sections of this paper. Although motivation is often closely related to achievement in that high EFL achievement necessitates high levels of motivation, as is well established in the language learning literature (e.g. Bernaus and Gardner 2008; Masgoret and Gardner 2003), this relation may not hold for Saudi EFL learners, who have been recognized as low EFL achievers (see for example Alrashidi & Phan, 2015; Rahman & Alhaisoni, 2013); indeed, such an interpretation could be confusing and quite false. One possible interpretation for the participants' overwhelmingly positive responses to most of the motivation items is that these responses reveal their positive attitudes toward learning EFL rather than indicating genuine motivation to learn. A positive shift in Saudi learners' attitudes toward learning English has been observed in the past few years (see e.g., Alrahaili, 2013) because of the large amount of effort and money that the Saudi government has invested in enhancing Saudi awareness of the importance of English as a worldwide language and the practical benefits of learning English for Saudi individuals and society alike. Therefore, the data in this section may well indicate that Saudi learners hold an explicitly positive attitude toward EFL learning; this attitude may not itself be linked with motivation but is undeniably a very important prerequisite for motivation. This

finding emphasizes the need for language teachers and educators in the Saudi EFL context to find practical ways to 'translate' learners' positive attitudes into real motivation.

Learners' perceptions of their involvement in autonomous activities

In this section, respondents reported their involvement in 22 self-directed activities. On average, the most commonly chosen response (by 27.29% of learners) was that they are "Rarely" involved in such activities (23.46% of them stated "Sometimes", 19.94% said "Often", 15.59% said "Never", and 13.72% said "Always". The mean score for the activities scale is 2.88 (out of 5), which clearly shows the low involvement of the participants of this study in autonomous activities.

As the figures in Section 4 in Appendix A show, learners have almost never been engaged in activities related to making suggestions to the teacher, writing diaries in English, reading daily English newspapers, and writing essays in English. Learners' responses to the item "make suggestions to your teacher in English" provide clear evidence that learners' lack autonomy, as the majority of them (42.3%) stated that they never make suggestions in English language classes. This finding suggests that students are typically reactive rather than proactive and they are thus not involved in decision making. The low competence of learners in English could also be a factor preventing learners from expressing their ideas freely to the teacher. This low competence could also be a cause of learners' withdrawal from certain activities, such as reading daily English newspapers and writing essays in English, as they perceive that such activities are well beyond their capabilities.

The participants emphasized that they rarely engage in most of the activities listed in Section 4. The most rarely utilized activities are those relating to communicating in the target language both inside and outside of class, such as talking to foreigners in English, talking to friends over the phone, asking the teacher questions in English, speaking English in the classroom, and discussing learning problems with classmates in English. This finding highlights the point that Saudi EFL learners typically have problems in speaking skills and often appear reluctant to speak in English, primarily because of their few opportunities to communicate in the target language both in class (see Aljumah, 2011; Rabab'ah, 2002) and outside of class (e.g., Alharbi, 2015; Khan, 2011). Activities related to reading in the foreign language, such as reading grammars on one's own and reading books and magazines in English, are also rarely used by learners. This result highlights the issue that Saudi EFL learners experience difficulties at different skill levels not only in the productive skills of speaking and writing but also in reading and listening skills, as indicated in item 9 (listen to the radio in English). Other rarely utilized activities include those related to some study habits, such as studying English in a group with classmates and doing voluntary revisions. In addition to performing voluntary assignments, the respondents reported that they "sometimes" use technology while studying English, such as chatting with a friend via WhatsApp or other social media programs, sending emails in English, and browsing internet websites in English, which reveals the tendency of those learners to not utilize technology in language learning regardless of its vital importance in this regard.

The respondents reported that they "often" make notes regarding new words and information in English (items 3 and 19). The participants in this study, who are all English-major students, appear to have evaluated these two items based on the requirements of their study. As English-major students, they are typically expected to take notes during lessons using the target language rather than their Arabic mother tongue. Therefore, these two frequently utilized activities concern requirements rather than true motivation in using the foreign language.

Two out-of-class activities have been found to be “always” practiced by a majority of learners in this study: ‘read signboards in English’ and ‘watch English movies’. These two activities, especially the latter, might reveal a deep interest in using the English language. However, these two activities are out-of-class activities that students do in the absence of the teacher’s control. Since this study is more concerned with evaluating learners’ in-class autonomy, they remain therefore less indicative of learner autonomy than the in-class activities, which are always controlled by the teacher and were ranked as rarely or never practiced by learners in this study.

Learners’ perceptions of their degree of independence

In this part, learners’ perception of their teacher’s role and their own role were examined. The participants were asked to provide their responses on a five-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. A higher mean on the questionnaire items measuring the teacher role (items 1-12 in Section 5 in Appendix A) was interpreted as an indication of lower teacher-centeredness (i.e., lower reliance of learners on their teacher) and higher learner-centeredness (i.e., higher learner independence). In the same direction, a higher mean for items representing the learner role (items 13-20 in Section 5) was interpreted as an indication of higher learner-centeredness (i.e., higher learner independence) and lower teacher-centeredness (i.e., lower reliance of learners on the teacher) and vice versa.

We followed this ranking to identify the independence levels of learners in this study:

Ranking	Mean Score	Percentage %
Highly independent	4.50–5.00	(above 90%)
Independent	4.00–4.50	(80–90%)
Slightly independent	3.50–4.00	(70–80%)
Slightly dependent	3.00–3.50	(60–70%)
Dependent	2.50–3.00	(50–60%)
Highly dependent	below 2.50	(below 50%)

Most learners in this study prefer teacher-centered learning over autonomous learning: 90.91% of them are considered dependent on their teachers (46.08% are slightly dependent, 39.81% are dependent, and 5.02% are highly dependent). Only 9.09% of the respondents are independent EFL learners (8.78% of them are slightly independent, 0.31% are independent, and none (0.00%) are highly independent).

With regard to teacher-centeredness ($M= 2.77$, $SD= .91$), the learners in this study showed a high degree of dependence on their teachers in different aspects of EFL learning, as shown in items 1-8 in Section 5 of Appendix A (e.g., giving ongoing help and guidance while learning, identifying learners’ weaknesses, determining the objectives of each activity that learners complete in class, explaining material to students during lessons, understanding the content of the language course, and correcting learners’ mistakes). In responses to items (9-12), the respondents were optimistic that their teachers could delegate some responsibility for learning English independently to them, such as selecting lessons that they would like to learn, deciding what and how to learn, and granting them the opportunity to learn on their own. Rather than being indicators of real independence, learners’ responses to these items remained primarily reflective of what learners believe to be the proper practice of teachers, who were expected by learners to grant them some responsibility for their learning. This result could also be interpreted, as emphasized by Chan (2001), as indicating that those learners had a natural disposition for self-direction and that the teacher might need to teach them how to learn autonomously, as the

learners might not be aware that they possessed the knowledge and skill base needed for language learning autonomy.

Regarding learner-centeredness ($M= 2.81$, $SD= .88$), the responses of learners confirmed their lack of independence in EFL learning, ranging from being slightly dependent (as in their responses to items 13, 14, 15, and 17 in Section 5) to being highly dependent (as in their responses to items 18, 19, and 20 in the same section). In response to item # 16, the respondents reported feeling slightly independent in deciding the due dates for assignments and exams in the English course; this response could be considered the only real sign of independence reported by learners.

In summary, the findings reported above confirm the well-acknowledged consideration that Saudi EFL learners are considered highly reliant on their teachers (e.g., Al Asmari, 2013; Tamer, 2013). Tawalbeh and AlAsmari (2015) clarified that the majority of EFL classes in Saudi Arabia are teacher-centered. They added that the teacher in this context plays a dominant role in being the authority in the classroom, which minimizes learner opportunities for active involvement in activities. In short, Saudi EFL students perceive their teacher as a leading figure in the classroom with the power to make decisions, give instructions, and provide them with input. As a result, students in this context are typically passive recipients of information delivered to them by their instructors.

Overall readiness for autonomy

Therefore, to what degree are Saudi EFL learners ready to take charge of learning EFL?

We adapted the following evaluation criteria used by Swatevacharkul (2008) to evaluate Saudi EFL learners' readiness for independent learning:

Mean	Percentage %	Degree of learner autonomy readiness
4.50–5.00	(above 90%)	Very high
4.00–4.50	(80–90%)	High
3.50–4.00	(70–80%)	Moderate
2.50–3.50	(50–70%)	Low
1.00–2.50	(50% or less)	Very low

To obtain the mean score for learners' readiness, we totalled the mean scores for all five aspects of autonomous learning tested in this study and divided the total mean by five (total mean score/5) as follows: *Responsibilities* ($M = 2.92$) + *Abilities* ($M = 3.63$) + *Motivation* ($M = 3.70$) + *Autonomous activities* ($M = 2.89$) + *Capacity for independent learning* ($M = 2.79$). The final mean score for learners' readiness was 3.06, which means that their readiness for autonomous learning is fairly low. Exhibiting such a low degree of autonomy readiness could be interpreted as a kind of survival autonomy in which learners, in this context, seek to achieve nothing except to meet the requirements for passing the course.

Interview results

A summary of students' responses to the six questions on the interview is provided in this section.

In response to the first question, "What is your interpretation of 'learner autonomy?'", most interviewees indicated that learner autonomy means learning by oneself with no help or guidance from the teacher. While learners appear to be aware of the active role that they should assume in their own learning, they also hold a misconception that learner autonomy means learning in the absence of the teacher. Little (1991) rejected this misconception, explaining that autonomy is not a synonym for self-

instruction and does not entail an abdication of responsibility on the part of the teacher; rather, the development of learner autonomy depends crucially on the initiatives that the teacher takes.

Students' responses to the second question in the interview, "Do you think learner autonomy plays a crucial role in language learning? Why? Why not?", indicates significant conclusions. A large majority of learners appear to be well aware of the vital role of autonomy in the learning of a foreign language. They acknowledged that learner autonomy is central to learning English because it enables learners to become responsible for their learning, to be more motivated to learn and improve their learning, to be free from the control of the teacher and to generally help them improve their learning of the foreign language.

The learners also identified the characteristic qualities of the autonomous learner when answering the third question in the interview, "What do you think are the characteristics and language behavior of an autonomous learner?". The learners recognized that an autonomous learner is the one who learns on his/her own, is highly motivated to learn, takes every possible opportunity to use the language inside and outside of the classroom, always participates in classroom discussions and asks the teacher questions, and shows interest and enthusiasm about learning a language.

In their answers to the fourth question, "To what extent do you consider yourself an autonomous learner?", the interviewees confirmed the unfortunate fact that Saudi EFL learners are generally non-autonomous. The following are some of their responses when they were asked to indicate whether they are autonomous learners (all names are pseudonyms):

I must admit that I am not an autonomous learner. I am always dependent on the teacher who does everything in class. (Hashem)

I never felt autonomous. I do not have the chance to decide on anything in class. (Ahmad)

Nobody has ever cared about our autonomy since we were in primary school. It is always the teacher who decides what to do or not to do in our class. This is what we are used to. (Saeed)

I don't think I am autonomous enough because I always like the teacher to tell me what to do. (Rami)

I believe that all Saudi students are non-autonomous because most of them are not motivated to learn English and they are all overly dependent on their teachers. (Dalal)

No one helps students to learn autonomously. Most students here study English just to pass exams, and they don't have any obvious motive beyond that. (Salem)

These responses confirm the low degree of autonomy, if any, that Saudi learners hold. Students' reactions to these items could be attributed to prior poor learning experiences, a passive orientation by teachers, and their lack of motivation to learn English.

While the interviewees' responses to questions 2 and 3 clearly show that they are conscious of what learner autonomy is, their responses to question 4 emphasize the need to find practical means to translate this awareness into the actual practice of learner autonomy.

In responding to the fifth question, the interviewees suggested some of the means by which "the teacher can help students to become more autonomous". They recommended that the teacher permit them to choose the units that they study, allow them to choose class activities, motivate them more to learn, involve them in decision making, and be tolerant and accepting of their mistakes. These valuable suggestions again acknowledge learners' awareness of the nature of learner autonomy and its prerequisites.

In response to the sixth question, “What factors help or hinder learner autonomy?”, the learners indicated that their low autonomy pertains to a variety of factors, including overcrowded classes, activities in the prescribed curriculum, insufficient class time that causes the teacher to lecture throughout class in order to cover all the material on the syllabus, teacher’s lack of appropriate understanding of learner autonomy, and the lack of cooperative learning in the classroom. Given that these factors play a negative role in both learners’ autonomy and their EFL achievement (Alrabai, 2016a), it is essential to address these factors extensively in order to minimize their undesirable impact on the different variables of EFL learning, including learner autonomy.

Despite the fact that the interview results are meant to represent the difference between earlier studies and the present one, only the main analyses and the major findings of this tool were reported due to the limited space of this paper. However, the data from student interviews do represent an important aspect of this study since they have added to our understanding of learner autonomy in the current Saudi EFL situation. These findings indicate that while Saudi EFL learners hold some awareness of the concept of autonomy, their questionnaire data show that they are highly reliant on their EFL teachers and are thus non-autonomous because of the various factors elaborated above.

Concluding thoughts

This study attempted to examine the readiness of Saudi learners for EFL independent learning in terms of five aspects: learning responsibilities, decision-making abilities, language motivation, involvement in autonomy-related activities, and the capacity to learn autonomously. The overall findings of the study, based on the questionnaire data, revealed that Saudi EFL learners demonstrate low readiness for autonomous learning. While learners assumed moderate to high levels of ability and motivation for self-directed learning, they assume low levels of responsibilities, low involvement in self-directed activities, and low capacity for autonomous learning. The findings from student interviews reveal that although learners demonstrated a reasonable level of awareness of the nature of learner autonomy, they appeared to be non-autonomous EFL learners.

Therefore, the study findings are anticipated to help EFL stakeholders in Saudi Arabia realize the potential for learner autonomy as a fundamental concept in teaching and learning foreign languages. We believe that the entire process of learning and teaching in Saudi Arabia should be revisited and reoriented, and major steps toward helping learners to become autonomous should urgently be taken. The transition from an institutionalized rote learning tradition to student autonomy will not be, however, without bumps and hurdles. Little (2007) noted that learner autonomy is the product of an interactive process in which the teacher gradually enlarges the scope of his/her learners’ autonomy by gradually allowing them more control of the process and content of their learning. A transitional period, during which a balance between teacher-centeredness and learner-centeredness is sought in classroom practice, is thus vital. As learner autonomy is achieved slowly and with patience (Ahmadi, 2013), such a transition requires full collaboration among the different players in the EFL learning process in Saudi Arabia. This study hence has implications for autonomy-supporting practice for two major players in this process: EFL policy makers and EFL teachers in Saudi Arabia.

EFL policy makers in Saudi Arabia are responsible primarily for providing and maintaining the conditions required for learner autonomy in terms of the prescribed EFL curriculum, the teaching methods needed to implement the curriculum, the school norms, the facilities and teaching materials, the teacher training, and the learner training, among others. The first step for providing the foundation for learner autonomy development in the Saudi EFL context relates to the pre-designed EFL curriculum. Curriculum

designers must create an autonomy-supporting curriculum. The first step in this process is to provide learners in each unit of the curriculum with meaningful rationales for why they are learning English. Course objectives, learning tasks and materials should be designed in ways that advance autonomous learning. Curriculum designers must also undertake more learner-centered activities and incorporate them into the English program. Chan (2001) suggested two guiding principles for the design of autonomy-orientated classroom activities: offering much room for student involvement and presenting a wide range of learning conditions and group activities to stimulate motivation and interest. Students should also be provided with a degree of choice in key aspects of curricular design, such as articulating course goals, choosing the range of teaching and learning methods employed, the types of assessment and assessment criteria, and the time devoted to learning activities. In addition, practical steps should be taken to reduce the density of the prescribed curriculum to enable teachers to involve students in autonomous learning. Furthermore, the lack of readiness for independent learning by Saudi EFL learners may be influenced by the cultural values and mentality of Saudis rather than indicating a lack of ability to learn autonomously. Curriculum designers must consider this issue because involving learners in autonomous learning is difficult if it is not part of their cultural identity.

Since the teacher plays a key role in learner autonomy, EFL practitioners in the Saudi context should reflect on autonomy-supporting practices in their language classes. The first step in this regard is to promote learners' motivation since a reasonable body of research considers that motivation reinforces autonomy (Benson, 2001; Dörnyei, 2001b; Gao & Lamb, 2011). In this respect, practical means for translating learners' positive attitudes into real motivation and then enhancing learners' motivation in order to maintain their autonomy in language learning could be sought in a variety of sources (Dörnyei, 2001b; Alqahtani, 2016; Alrabai, 2016b). Supporting learners' intrinsic motivation is key in this regard because it is thought to be strongly associated with autonomy (Niemi and Ryan, 2009).

Teachers should also allow learners to be partners in the learning process. This can be achieved by rethinking authoritative roles, using non-controlling language, granting learners some choices, and involving them in decision making.

An integral relationship between learner autonomy and teacher autonomy should be created. Therefore, teachers should exercise autonomy themselves in order to develop students' autonomy. Saudi EFL teachers should; therefore, be equipped with sufficient opportunities to act as a facilitator of learning, helper, supporter, guide, counsellor, and builder of learner self-confidence and motivation. Teachers should be involved in decision making, and their ideas and thoughts should be considered in designing the curriculum, the teaching methods and materials, and their roles in conducting classroom activities, and they should be provided with the necessary facilities to involve learners in autonomous learning. To promote self-directed learning in the classroom, teachers should adopt student-centered teaching methods or approaches, such as task-based language teaching, community language learning, and experiential language learning. Teacher-training workshops should be held regularly to train teachers on presenting such teaching methods.

Teachers should involve learners in class activities that promote their autonomy, such as role-transfer activities (e.g., choosing and preparing learning materials, being a source of information to other learners, peer-monitoring, peer-teaching, peer-correcting, presenting a model of the target language, making decisions about the learning process, evaluating or giving feedback on others' performance, maintaining discipline, keeping time). According to Al-Saadi (2011), these activities help learners to develop responsibility and autonomy in a systematic and gradual manner, as they cover a comprehensive range of skills and attitudes and can be easily integrated into regular lessons.

In addition to the significant findings and contributions of the present study in drawing important conclusions about the autonomy of Saudi EFL learners, a number of avenues for future research arise from this study. Further studies are needed in the Saudi setting to draw more concrete conclusions on Saudi EFL students' readiness for learner autonomy. Moreover, since various researchers around the world have proposed different ways of developing learner autonomy, future studies should explore how to best encourage autonomy in Saudi students' specific learning context.

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Appendix A

Autonomy Readiness Questionnaire:

<p>عزيزي الطالب/ عزيزتي الطالبة</p> <p>إن الهدف من هذا الاستبيان هو معرفة آراءك عن دور كل من المعلم والطالب في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية. نرجو منك الإجابة على الفقرات التالية بدقة لأن ذلك سيساعدنا على فهم احتياجاتك ومساعدتك بشكل أفضل</p>	
<p>Dear student:</p> <p>This research is to find out about your views of the roles of students and teachers in learning English. Could you please give your honest opinion on the following questions? The results will help us understand and serve your needs better.</p>	
<p>SECTION 1 – RESPONSIBILITIES</p> <p><i>In your English class, whose RESPONSIBILITY should it be to:</i></p> <p>Teacher's altogether</p> <p>Mine altogether</p> <p>Teacher's and mine</p>	<p>الجزء الأول: المسؤوليات تجاه تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية</p> <p>من هو المسؤول المقترض برأيك عن القيام بالتالي (أثناء حصة/محاضرة اللغة الإنجليزية):</p> <p>مسئولية المعلم لوحده</p> <p>مسئوليتي لوحدي</p> <p>مسئوليه مشتركه بيني وبين المعلم</p>
1. Make sure you make progress during lessons.	١. التأكد من تطور مستواك العلمي اثناء الدروس.
2. Stimulate your interest in learning English.	٢. تحفيزك ودعم رغبتك لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.
3. Identify your weaknesses in English.	٣. التعرف على نقاط الضعف لديك اثناء تعلمك للغة الإنجليزية.
4. Make you work harder.	٤. دفعك للعمل بجدية أكثر لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.
5. Decide the objectives of your English course.	٥. تحديد أهداف مقرر اللغة الإنجليزية الذي تدرسه.
6. Decide what you should learn next in your English lessons.	٦. تحديد محتوى الدروس التي ستدرسها في الحصة/المحاضرات القادمة.
7. Choose what activities to use to learn English.	٧. اختيار الأنشطة التي تساعدك على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.
8. Decide how long to spend on each activity.	٨. تحديد الزمن اللازم للقيام بكل نشاط أثناء درس اللغة الإنجليزية.
9. Choose what materials to use to learn English.	٩. اختيار أدوات التعلم اللازمة في دروس اللغة الإنجليزية.
10. Evaluate your course.	١٠. تقييم المقرر الدراسي الذي تدرسه.
11. Choose what strategies to use to learn English.	١١. تحديد إستراتيجيات التعلم التي تستخدمها لتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.

12. Correct the errors you make during English class.	١٢ . تصحيح الأخطاء التي ترتكبها أثناء حصة/محاضرة اللغة الانجليزية.
13. Decide what you learn outside class.	١٣ . تحديد ما تتعلمه خارج المدرسة/الكلية.
SECTION 2 – ABILITIES If you have the opportunity, how good do you think you would be at: Very Poor – Poor – OK – Good – Very Good	الجزء الثاني: القدرة على التعلم كيف تتوقع أن يكون أداءك في مقرر اللغة الانجليزية إذا أتيت لك الفرصة للقيام بالتالي: ضعيف جداً – ضعيف – متوسط – جيد – جيد جداً
1. Choosing the content of English language course.	١ . إختيار محتوى مقرر اللغة الانجليزية.
2. Choosing learning activities in English class.	٢ . إختيار الأنشطة التعليمية التي تقوم بها أثناء حصة/محاضرة اللغة الانجليزية.
3. choosing learning objectives in class.	٣ . إختيار أهداف الدروس التي تتعلمها في مقرر اللغة الانجليزية.
4. Choosing learning materials in class.	٤ . إختيار أدوات التعلم اللازمة في دروس اللغة الانجليزية.
5. Evaluating your learning.	٥ . تقييم مستواك في مقرر اللغة الانجليزية.
6. Evaluating your course.	٦ . تقييم مقرر اللغة الانجليزية الذي تدرسه.
7. Identifying your weakness in English.	٧ . التعرف على نقاط الضعف لديك في مقرر اللغة الإنجليزية.
8. Deciding what you should learn next in your English lessons.	٨ . تحديد ما ينبغي تعلمه في الدروس القادمة لمقرر اللغة الإنجليزية.
9. Deciding how long to spend on each activity.	٩ . تحديد الزمن اللازم للقيام بكل نشاط أثناء دروس اللغة الإنجليزية.
10. Choosing what strategies to use to learn English.	١٠ . تحديد إستراتيجيات التعلم التي تستخدمها لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية .
11. Deciding what you learn outside class.	١١ . تحديد ما تتعلمه خارج المدرسة/الكلية.
12. Correcting the errors you make during English class yourself.	١٢ . تصحيح الأخطاء التي ترتكبها أثناء حصة/محاضرة اللغة الانجليزية بنفسك.
SECTION 3 – MOTIVATION <i>Please rate the extent to which each statement applies to you using the following rating scale:</i> Very untrue – Untrue – Uncertain– True - Very true	الجزء الثالث: الدافعية للتعلم فضلاً قم بإختيار الخيار الذي يناسب مدى صحة العبارة بالنسبة لك مستخدماً المقياس التالي: لا تنطبق علي أبداً - لا تنطبق علي - غير متأكد - تنطبق علي - تنطبق علي تماماً
1. I enjoy learning English.	١ . إنني أستمتع بتعلم اللغة الانجليزية.

2. When English classes end, I often wish they would continue.	٢. عندما تنتهي مدة حصة/محاضرة مادة اللغة الإنجليزية فأبني أتمنى أنها لم تنتهي.
3. I would study English even if it were not required by this school/university.	٣. سأتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية حتى وإن لم يكن ذلك مطلوباً من قبل هذه المدرسة/الكلية.
4. I would like to continue to learn English even after I leave this school/college.	٤. سأستمر في تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية حتى بعد أن أنهى دراستي في هذه المدرسة/الكلية.
5. My goal of learning English is far more than just passing exams.	٥. إن هدفي من تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية هو أبعد بكثير من مجرد النجاح في الامتحانات فقط.
6. Learning English is a boring activity for me.	٦. إن تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية عبارة عن أمر ممل بالنسبة لي.
7. I wouldn't study English if I didn't have to.	٧. لن أتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية إذا لم تكن مادة إجبارية في هذه المدرسة/الكلية.
8. I pay close attention to and actively participate in English class discussion.	٨. أقوم بالتركيز ومتابعة المعلم أثناء حصة/محاضرة اللغة الإنجليزية.
9. I feel inspired to learn English.	٩. أشعر بالحماس والتحفز أثناء محاضرات اللغة الإنجليزية.
10. I feel confused during English class.	١٠. أشعر بالتشتت وعدم التركيز أثناء محاضرات اللغة الإنجليزية.
11. I feel satisfied during English class.	١١. أشعر بالرضا عن نفسي أثناء محاضرات اللغة الإنجليزية.
12. I feel independent during English class.	١٢. أشعر بالاستقلاليه والاعتماد على النفس أثناء محاضرات اللغة الإنجليزية.
13. When learning English, I easily give up learning tasks that prove hard to do.	١٣. عندما أجد أن إحدى المهام التي ينبغي تأديتها أثناء محاضرات اللغة الإنجليزية صعبة فأني أتخلى عن القيام بها.
14. In English class, I enjoy doing difficult tasks that require innovation on my part.	١٤. أستمتع بالقيام بالمهام الصعبة والمعقدة التي تتطلب الكثير من التفكير والإبداع أثناء محاضرات اللغة الإنجليزية.
SECTION 4 – ACTIVITIES	الجزء الرابع: الأنشطة
Since the beginning of the academic year, how often have you: Never – Rarely – Sometimes - Often - Always	حدد مدى قيامك بهذه الأنشطة خلال هذا الفصل الدراسي: أبداً – نادراً – أحياناً – في معظم الأحيان – دائماً
1. Read grammar books on your own.	١. قراءة كتب عن قواعد اللغة الإنجليزية ليست مفررة ضمن المنهج الدراسي.
2. Done assignments which are not compulsory.	٢. القيام بحل تمارين وأداء واجبات اختياريه غير مطلوبة منك.
3. Noted down new words and their meanings.	٣. تدوين مفردات إنجليزيه جديدة ومعانيها.
4. Made chats with a friend via WhatsApp or other social media Apps.	٤. عمل محادثه مع أحد أصدقائك عبر الواتس أب أو إحدى وسائل التواصل الاجتماعي الأخرى باللغة الإنجليزية.

5. Read English notices around you.	٥. قراءة اللوحات الإرشادية الموجوده في محيطك باللغة الإنجليزية.
6. Read newspapers in English.	٦. قراءة الصحف اليومية الصادره باللغة الإنجليزية.
7. Sent e-mails in English.	٧. إرسال رسائل الكترونية (إيميل) باللغة الإنجليزية.
8. Read books or magazines in English.	٨. قراءة كتب أو مجلات في مختلف المجالات باللغة الإنجليزية.
9. Listened to English radio.	٩. الاستماع إلى برامج باللغة الإنجليزية على المذياع.
10. Talked to foreigners in English.	١٠. التحدث إلى أجانب باللغة الإنجليزية.
11. Practiced using English with friends.	١١. التحدث إلى الأصدقاء عبر الهاتف باللغة الإنجليزية.
12. Done English self-studying in a group.	١٢. استنكار اللغة الانجليزية مع زملائك/زميلاتك في شكل مجموعته.
13. Watched English movies.	١٣. مشاهدة أفلام باللغة الانجليزية.
14. Browse English websites.	١٤. تصفح الانترنت باللغة الانجليزية.
15. Written a diary in English.	١٥. كتابة مفكرتك اليومية باللغة الانجليزية.
16. Done revision not required by the teacher.	١٦. مراجعة دروس باللغة الانجليزية لم يطلب منك المعلم مراجعتها.
17. Written essays in English.	١٧. كتابة مقالات باللغة الإنجليزية.
18. Asked the teacher questions when you don't understand.	١٨. سؤال معلم اللغة الانجليزية عن أشياء لم تفهمها أثناء الدرس.
19. Written new information during English classes in English.	١٩. تدوين المعلومات والملاحظات الجديدة أثناء دروس اللغة الانجليزية.
20. Made suggestions to the teacher in English.	٢٠. تقديم بعض الملاحظات والمقترحات للمعلم باللغة الانجليزية.
21. taken opportunities to speak in English.	٢١. استغلال الفرص لتحدث اللغة الانجليزية داخل الفصل.
22. discussed learning problems with classmates.	٢٢. مناقشة مشاكل التعلم التي تواجهك مع زملائك الطلاب/زميلاتك الطالبات.
SECTION 5 – INDEPENDENT LEARNING <i>Please indicate whether or not you agree with each of the following statements using the following scale:</i> Strongly disagree – Disagree – Uncertain – Agree – Strongly agree	الجزء الخامس: الاستقلالية في التعلم قم باختيار الخيار الذي يناسب مدى صحة العبارة بالنسبة لك في مقررات اللغة الانجليزية خلال هذا الفصل الدراسي مستخدماً المقياس التالي: لا أوافق ابداً - لا أوافق - غير متأكد - أوافق - أوافق بشده
1. I like the teacher to help me a lot when learning English.	١. أفضل أن يقوم معلم اللغة الانجليزية بمساعدتي دائماً أثناء تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.
2. I like the teacher to identify my weakness	٢. أفضل أن يقوم معلم اللغة الانجليزية بتحديد نقاط الضعف

in English.	لدي أثناء التعلم.
3. The teacher should decide the objectives of each activity we do in English class.	٣. يجب على المعلم أن يقوم بتحديد أهداف كل نشاط نقوم به في الفصل المدرسي.
4. I like the teacher to explain everything to me.	٤. أفضل أن يقوم أستاذ اللغة الانجليزية بتوضيح كل شيء لي أثناء الدرس.
5. I need a lot of guidance from the teacher when learning English.	٥. أحتاج الى الكثير من التوجيه من قبل المعلم اثناء تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.
6. I like teachers who follow the text closely.	٦. أفضل ان يقوم الأستاذ بشرح الدرس كما هو حرفياً في الكتاب المقرر دون أي إضافات.
7. I like the teacher to correct all my mistakes when learning English.	٧. أفضل ان يقوم الأستاذ بتصحيح كل أخطائي أثناء تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.
8. I heavily rely on the teacher to understand the content of the English course.	٨. أعتد بشكل كبير على المعلم الذي يقوم بتدريس مقرر اللغة الإنجليزية لفهم محتوى المقرر الدراسي.
9. I do not have the ability to learn English on my own.	٩. ليس لدي المهارات الكافية لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية بشكل ذاتي (بدون مساعدة أحد).
10. I think the teacher should give us opportunities to select the units we like to learn.	١٠. ينبغي على معلم اللغة الانجليزية أن يمنح الطلاب الفرصة لاختيار الدروس التي يرغبون في تعلمها.
11. I like the teacher to give us a lot of opportunities to decide what and how to learn.	١١. ينبغي على معلم اللغة الانجليزية أن يمنح الطلاب الفرصة لاختيار ماذا يتعلمون وكيف يتعلمون.
12. I like the teacher to give us a lot of opportunities to learn on our own.	١٢. ينبغي على معلم اللغة الانجليزية أن يمنح الطلاب كامل الفرصة للتعلم بشكل ذاتي.
13. I have set clear goals for learning English language.	١٣. لدي تصور واضح عن أهدافي من تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.
14. I do not have the ability to decide how I am progressing in learning English.	١٤. ليس لدي القدرة على تحديد ما اذا كان مستواي يتطور في اللغة الانجليزية ام لا.
15. I can manage my time for learning English.	١٥. لدي القدرة الكافية على إدارة وقتي بشكل جيد من أجل تعلم اللغة الانجليزية.
16. I take part in deciding due dates for assignments and exams in our English course.	١٦. أقوم بالمشاركة في تحديد مواعيد تسليم الواجبات ومواعيد الاختبارات في مقررات اللغة الانجليزية.
17. I easily express my own ideas and participate in the discussions that take part in our English class.	١٧. أقوم بالمشاركة في النقاشات وإبداء الرأي وتقديم الاقتراحات أثناء محاضرات اللغة الانجليزية.
18. I feel that other students take part in English class discussions much more than me.	١٨. أشعر أن زملائي الآخرين يشاركون بصورة أكبر مني في النقاشات التي تدور خلال محاضرات اللغة الانجليزية.
19. Most students don't participate in the discussions that take place in our English class this semester.	١٩. لا يشارك معظم الطلاب في النقاشات التي تدور خلال محاضرات اللغة الانجليزية.
20. I set clear strategies for myself for achieving my goals of learning English.	٢٠. أضغ لنفسي استراتيجيات للتعلم من أجل تحقيق أهدافي من دراسة اللغة الانجليزية.

Analysis of responses:

Section 1. Questionnaire results for participants' perceptions of their own responsibilities and those of their teachers - % of Respondents

No.	Responsibility	Learner %	Teacher %	Both %
1.	Tell me how I am progressing	6.3	18.5	75.2
2.	Motivate and inspire me to learn	5	23.2	71.8
3.	Identify my weaknesses	5.6	62.1	32.3
4.	Make me work harder	15.3	27	57.7
5.	Decide the objectives of our course	4.4	59.2	36.4
6.	Decide the content of our course	4.7	69.6	25.7
7.	Choose the activities we do in our class	8.4	39.2	52.4
8.	Decide how long to spend on each activity	10	50.8	39.2
9.	Evaluate my learning	22.9	28.5	48.6
10.	Evaluate my English language course	12.2	38	49.8
11.	Decide the strategies I use to learn	26	31.1	42.9
12.	Correct my mistakes while learning	12.8	24.8	62.4
13.	Decide what to learn outside class	90.9	0.6	8.5
Percentage		17.27%	36.35%	46.38%
Mean = 2.92		.87	1.82	2.31

Section 2. Questionnaire results for participants' perceptions of their decision-making abilities - % of Respondents

No.	Ability to perform in English language class	Very poor %	Poor %	OK %	Good %	Very Good %
1.	Choose the content of English language course	1.3	3.1	47	27	21.6
2.	Choose learning activities we do in class	3.8	14.4	35.1	26.3	20.4
3.	Decide the objectives of the lessons we learn	9	9.1	37.3	29.8	22.9

4.	Choose learning materials we use in class	4.7	9.7	32.3	30.4	22.9
5.	Evaluate my progress	0.9	3.4	44.5	32.9	18.2
6.	Evaluate my English language course	0.9	4.1	37.9	36.4	20.7
7.	Identify my weaknesses	0.00	6.9	39.2	26.6	27.3
8.	Decide what we learn in coming lessons	1.3	9.7	36.7	33.2	19.1
9.	Decide how long to spend on each activity	2.5	9.7	34.2	31.3	22.3
10.	Decide the strategies I use to learn	2.2	10.3	43.6	26	17.9
11.	Decide what to learn outside class	1.9	7.8	28.8	33.2	28.2
12.	Correct my mistakes while learning	0.9	5.6	38.6	28.2	26.6
	Percentage	2.45	7.82	37.93	30.11	22.34
Scale mean = 3.63 (Moderate ability)						

Section 3. Questionnaire results for participants' perceptions of their motivational levels

No.	Statement	Mean
1.	I enjoy learning English.	3.69
2.	When English classes end, I often wish they would continue.	2.42
3.	I would study English even if it were not required by this school/university.	4.27
4.	I would like to continue to learn English even after I leave this school/college.	4.52
5.	My goal of learning English is far more than just passing exams.	4.30
6.	Learning English is a boring activity for me.	4.15
7.	I wouldn't study English if I didn't have to.	4.17
8.	I am paying? close attention during English language class this semester.	3.81
9.	I feel enthused and stimulated during English classes this semester.	3.39
10.	I have felt lost during English language class this semester.	3.13
11.	I feel satisfied during English language class this semester.	3.53
12.	I feel independent during English language class this semester.	3.74
13.	When learning English, I easily give up learning tasks that are hard to do.	3.59
14.	In English class, I enjoy doing difficult tasks that require innovation on my part.	3.13
	Mean	3.70

Section 4. Questionnaire results for participants' perceptions of involvement in learning activities - % of Respondents

No.	Activity	Never %	Rarely %	Sometimes %	Often %	Always %
1.	Read grammar books on your own.	11.9	43.9	24.5	14.7	5
2.	Do voluntary assignments.	16.6	30.1	32.9	16.6	3.8
3.	Note down new words and their meanings.	3.1	29.8	11.3	34.2	21.6
4.	Chat with a friend via WhatsApp or any other social media program in English.	11.6	22.3	29.8	23.8	12.5
5.	Read English signboards.	0.6	24.8	7.5	23.2	43.9
6.	Read daily newspapers in English.	32.3	23.5	31	11	2.2
7.	Send e-mails in English.	28.2	24.5	30.7	12.2	4.4
8.	Read books and magazines in English.	13.8	32	29.2	19.4	5.6
9.	Listen to the radio in English.	13.8	35.5	16.9	21.9	11.9
10.	Talk to foreigners in English.	14.1	26	22.9	23.2	13.8
11.	Talk to friends over the phone in English.	23.5	29.5	28.5	15.4	3.1
12.	Study English in a group with your classmates.	7.8	28.8	18.2	27.6	17.6
13.	Watch English movies.	0.6	17.9	6.9	23.8	50.8
14.	Browse internet websites in English.	4.7	18.8	33.9	27.9	14.7
15.	Write your diaries in English.	35.8	24.8	24.1	10	5.3
16.	Do work/assignments in English not required by the teacher.	21	29.8	31.3	11.9	6
17.	Write essays in English.	30.7	22.9	29.2	13.8	3.4
18.	Ask your teacher questions in English.	10.7	32.9	27.9	21	7.5
19.	Note down new information in English.	1.3	22.6	10.7	34.7	30.7
20.	Make suggestions to your teacher in English.	42.3	20.7	27	7.2	2.8

21.	Take opportunities to speak English in the classroom.	11.3	32	27.6	20.4	8.7
22.	Discuss learning problems with classmates in English.	7.2	27.3	14.1	24.8	26.6
Percentage %		15.59	27.29	23.46	19.94	13.72
Mean = 2.88						

Section 5. Questionnaire results for participants' perceptions of their degree of independence (teacher role vs. learner role)

No.	Statement	Mean	SD
1.	I like the teacher to help me while learning.	2.23	.93
2.	I like the teacher to identify my weaknesses while learning.	2.30	.89
	The teacher should decide the objectives of each activity we do in class.	1.97	.82
3.	I like the teacher to explain everything to us during lessons.	1.64	.72
4.	I need much guidance from the teacher.	2.08	.96
5.	I like the teacher to explain the lesson as it is in the book without any additions.	3.45	.99
6.	I like the teacher to correct all my mistakes while learning.	1.99	.87
7.	I depend mostly on the teacher to understand the content of the language course.	2.66	.96
8.	I do not have enough skills to learn English on my own.	3.51	.98
9.	I think the teacher should give us opportunities to select the units we would like to learn.	3.89	.95
10.	I think the teacher should give students opportunities to decide what and how to learn.	3.96	.88
11.	I think the teacher should give us opportunities to learn on our own.	3.50	.96
12.	I have clear goals for learning English.	3.11	.76
13.	I do not have the ability to decide whether I am progressing in English or not.	3.18	.95
14.	I have good time management skills for learning English.	3.20	.97
15.	I take part in deciding the due dates for assignments and exams in our English course.	3.61	.83
16.	I easily express my own ideas and participate in the discussions that take place in our English class.	3.04	.92
17.	I feel that other students take part in English class discussions much more than me.	2.15	.93
18.	Most students don't participate in the discussions that take place in our English class.	2.02	.87
19.	I set clear strategies for myself for achieving my goals of learning English.	2.13	.79

Appendix B

Interview questions

1. What is your interpretation of “learner autonomy”?
2. Do you think learner autonomy plays a crucial role in language learning? Why? Why not?
3. What do you think are the characteristics and language behavior of an autonomous learner?
4. To what extent do you consider yourself an autonomous learner?
5. What can the teacher do to help students to become more autonomous?
6. What factors help or hinder learner autonomy?