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EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND PRACTISES ON LEARNER AUTONOMY

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ÖZET

İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN ÖĞRENEN ÖZERKLİĞİNE YÖNELİK ALGI VE UYGULAMALARI

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Son yıllarda, dil eğitiminde öğrenci özerkliği kuramı ve uygulamasına olan ilgi önemli ölçüde artmıştır. Bu artış, değişen pedagojik paradigmalar ve COVID-19 pandemisi sırasında uzaktan eğitime küresel geçişle birlikte daha da hız kazanmıştır. Bu bağlamda, öğretmenlerin inançları giderek daha önemli hale gelmiştir; çünkü onların algı ve tutumları—açık ya da örtük biçimde—öğrenci özerkliğinin gelişimini büyük ölçüde şekillendirebilir. İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten öğretmenlerin öğrenci özerkliğini nasıl kavramsallaştırdığı ve sınıf içinde nasıl desteklediğini anlamak, etkili öğretim stratejilerini belirlemek ve öğrenci motivasyonunu artırmak açısından büyük önem taşımaktadır.

Bu çalışma, ingilizce öğretmenlerinin öğrenci özerkliğine algılarını ve sınıf içi uygulamalarını incelemektedir. Çalışmada nicel ve nitel verilerin bir arada kullanıldığı karma yöntem araştırma deseni benimsenmiştir. Toplam 100 EFL öğretmeni yapılandırılmış bir anketi yanıtlamıştır. Ardından, 14 katılımcı ile derinlemesine yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bulgular, öğretmenlerin genel olarak öğrenci özerkliğine olumlu yaklaştıklarını ve bu özerkliği desteklemek amacıyla çeşitli stratejiler kullandıklarını ortaya koymuştur. Bu bulgular, dil öğretmeni eğitimi, müfredat geliştirme ve hem geleneksel hem de dijital öğrenme ortamlarında özerklik destekleyici öğretimin teşvik edilmesine yönelik değerli çıkarımlar sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğrenci özerkliği, öğretmen inançları, motivasyon, dil eğitimi, uzaktan öğrenim.

ABSTRACT

EFL TEACHERS' PERCEPTION AND PRACTISES ON LEARNER AUTONOMY

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M.A. Thesis, Foreign Language Education
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In recent years, interest in the theory and practice of learner autonomy in language education has grown significantly, particularly in response to evolving pedagogical paradigms and the global shift toward distance education during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, teachers' beliefs have become increasingly pivotal, as their perceptions and attitudes—whether explicit or implicit—can substantially shape the development of learner autonomy. Understanding how English as Foreign Language (EFL) teachers conceptualize and foster learner autonomy is therefore essential to informing effective instructional strategies and enhancing student motivation.

This study explores the perceptions and classroom practices of EFL teachers regarding learner autonomy. A mixed-methods design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative data. A total of 100 EFL teachers participated in the study by responding to a structured questionnaire. Subsequently, 14 participants were selected for in-depth, semi-structured interviews. The results indicated that teachers generally held positive views toward learner autonomy and employed a variety of strategies to promote it. These findings offer valuable implications for language teacher education, curriculum development, and the promotion of autonomy-supportive teaching in both traditional and digital learning environments.

Keywords: Learner autonomy, teacher beliefs, motivation, language education, distance learning.

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LIST OF ICONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
LA:	Learner Autonomy
SDL:	Self-Directed Learning
SAC:	Self-Access Centre
L2:	Second Language
CLT:	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
SPSS:	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRL:	Self-Regulated Learning
LA:	Learner Autonomy
LMS:	Learning Management System
MALL:	Mobile-Assisted Language Learning
MOOC:	Massive Open Online Course

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1. INTRODUCTION

Learner autonomy (LA) has become a central concept in language education, particularly within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction. Commonly defined as the learner's ability to take responsibility for their own learning, LA is now recognized as a vital component of successful language acquisition (Holec, 1981; Benson, 2001). With the increasing emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy and the need to develop lifelong learning competencies, the promotion of LA is regarded as a necessary educational objective rather than an optional enhancement (Little, 1991).

In the context of Türkiye, efforts to enhance learner autonomy in EFL classrooms have been driven by educational reforms emphasizing critical thinking, independent learning, and communicative competence (Balçıkanlı, 2010; Yıldırım, 2012). Despite these initiatives, the effective implementation of autonomy-oriented practices remains heavily dependent on teachers' existing experiences, instructional routines, and professional contexts. As noted by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), teachers' perceptions are crucial in shaping their pedagogical choices, especially when adapting to educational innovations such as the integration of learner autonomy (LA) into classroom practice.

This study aims to examine how EFL teachers in Türkiye perceive learner autonomy and to what extent their teaching practices reflect those conceptions. While previous research has extensively explored autonomy from the learner's perspective, fewer studies have focused on teachers' roles—especially within the context of primary and secondary education in Türkiye (Kocaman & Balçıkanlı, 2013; Açıkgöz, 2016). Investigating teachers' perspectives and practices is therefore essential for gaining insight into the enablers and barriers that influence the promotion of learner autonomy (LA) within authentic classroom environments.

This chapter outlines the setting and the rationale for the study. It describes the goals and the research questions, emphasizes this study's relevance in the wider area of language education, and introduces the main concepts and terms that are used in this work.

1.1. Background to the Study

The capacity to manage one's own learning has become a foundational principle in contemporary language education, especially in light of the increasing focus on communicative and learner-centered methodologies. Learner autonomy (LA)—typically defined as the ability of learners to assume control over and regulate their own learning processes—is now broadly acknowledged as a critical element in attaining both academic achievement and long-term educational development (Benson, 2001).In response to this paradigm shift, traditional teacher-centered models that position students as passive recipients of knowledge are increasingly being supplanted by pedagogical frameworks that promote active learner involvement and individual responsibility (Little, 1991; Benson, 2007). This transition underscores a broader understanding that effective language acquisition is not confined to formal instruction but rather requires sustained, meaningful interaction with the target language across diverse learning contexts (Benson, 2007).

The pioneering work on learner autonomy has primarily emerged from Europe, shaped by foundational contributions from researchers such as Holec (1981), Dam (1995), and Little (1991). Over time, the field has expanded globally, with recent research in East Asia exploring how autonomy can be cultivated in diverse educational and cultural settings. For instance, Benson (2001) and Littlewood (2007) have examined learner autonomy in the context of Hong Kong, while Aoki (2001) and Aoki and Smith (1999) have contributed to our understanding of its application in Japan. These studies not only confirm the educational benefits of fostering autonomy but also highlight the complexities surrounding its implementation—complexities that are often influenced by sociocultural expectations and institutional limitations (Benson, 2007).

Fundamentally, learner autonomy refers to learners' capacity to set their own learning goals, choose appropriate strategies, monitor their progress, and evaluate outcomes—typically with the support of a teacher (Holec, 1981). Crucially, autonomy should not be misconstrued as complete independence from teacher involvement. Rather, it is most effectively fostered within structured learning environments that promote learner initiative while maintaining

pedagogical support (Little, 1991). Benson (2001) similarly emphasizes that teacher guidance remains essential in scaffolding autonomous behaviors. Moreover, as Dam (1995) contends, learner autonomy (LA) is not merely an individual pursuit; rather, it flourishes within collaborative learning environments where meaningful interactions with peers and teachers play a vital role in supporting and enhancing the learning process.

The positive impact of autonomy-supportive environments on student learning is well documented in the literature. Students who are entrusted with greater responsibility for their learning often demonstrate higher levels of motivation, engagement, and self-confidence (Madjar et al., 2013). Teachers play a crucial role in fostering such environments by balancing learner independence with appropriate scaffolding and guidance (Littlewood, 2007). According to Madjar et al. (2013), autonomy-supportive classrooms promote adaptive goal orientations and academic resilience, whereas overly controlling instructional approaches can lead to disengagement and counterproductive behaviors. The findings of the present study further emphasize that learners' emotional and motivational needs—especially those directly linked to learning—should be integrated into the teaching process.

Despite growing recognition of its benefits, several misconceptions continue to obstruct the broader implementation of learner autonomy. A common misunderstanding is the assumption that autonomy equates to complete self-instruction or learning in isolation. In contrast, Little (1991) argues that autonomy is inherently interactive, requiring continuous collaboration between learners and teachers. Similarly, Allwright (1984) describes autonomous classrooms as co-constructed spaces where both students and teachers play active roles in shaping the learning experience. This view redefines autonomy not as a withdrawal from instructional support, but rather as a transformation of the teacher's role—from that of a knowledge provider to a facilitator of learning—who empowers students to become independent, reflective, and intrinsically motivated learners.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

Learner autonomy is hindered as the Turkish educational system presents several limitations. In Türkiye, teaching is still generally based on the recitation method (Yumuk, 2002), where the teacher assumes the leading role in the classroom (as cited in Balçkanlı, 2008). Furthermore, creativity and individuality are not supported in traditional educational environments, which suppress the development of learner autonomy (Balçkanlı, 2008). Given such limitations, it is important to understand teachers' perceptions and practices, as their use of instructional approaches is influenced by their pedagogical perceptions. These perceptions, in turn, determine the extent to which they promote or inhibit autonomy in their students. This reciprocal interaction between teachers' perceptions and their teaching methods, and between their teaching methods and their perceptions, plays a significant role in either facilitating or hindering learner autonomy. These ingrained instructional habits are often difficult to change.

Fleming and Walter (2004) argue that teachers' approaches to instruction are influenced by multiple factors, including their personal educational philosophies, professional training, classroom experience, willingness to relinquish control, tolerance for uncertainty, and openness to experimenting with new teaching strategies. Given the complexity of these variables, it is essential to explore how educators perceive and implement learner autonomy in their classrooms. Without a deep understanding of teachers' perspectives, efforts to promote autonomy in language learning may remain superficial and ineffective, relying solely on theoretical frameworks rather than practical, teacher-informed insights.

Accordingly, the present study aims to examine how EFL teachers in Türkiye, across both public and private educational settings, perceive and implement learner autonomy. Specifically, it investigates their conceptualizations of autonomy, the factors they identify as facilitating or constraining its development in their classrooms, and the strategies they employ to promote autonomous learning among their students. By shedding light on teachers' perceptions and classroom practices, this study seeks to contribute to a more

effective and context-sensitive implementation of learner autonomy within the Turkish EFL context.

1.3. Research Questions

This study seeks to explore EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding learner autonomy in Türkiye. The research is guided by the following questions:

1. What are the perceptions of EFL Teachers on learner autonomy in Türkiye ?
2. What stated practices do EFL teachers implement to foster learner autonomy?
3. To what extent do EFL teachers perceive learner autonomy as contributing to second language (L2) learning?
4. How important and practical do EFL teachers consider the enhancement of learner autonomy?
5. To what extent do EFL teachers perceive their students as autonomous learners?

1.4. Significance of the Study

Learner autonomy has recently been a matter of great concern for language teaching and learning. This interest has become a popular trend in today's education sector, due to ongoing educational reforms and the proliferation of technologies in educational settings. The COVID-19 pandemic only accelerated this shift, as the sudden turn to remote instruction forced students to take on even more agency for their learning. In such contexts, learner autonomy (LA) becomes increasingly vital, underscoring the importance of equipping both students and teachers with the knowledge and competencies necessary to foster independent learning. Teachers' perceptions play a pivotal role in either facilitating or impeding the development of LA within the classroom. Their attitudes and beliefs significantly shape the degree to which an autonomy-supportive environment is cultivated—whether consciously or unconsciously.

Therefore, examining these perspectives is essential to understanding how teachers conceptualize LA and how they implement pedagogical approaches to enhance learners' autonomy, motivation, and engagement. A substantial body of research highlights that autonomy in language learning is a critical determinant of both language acquisition success and classroom performance (Dickinson, 1987; Rebenius, 2003).

EFL teachers play a pivotal role in fostering learner autonomy, serving as central agents in shaping autonomous learning environments. Their perceptions of autonomy, combined with the instructional strategies they implement, exert a significant influence on learners' capacity to develop independent learning skills. While the pedagogical value of learner autonomy is widely recognized, there remains a pressing need to examine how teachers perceive and operationalize autonomy within their classroom practices. A deeper understanding of these perceptions is essential for interpreting the pedagogical reasoning behind specific instructional approaches and for informing the development of contextually appropriate strategies aimed at promoting learner autonomy across diverse educational settings.

One response to these questions is offered by the present study, which examines the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers concerning learner autonomy (LA). By exploring the underlying beliefs that shape teachers' instructional decisions and the strategies they adopt to foster self-directed learning, this research aims to contribute to the expanding body of literature on classroom-based language education. In addition, it seeks to provide practical insights for the advancement of autonomy-supportive pedagogical practices within EFL settings.

1.5. Limitations of the Study

The current study was limited to the data obtained from 100 of the participants who were EFL teachers employed at state and private schools in Van, Türkiye. The generalisibility of the findings to larger EFL teacher populations in Türkiye is limited due to the relatively small sample size and the geographical narrowness of the sample.

A further limitation is the lack of class observations. The research was based only on teachers' self-reported data about whether and how they engaged in promoting learner autonomy. Self-report measures Although self-report tools are informative about attitudes and practices as reported by the individual, they are vulnerable to reporting biases, including self-perception biases and social desirability. As a result, behaviors documented in reporting may not reflect the actual instruction.

Additionally, the response rate to the questionnaire was lower than anticipated. Despite three rounds of follow-up reminders over a two-month period, only 100 responses were obtained. However, considering that participation was entirely voluntary, no additional pressure was exerted on potential respondents.

The present study addresses these issues by investigating the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers regarding learner autonomy (LA). By examining the pedagogical perceptions that inform their instructional decisions and the strategies they employ to foster self-directed learning, the study aims to contribute to the growing body of literature on classroom-based language education. Furthermore, it seeks to provide practical recommendations for the development of autonomy-supportive pedagogical interventions in EFL contexts.

1.6. Definitions of Terms

Autonomy of the Learner: This concept refers to the learners' capacity to take responsibility for their own learning—that is, to set personal learning goals, select and regulate the strategies they employ, and assess their own progress (Holec, 1981; Benson, 2001). Autonomy involves both the ability and the willingness to assume control over one's learning, whether within the classroom or in independent learning environments.

Perception: refers to the cognitive process through which individuals interpret and derive meaning from sensory input, experiences, or phenomena, influenced by their prior knowledge, beliefs, and contextual factors. In the context of educational research, perception typically denotes how teachers or learners

understand, interpret, and react to specific concepts, instructional practices, or pedagogical frameworks (Pajares, 1992).

The Autonomous Learner: is a person who takes charge of his or her learning by purposeful and deliberate actions, and by demonstrating independent learner characteristics (Little, 1991). These are learners who are reflective, take the initiative, and use all available resources to learn and grow academically for themselves.

Self-Directed Learning (SDL): is a learning process that inherently involves learner autonomy (LA) and represents a complex human phenomenon within the broader context of learning (Reinders, 2010). In this educational model, learners actively engage in identifying their learning needs, setting goals, selecting appropriate tools and methods, and evaluating their own progress (Benson, 2010; Knowles, 1975).

Teacher Autonomy: Teacher autonomy refers to educators' ability to make informed instructional decisions, including choices related to curriculum, teaching methods, and assessment practices, with the goal of enhancing learner independence (Smith, 2003). It also involves continual professional development and the adaptability to implement instructional approaches that support autonomous learning.

Metacognition in Learning: Metacognition involves learners' skills in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their learning processes (Flavell, 1979). It is crucial for fostering autonomy, as it allows learners to recognize their strengths and limitations and to adjust their learning strategies accordingly.

Motivation and Autonomy: There is a strong relationship between motivation and autonomy. Learners who are self-regulated tend to exhibit higher levels of intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Environments that promote autonomy nurture students' sense of ownership over their learning, which in turn enhances motivation and academic engagement (Littlewood, 1999).

Experiential Learning: This educational approach centers on learning through real-life, practical experiences (Kolb, 1984). In relation to learner autonomy, experiential learning promotes student initiative, encourages reflective practice, and supports active participation in the learning process.

Reflective Learning: Reflective learning entails critically examining one's learning experiences, strategies, and progress to make thoughtful adjustments (Schön, 1983). This process is fundamental to developing autonomy, as it enhances learners' self-awareness and helps them refine their learning goals and methods.

Scaffolding and Learner Autonomy: A teaching approach where educators provide temporary support to help learners develop autonomy (Vygotsky, 1978). Scaffolding enables students to gradually take responsibility for their learning by initially receiving guidance and progressively gaining independence.

L2 Learning Strategies: These refer to the strategies and techniques employed by second or foreign language (L2) learners to facilitate the learning process, including cognitive, metacognitive, and socio-affective strategies (Oxford, 1990). Proficient self-directed language learners are adept at utilizing such strategies to optimize their language development and overall educational outcomes.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. The Origins of Autonomy

Autonomy is a multifaceted and evolving concept with significant implications for education, posing challenges across various domains, including language learning. In the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), numerous scholars have emphasized the central role of learner autonomy (LA) as a foundational pedagogical principle. Holec (1981), widely regarded as a pioneer in this area, defines LA as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning," highlighting the learner's role in making decisions about goal-setting, strategy selection, and self-evaluation. Little (1991) expands this notion by emphasizing that autonomy is not merely a capacity but also a developmental process that requires encouragement and facilitation by educators. Similarly, Benson (2001) argues that autonomy is socially and institutionally mediated, asserting that teachers play a critical role in scaffolding learners' gradual and structured assumption of responsibility. These perspectives collectively underscore the necessity of shifting from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches in ELT, enabling students to engage critically and reflectively in their learning. Consequently, the development of autonomy in language teaching reflects a broader educational movement toward fostering independence, empowerment, and intrinsic motivation among learners.

The concept of autonomy in education has long been associated with a shift in the learner's role—from a passive recipient of knowledge to an active constructor of meaning. In language education, this perspective is grounded in the notion that learners should be empowered to take responsibility for their own learning processes, including making decisions about goals, strategies, and evaluation. As Benson (2001) explains, the promotion of learner autonomy involves a redefinition of the traditional teacher-student dynamic, in which the learner becomes a co-participant in knowledge construction rather than a dependent subject. This aligns with broader educational principles that advocate for self-direction and agency in the learning process. Moreover, naturalistic and humanistic approaches to education emphasize that learners, when supported

appropriately, are capable of directing their own learning in ways that promote both academic success and personal development (Benson, 2001; Charvet, 2011). In such models, the teacher functions more as a facilitator or mentor—guiding learners toward independence—rather than an authoritative transmitter of knowledge.

The concept of autonomy, particularly in the context of education, has been significantly shaped by philosophical and pedagogical thought. Among the most influential figures, John Dewey contributed profoundly to the understanding of autonomy through his emphasis on experiential learning and democratic participation. Dewey (1916) argued that education and democratic life are inherently connected, and he advocated for classrooms that promote active problem-solving and continuous transformation. His perspective laid the foundation for learner-centered approaches, which were subsequently echoed in the Council of Europe's language education policies that underscored the significance of learners assuming responsibility for their own learning processes (Little, 2007; Dam, 1995).

The philosophical foundation of autonomy extends beyond education. Etymologically, the term derives from the Greek autos (self) and nomos (law), meaning self-governance or self-rule (Candy, 1991). While classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle acknowledged the importance of self-rule, their views often applied to a limited segment of society (Carr, 1999). During the Enlightenment, autonomy was redefined as a universal human attribute. Kant (1785/1996) emphasized moral autonomy as a principle grounded in rationality and intrinsic human dignity, asserting that individuals should act according to self-imposed moral laws. Rousseau also contributed to this tradition, arguing in The Social Contract (1762) that self-determination and the general will are essential components of legitimate governance (Charvet, 2011).

These historical perspectives continue to shape contemporary understandings of autonomy in education, particularly within the field of language learning. The shift toward learner-centered instruction reflects the enduring influence of philosophical traditions that emphasize self-direction, agency, and individual responsibility. In this context, learner autonomy is recognized as

essential for fostering meaningful, authentic, and self-directed learning experiences (Little, 1991).

2.1.1. Origins of Learner Autonomy in EFL

Advancements in the globalization of economies, cultures, and societies have significantly increased awareness of and interest in second language (L2) learning. While formal education remains a primary avenue for language acquisition, learning an L2 is not limited to institutional contexts. Historically, individuals have acquired additional languages through informal settings and personal initiative. Even in contemporary contexts, many learners attain proficiency in foreign languages outside traditional classroom environments by engaging in self-directed learning practices (Benson, 2001).

In this framework, learner autonomy (LA) has become a major issue in language education. Learner Autonomy Learner autonomy is a multidimensional concept that refers to learners' ability to assume responsibility for their own learning using strategies like self-direction, critical reflection and active interaction. The concept was originated by Holec (1981), who described autonomy as “capacity to take control of one’s own learning”. Learner autonomy has received ample theoretical and practical attention after its emergence; especially after educational models have pointed towards more learner-centeredness. Benson (2001) notes that there has been much increased interest in autonomy in recent decades, as the field of education has seen an increasing emphasis on empowering learners. Describing the historical roots of this movement, autonomy in language education was inspired by the social and political climate of 1968 Europe, when the demands for democratization, lifelong learning, and personal responsibility of individual actors served as the foundation for the development of autonomy (Gremmo & Riley, 1995).

The emergence of learner autonomy (LA) in English Language Teaching (ELT) is rooted in mid-20th-century shifts in educational and linguistic theory, during which increased attention to learner responsibility began to influence pedagogical paradigms. A key milestone in this development was the Council of Europe’s Modern Languages Project (1971), which formally integrated the

concept of autonomy into the discourse on language education. This initiative gave rise to the establishment of the Centre de Recherches et d'Applications Pédagogiques en Langues (CRAPEL) at the University of Nancy in France—an institution that became instrumental in advancing self-directed learning and promoting learner empowerment within institutional settings (Altunay, 2013).

Henri Holec's (1981) expert study for the Council of Europe, produced at CRAPEL, is widely regarded as the foundational work on learner autonomy (LA). Holec (1981, as cited in Egel, 2009) defined autonomy as "having a grip on one's own learning," emphasizing its relevance to lifelong learning, learner-centered educational paradigms, strategic planning, and self-monitoring. He highlighted the essential role of autonomy in fostering independent, reflective learners capable of taking initiative and responsibility for their educational development (Egel, 2009). Building on this foundation, CRAPEL continued to lead the advancement of LA through the establishment of Self-Access Centres (SACs), designed to provide learners with appropriate resources and environments that support autonomous learning and ensure its sustainability.

Benson (2001) further argues that the theoretical underpinnings of LA in language education are rooted in adult education, particularly in the theory of self-directed learning (SDL). SDL emphasizes learners' capacity to set their own goals, monitor their progress, and evaluate outcomes—core features of autonomous or self-regulated learning. This shift from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered educational model aligns closely with the principles of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which prioritizes learners' active engagement in meaning-making and in mediating their own learning experiences (Benson, 2006). Within this framework, the teacher adopts a facilitative rather than authoritative role, supporting learners in developing independence and autonomy in their language learning journeys (Little, 1991; Benson, 2011).

Furthermore, research suggests that in technology-enhanced learning environments, such as those incorporating computers or digital tools, learner autonomy becomes even more essential. The integration of autonomy into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education not only supports independent learning but also reinforces and complements more traditional study methods.

2.1.2. Definition of Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy has exerted a considerable influence on language education, affecting not only teaching and learning practices but also the formulation of educational policies. Achieving conceptual clarity around learner autonomy (LA) is essential for a range of stakeholders—teachers, learners, and policymakers alike—given its far-reaching implications for instructional design, learner achievement, and the overall quality of the learning experience. The growing emphasis on LA aligns with a broader pedagogical shift toward learner-centered education, wherein students are encouraged to take greater responsibility for their own learning. This shift necessitates the development of key competencies such as self-regulation, critical thinking, and independent decision-making, all of which are fundamental to effective and sustainable language learning.

Henri Holec (1981), widely recognized as the founding figure of the learner autonomy movement in language education, defined autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (as cited in Defai, 2007, p. 15). This definition situates the learner as an active, informed participant responsible for managing various stages of the learning process. Holec asserted that autonomy is not an inborn trait but a developmental capacity that can be cultivated through deliberate pedagogical support and guided practice. Although his work provided a crucial theoretical foundation for understanding autonomy in second language learning, it has been critiqued for its predominantly procedural orientation—emphasizing the mechanics of decision-making while largely overlooking the cognitive, affective, and psychological dimensions necessary for sustaining autonomous learning over time (Benson, 2001).

Building upon Holec's foundational framework, Little (1991) advanced the concept of learner autonomy by asserting that it encompasses more than merely managing the logistics of learning. He argued that true autonomy involves the ability to think critically, make independent choices, and act with intentionality—thereby framing autonomy as a deeply cognitive and affective process (as cited in Benson, 2001). From this perspective, learner autonomy is intrinsically linked to psychological engagement, requiring learners to be self-

aware and reflective participants in their educational journey. This interpretation underscores the significance of metacognitive awareness, wherein autonomous learners continuously monitor, evaluate, and adjust their strategies to optimize learning outcomes.

To refine the terminology, Benson (2001) proposed using the word control instead of charge or responsibility, as it better captures the regulatory dimension of learner autonomy. Recognizing the range of interpretations surrounding the concept, Little (1990, as cited in Benson, 2001) emphasized the need for conceptual precision. He noted that learners' goals, motivations, and strategies vary widely, and thus autonomy must be clearly defined to be meaningful for both research and practice. For researchers, clear conceptualization ensures construct validity and facilitates empirical investigation. For practitioners, precise definitions inform the design of instructional programs that effectively promote autonomy.

Learner autonomy continues to serve as a cornerstone in the field of foreign language (FL) education, a status affirmed by decades of sustained scholarly attention. Seminal works by researchers such as Holec (1981), Dickinson (1987), Brookes and Grundy (1988), Dam (1988), Little (1991), and Wenden (1995) have consistently highlighted the critical role of autonomy in fostering effective and meaningful second language (L2) learning. As Dickinson (1987) noted, "it was in the late 1970s and early 1980s that a new role, the learner, and its partner, the self-directed or autonomous learner, emerged" (p. 138). These foundational studies demonstrated that autonomous learners tend to outperform their non-autonomous peers—not only because they manage their learning processes more effectively, but also because they cultivate long-term learning habits and continue developing beyond the confines of formal instruction.

As scholarship in this area has developed, so too has the concept of learner autonomy. While Holec's (1981) original definition emphasized learners' ability to take responsibility for their own learning, more recent contributions have expanded the term to include related constructs such as self-regulated learning, cognitive engagement, and metacognitive awareness. Little (1991) and Benson (2001), in particular, have deepened the theoretical framework by highlighting the

roles of learner reflection, control over learning processes, and the use of self-directed strategies. In contemporary language education, autonomy is widely regarded as a core principle that fosters independent learning, critical thinking, and the development of long-term communicative competence in additional languages.

In summary, the concept of learner autonomy (LA) has undergone significant development and theoretical refinement over the years. Contemporary perspectives increasingly incorporate constructs such as self-regulation, reflexive thinking, and cognitive engagement as integral components of autonomous learning (Benson, 2001, 2006; Little, 1991). While Holec (1981) initially defined LA as the capacity to take responsibility for one's own learning, later scholars such as Little and Benson (2015) have reconceptualized it as a dynamic, multistage process. As language education continues to shift toward learner-centered paradigms, the role of LA has become even more central to cultivating self-reliant and reflective language learners (Benson, 2011). These learners not only demonstrate greater control over their learning processes but are also more likely to achieve sustained success in second language (L2) acquisition (Benson, 2013; Dickinson & Little, 2007).

2.1.3. Misconceptions related to Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy (LA) has been a central concept in language education, shaping both pedagogical practices and educational policy. As the learners' ability to manage their own learning—by setting goals, selecting strategies, and taking responsibility for outcomes—LA is closely linked to improved learning results and the development of lifelong learning competencies (Holec, 1981). Despite its growing prominence in the field of language teaching and learning (LTL), numerous misconceptions persist, potentially hindering its effective implementation in classrooms. These misunderstandings can discourage educators from adopting autonomy-supportive strategies and obscure the developmental nature of autonomous learning.

One of the most prevalent misconceptions is the belief that learner autonomy implies complete independence from teachers, peers, or institutional

structures. This interpretation mistakenly frames autonomy as solitary learning, detached from social or instructional support. In contrast, Little (1995) clarifies that autonomy involves learners actively participating in their educational journey by making informed decisions, while still engaging with teachers, utilizing available resources, and collaborating with peers when necessary. Far from being a rejection of guidance, autonomy thrives in supportive learning environments that encourage initiative and responsibility within structured parameters.

As discussed in Section 2.1.2, the concept of learner autonomy is deeply rooted in constructivist learning theories, which prioritize learner involvement, critical thinking, and self-management (Fenner, 2000). From this perspective, the teacher's role is not eliminated but redefined. Instead of acting as the sole authority, the teacher becomes a facilitator or guide who scaffolds learners' development (Benson, 2001). Little (1995) emphasizes that autonomy does not imply a complete detachment from educators, syllabi, or structured learning contexts. Rather, it calls for a flexible, collaborative relationship in which students are encouraged to take greater ownership of their learning within an organized instructional framework.

Another common misconception equates learner autonomy with a lack of structure, suggesting that students are left to navigate their learning without direction. However, effective autonomous learning requires a carefully balanced environment—one that grants learners freedom while maintaining a supportive and organized structure (Little, 1991). This is particularly crucial in EFL contexts, where guided instruction is essential for successful language acquisition (Benson, 2011). As noted in Section 2.1.1, learner autonomy in EFL is closely tied to the concept of educational scaffolding, where control over learning is gradually transferred from teacher to learner. This progression ensures that learners build the necessary cognitive and metacognitive skills, such as goal-setting and strategy evaluation, through continuous support and reflective practice (Dam, 1995).

It is also a misconception to assume that autonomy involves a complete transfer of responsibility from teachers to learners. On the contrary, teachers remain instrumental in cultivating autonomy by creating opportunities for reflective learning, modeling goal-setting strategies, and designing tasks that

foster independent thinking. As Little (1991) asserts, autonomy is not a prescriptive method that can be imposed but a developmental process that evolves over time and varies across learners. It requires intentional pedagogical support and a sustained commitment to learner development.

Another widely held but inaccurate belief is that learner autonomy is a fixed state—something learners achieve once and retain indefinitely. Benson (2006) challenges this view by conceptualizing autonomy as a dynamic and ongoing process involving the continual refinement of self-regulation, decision-making, and self-assessment skills. Learners grow into autonomy through experience and exposure to diverse learning contexts, gradually building the confidence and competence to manage their learning more independently (Reinders, 2010).

Additionally, autonomy is sometimes perceived as relevant only to advanced learners or limited to specific disciplines. This misconception assumes that only mature, self-disciplined students are capable of autonomous learning. However, research demonstrates that autonomy can be nurtured at all educational levels—even among young learners—through developmentally appropriate strategies and scaffolded support (Little, 2007). The principles of learner autonomy, including self-assessment, reflection, and goal-setting, can be effectively integrated across a wide range of educational stages and subject areas (Benson, 2011). Boud (1988) further reinforces that the core tenets of autonomy—active learner engagement, self-direction, and reflective learning—are applicable beyond language education and contribute meaningfully to lifelong learning and personal development across academic and professional domains.

Addressing these misconceptions is essential for promoting a more accurate and functional understanding of learner autonomy. As emphasized in previous sections, autonomy is not synonymous with isolation, unstructured learning, or diminished teacher involvement. Rather, it represents a pedagogical shift towards empowering learners to take responsibility for their learning within a supportive educational environment. When autonomy is clearly defined and understood, teachers are better equipped to implement instructional methodologies that encourage learners to become active, reflective participants in

their learning processes. This aligns with both constructivist educational principles (Fenner, 2000) and the Council of Europe's framework on learner autonomy in language education (Holec, 1981).

Once educators and students develop a shared understanding of autonomy, meaningful collaboration becomes possible, thereby enhancing engagement and motivation across the learning community. As Little (1991) notes, autonomy fosters self-regulation and intrinsic motivation without undermining the teacher's role. Benson (2001) further asserts that autonomy evolves through intentional pedagogical design and collaborative learning processes, not merely through learner initiative alone. Misconceptions—such as equating autonomy with total independence, viewing it as a one-time achievement, or restricting it to advanced learners—must be critically addressed. As Benson (2013) and Reinders (2010) conclude, a clear, evidence-based understanding of learner autonomy enables educators to prepare students for lifelong learning, academic achievement, and empowered, self-directed engagement in their educational journeys.

2.1.4. Characteristics of Autonomous Learners

Autonomous learners do not exhibit a fixed set of easily identifiable traits; rather, learner autonomy (LA) should be regarded as an inherent potential present in all individuals. As discussed in previous sections refers to the learner's potential to take charge of his / her learning and to determine when, how and to what extent s/he wants to engage with learning activities. Autonomy takes different forms in different students, but it is a basic component of successful learning, that is, learning to do something well, in language learning especially.

Dickinson (1993) describes autonomous learners as individuals who can identify their learning objectives, understand what needs to be learned, and formulate their goals in collaboration with their teachers. These learners are skilled at choosing and applying appropriate learning strategies, actively monitoring their effectiveness, and making adjustments when necessary. This process involves a continuous cycle of planning, implementing, evaluating, and refining learning approaches to enhance outcomes.

Similarly, Little (1991) highlights the dynamic nature of knowledge acquisition, asserting that learners must continuously reorganize new knowledge and integrate it with prior understanding. This process necessitates the active use of learning strategies, as learners must determine how best to absorb, process, and apply new information. Importantly, autonomy is not a fixed state but rather a context-dependent capability. Little (1991, p. 4) explains that autonomy in one area of learning does not automatically translate to autonomy in another; rather, it must be developed and refined according to the specific learning context.

The ability to self-direct learning is closely linked to cognitive and metacognitive processes, enabling learners to regulate their own learning effectively. Little (1995, p. 177) asserts that all learners possess an innate cognitive predisposition to acquire and use language for communication. However, the expression of autonomy varies among individuals due to differences in learning styles, preferences, and past experiences. In this regard, teachers play a pivotal role in fostering learner autonomy by offering structured guidance while simultaneously allowing the flexibility necessary for students to develop personalized learning pathways. To facilitate autonomy, educators must acknowledge diverse learning preferences and support students in identifying and applying learning strategies that align with their strengths. This approach is based on theories of constructivist learning (Fenner, 2000), which posit that learners actively construct knowledge from prior experience, cognitive activity and reflective practice.

Reinders (2010) identifies several key characteristics that define autonomous learners, emphasizing their proactive and self-regulated approach to learning. According to his perspective, autonomous learners exhibit the following traits:

- Determine Their Needs – They possess the ability to identify their learning needs, recognizing the specific knowledge or skills they must acquire.
- Set Their Goals – Autonomous learners establish clear and achievable learning objectives, defining what they aim to accomplish.

- Plan Their Learning – They engage in thoughtful planning, structuring their learning activities to ensure steady progress toward their goals.
- Select Appropriate Resources – They can identify and utilize suitable learning resources that align with their learning objectives, including textbooks, online materials, and other educational tools.
- Choose Effective Learning Strategies – Autonomous learners are capable of selecting and implementing effective learning strategies that enhance comprehension and retention.
- Implement Strategies – They actively apply their chosen strategies, integrating them into their study routine for optimal learning outcomes.
- Monitor Their Progress – Autonomous learners regularly track their learning progress, recognizing challenges and making necessary adjustments.
- Assess and Revise – They consistently evaluate the effectiveness of their learning approaches and are open to modifying their strategies based on self-reflection and performance assessment.

These characteristics illustrate the cyclical nature of the autonomous learning process, wherein learners continuously plan, implement, monitor, and refine their learning strategies (Reinders, 2010). By taking control of these aspects, autonomous learners develop self-regulation skills, enabling them to adapt to different learning environments and achieve long-term academic success.



Figure 2.1. Cyclical Nature of the Autonomous Learning Process (Reinders, 2010).

Autonomous learners are often those who perceive success of failure from a healthy, growth mindset and think of setbacks as opportunities to learn rather than roadblocks (O'Donnell, 2013). They tend to be persistent, maintaining interest and effort in the face of frustrations, and possessing a firm belief in themselves and their ability to control their own learning. This point is echoed by Benson (2011), who accentuates that independent learners engage actively in self-determination of their own learning, and thus they are provided with useful tools for using our learning strategies effectively and for managing difficulties with little need of external assistance.

One of the features of the independent learner is to be able to establish or make use of favourable environmental conditions to study and to use study practices that promote study progress. It is advised by Little (1991) that learner autonomy can be seen from their ability to make their own decisions, the way they engage in discussions as well as the manner they evaluate their own achievement between two courses. In language learning, autonomy helps learners evaluate their needs set explicit goals and realistic learning goals (Renders, 2010). Autonomous learners are not "ensembled" by passive engagement in the

learning context but are purposeful in seeking to augment their own learning through self-directed involvement.

Furthermore, autonomous learners demonstrate flexibility and adaptability, particularly when facing challenges in language acquisition. They exhibit problem-solving skills by selecting and utilizing varied resources, including digital tools, textbooks, and peer interactions, to address difficulties (Reinders & White, 2011). Their ability to evaluate different strategies and adjust accordingly enables them to develop effective language learning techniques, making them more independent and resourceful.

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of autonomous learners is their commitment to lifelong learning. Unlike learners who rely solely on structured educational settings, autonomous individuals continuously seek knowledge and refine their skills beyond formal education (Boud, 1988). Their engagement in lifelong learning practices fosters intellectual curiosity, adaptability, and personal growth, preparing them for evolving academic and professional demands (Little, 2007). This proactive approach ensures sustained learning success and the development of self-regulated learning habits that extend beyond traditional classroom environments.

By cultivating self-regulation, independent decision-making, and effective problem-solving skills, autonomous learners develop a sustainable and adaptable learning mindset. Their ability to monitor progress, reflect on learning experiences, and refine strategies equips them with the necessary tools to navigate diverse educational and professional challenges (Benson, 2013).

The characteristics of autonomous learners encompass a blend of cognitive, metacognitive, and behavioral traits that empower them to take ownership of their learning processes. Such learners demonstrate strong self-regulation skills, including the ability to set clear learning objectives, and to plan, monitor, and evaluate their progress effectively (Benson, 2011; Reinders, 2010). Their resilience—evident in their capacity to adapt and persevere through learning challenges—sets them apart from more passive learners (O'Donnell, 2013). Furthermore, their strategic engagement with learning resources and informed

selection of appropriate learning strategies reflect a high level of independence and a sustained commitment to lifelong learning (Little, 1991).

Moreover, Cotterall (1995) emphasizes that a learner's level of independence is a strong indicator of their readiness for autonomy, reinforcing the idea that autonomy is not an innate quality but a skill that can be cultivated over time. Autonomous learners embrace challenges, seek solutions, and remain engaged in lifelong learning, extending their educational experiences beyond formal instruction (Benson, 2013).

In the end, the cultivation of learner autonomy prepares individuals for the lifelong quality of learning success both in class and in real life. By encouraging learner autonomy at decision-making, goal-setting and monitoring level, facilitators can enable learners to become less passive objects of learning and more active, self-regulating agents who take charge of their own learning. Given the current trend towards autonomy in both research and practice, information regarding what entails autonomy is of paramount importance as one seeks to develop among other effective learning contexts conducive to the emergence of responsible, engaged learners (Reinders & White, 2011).

2.2. Why Autonomy in EFL Classes?

The concept of learning to learn has gained significant traction in the field of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, primarily due to its potential to improve learner outcomes and support educational transformation. Benson (2001) highlights two key factors driving the growing emphasis on learner autonomy (LA). First, a range of successful LA initiatives have shown that learners who assume greater responsibility for their learning processes tend to achieve higher levels of performance. Second, there has been a strong push from educational theorists and practitioners to position autonomy as a central instructional objective, in line with the broader pedagogical movement toward learner-centered education.

Two central rationales support the promotion of learner autonomy. The first is that learners who actively participate in managing their own learning tend to achieve better outcomes, as they can personalize strategies and sustain

motivation. The second rationale relates to learner affect, particularly self-perceptions and willingness to engage with learning tasks. As Nunan (2000) argues, learners do not always share the same goals as their teachers, highlighting the need for teaching approaches that accommodate diverse learner objectives and foster deeper engagement.

This issue is particularly salient in large EFL classrooms, such as those frequently found in Türkiye, where high student numbers and exam-driven curricula often limit individualized instruction. In such environments, highly motivated students who take initiative are more likely to thrive, while less self-directed learners may struggle to engage meaningfully. These conditions emphasize the importance of fostering autonomy among all learners, not only high achievers. Studies on successful language learners (e.g., Naiman et al., 1978) have shown that autonomy, motivation, and the ability to manage learning strategies are common characteristics among effective learners.

Broader shifts in the educational landscape have further contributed to the emphasis on learner autonomy. The rapid expansion of accessible information, growing student populations, commercialization of education, and technological advancements have transformed language teaching practices globally (Benson, 2001). These developments necessitate more flexible and learner-responsive approaches. In Türkiye, this shift is evident in recent curricular reforms and the growing use of digital tools, especially in private institutions and universities, where learner-centered methodologies are increasingly adopted to foster autonomous learning behaviors.

Cotterall (1995b) also highlights the limitations of relying solely on teacher input for sustained language acquisition. She argues that learners must take an active role in their own development, particularly outside the formal classroom. Autonomy in this sense does not negate the teacher's role, but rather redefines it. Teachers act as facilitators who guide learners toward independence through reflective practices, goal-setting, and self-assessment.

In sum, learner autonomy has become a key pillar of effective EFL instruction. Early conceptualizations, such as Holec's (1981) focus on learner responsibility, laid the foundation for understanding the concept, while

subsequent contributions from Little (1991) and Benson (2001, 2006, 2013) have broadened its scope to include motivation, metacognitive awareness, and learner agency. As the Turkish educational system continues to evolve, promoting learner autonomy remains essential for preparing students for lifelong learning, adaptability, and communicative competence.

2.3. Fostering Learner Autonomy with Different Approaches

The concept of learning to learn has become increasingly prominent in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instruction, largely because of its potential to equip learners with the skills needed to organize, regulate, and reflect on their own learning processes. Benson (2001) identifies two primary reasons for this heightened focus. First, empirical evidence from various learner autonomy (LA) projects demonstrates that learners who take greater control over their learning tend to achieve more effective outcomes. Second, there has been a strong theoretical and pedagogical shift toward recognizing autonomy as a fundamental educational goal, aligning with the broader movement toward learner-centered instruction.First, the positive outcomes of various learner autonomy (LA) initiatives have demonstrated the significant benefits of increased learner control for both language acquisition and motivation. Second, autonomy theorists have positioned LA as a central educational goal, emphasizing not only its attainability but also its transformative potential in fostering more effective, learner-centered approaches to language instruction. As a consequence, there is an increasing realisation that learners should be encouraged to become autonomous by providing them with the strategies, attitudes and metacognitive tools that are required for them to take charge of their own language learning.

Two key arguments support the integration of learner autonomy into EFL classrooms. The first suggests that active learner engagement enhances personalization and learning efficiency. When learners assume responsibility for their progress, they are more likely to develop intrinsic motivation, which contributes to long-term retention and communicative proficiency (Benson, 2001). The second argument emphasizes the role of affective factors in language learning. Learners' self-perceptions, attitudes, and willingness to engage with

tasks significantly influence the success of instructional activities. As Nunan (2000) argues, students do not always share the goals defined by teachers, which necessitates flexible and responsive teaching practices that can address diverse learner objectives and enhance classroom engagement.

This issue is particularly relevant in EFL contexts characterized by large class sizes and centralized curricula, such as those frequently found in Türkiye and Bangladesh. In these settings, students who exhibit high levels of motivation and initiative often thrive, while more passive learners may struggle to engage effectively (Nunan, 2000). Learner agenda studies have shown that students tend to prioritize learning goals that differ from those of their teachers, underscoring the importance of promoting a type of autonomy that enables learners to pursue personal objectives within the instructional framework.

The significance of learner autonomy is further reinforced by the concept of the "good language learner," developed through research in the 1970s and 1980s. Naiman et al. (1978) identified common traits among successful language learners, including self-motivation, strategic learning, and the capacity for self-regulation. These findings support the view that fostering independence in all learners can lead to improved academic outcomes and greater language proficiency.

In addition to pedagogical considerations, broader educational trends also necessitate a focus on autonomy in language learning. Benson (2001) highlights several systemic developments that have reshaped the landscape of language education, including the information explosion, rising student enrollments, the commercialization of education, and rapid advances in educational technology. These shifts have increased both the volume of information learners must process and the complexity of the environments in which they access it. Educators are therefore increasingly required to adopt flexible teaching methods that cater to diverse learner needs, preferences, and learning contexts. In Türkiye, such trends are evident in curricular reforms and the growing use of digital learning tools, particularly in private institutions and universities, which seek to promote learner-centered practices and foster autonomous learning behaviors.

The proliferation of online tools, self-access resources, and digital platforms has substantially broadened the scope for learners to manage their own learning beyond the confines of traditional classroom environments. This evolution highlights the growing relevance of learner autonomy (LA), as students are increasingly required to independently navigate, evaluate, and utilize diverse learning resources. Embedding autonomy-enhancing strategies within classroom instruction not only empowers learners to take control of their educational journeys but also equips them with the skills necessary for lifelong learning in an ever-evolving, technology-driven landscape.

Effective language learning cannot be attributed solely to teacher expertise; it also depends heavily on the learner's active involvement. Cotterall (1995) contends that language acquisition requires sustained effort and engagement beyond the boundaries of formal lessons. Given the extended nature of the language learning process, it is neither feasible nor pedagogically desirable for teachers to manage every aspect of students' progress. Incorporating autonomy into the classroom helps establish a more balanced and sustainable model of instruction in which learners assume increasing responsibility for their development.

Promoting learner autonomy does not entail diminishing the teacher's role; rather, it involves reimagining the teacher as a facilitator who supports learners in setting goals, making informed decisions, and evaluating their progress (Cotterall, 1995). Creating learning environments that emphasize learner responsibility has been shown to increase motivation, participation, and language achievement. Accordingly, the application of autonomy-supportive practices in EFL settings contributes not only to learner independence but also to overall instructional effectiveness.

In summary, learner autonomy is a vital component of contemporary EFL pedagogy, fostering learner responsibility, motivation, and self-direction. Empirical research has demonstrated that autonomy enhances learning efficiency, supports intrinsic motivation, and contributes to students' readiness for lifelong learning (Benson, 2001; Nunan, 2000). Furthermore, ongoing changes in educational technology, student demographics, and instructional paradigms

reinforce the relevance of autonomy in modern language education (Benson, 2001). While teachers remain essential as facilitators and guides, fostering autonomy ensures that learners take ownership of their learning, build essential self-regulatory skills, and engage actively in their educational journeys. Through practices such as goal-setting, resource selection, and reflective self-assessment, EFL educators can create dynamic, learner-centered classrooms that support both language proficiency and the long-term academic success of their students.

2.3.1. Resource-Based Approaches

Resource-based theories of learner autonomy emphasize the role of learning materials, learning resources, and learning conditions for independent learning. In the field of EFL studies, these are approaches that help students to autonomously discover, evaluate and make use of materials in their self-learning and which are not under the direct-teacher control (Benson, 2001). These approaches, which provide multiple types of learning materials, facilitate exploration, self-monitoring, and strategic use of language content, respectively.

An example of this is the implementation of Self-Access Centers (SACs) that offer students a range of learning resources, including books, multimedia materials, interactive software and language-learning software applications (Reinders, 2012). Such centers foster independence by allowing pupils to choose resources that suit their needs, use personal learning plans and evaluate themselves (Morrison, 2011). Moreover, the proliferation of technology- enriched resources—including such tools as digital libraries, online interfaces, and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) — has greatly increased opportunities for flexible, individualized, and autonomous learning (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

Learning Management Systems (LMS) like Moodle, Duolingo, and Edmodo further support autonomous learning by offering interactive tasks, personalized feedback, and tools for progress tracking (Reinders & White, 2016). These platforms allow learners to develop language skills independently and at their own pace, reinforcing habits of self-regulated learning while maintaining an organized structure.

Authentic materials play an important role in resource-based approaches to fostering learner autonomy. Resources such as newspapers, podcasts, videos, blogs, and other real-world texts expose learners to language in authentic communicative contexts, thereby enhancing their ability to develop practical and contextually relevant language skills (Little, 1991). In addition to these external materials, learner-generated resources—such as personal vocabulary logs, reflective journals, and peer-reviewed projects—further promote learner ownership and active engagement. These personalized tools support metacognitive development and reinforce the idea that learners are not merely passive recipients of knowledge but active participants in shaping their own educational experiences (Benson, 2011).

While resource-based learning fosters autonomy, its effectiveness largely depends on learner motivation, digital competence, and the quality of available resources (Morrison, 2011). Some students may face challenges in managing their time or maintaining discipline, requiring structured support to effectively benefit from these tools (Reinders, 2012). In this regard, teachers play an essential role in guiding learners to develop critical evaluation skills and to use resources meaningfully and strategically.

Ultimately, resource-based approaches offer a learner-centered, adaptable framework that supports the development of independent study habits. Through access to SACs, digital tools, authentic input, and learner-created content, students are encouraged to take ownership of their education. When paired with adequate guidance and digital literacy training, these approaches can effectively promote both learner autonomy and language proficiency in EFL settings.

2.3.2. Technology-Based Approaches

Technology-based approaches to learner autonomy (LA) focus on leveraging digital platforms, online tools, and interactive resources to facilitate independent learning in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. These technological innovations have empowered learners to customize their learning pathways, interact with content at their own pace, and take increased responsibility for their academic development. Benson (2011) emphasizes that

such tools play a pivotal role in fostering self-directed learning by enhancing learner control and decision-making. Similarly, Reinders and White (2016) argue that technology supports essential dimensions of LA, including self-regulation, intrinsic motivation, and individualized engagement, thereby reinforcing the autonomy of learners in digitally mediated environments.

At the core of these approaches are Learning Management Systems (LMS) such as Moodle, Blackboard, Edmodo, and Google Classroom. According to Godwin-Jones (2011), these platforms provide interactive features like task submission, formative feedback, and performance tracking, which help learners establish effective independent study routines. In addition, gamified language-learning applications—including Duolingo, Busuu, and Babbel—enhance motivation by offering structured yet flexible activities. Reinders (2012) notes that these applications promote sustained learner engagement through game-like challenges and personalized pacing.

Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs), such as those offered through platforms like Coursera, edX, and Udemy, contribute significantly to the promotion of learner autonomy (LA). These platforms provide self-paced learning opportunities through video lectures, interactive assessments, and peer-based discussion forums, allowing learners to engage with content according to their individual needs and preferences. As Benson (2013) notes, MOOCs foster autonomous learning by encouraging students to take responsibility for their progress, evaluate their own understanding, and participate actively in collaborative online learning communities.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has further extended the potential for autonomy by providing learners with access to educational content via smartphones, tablets, and mobile applications. Tools such as Quizlet, Anki, and Memrise enhance vocabulary learning through spaced repetition and interactive activities. Stockwell (2013) explains that mobile access allows learners to integrate language learning into daily routines, supporting flexibility and continuous engagement. Reinders and White (2016) add that MALL tools enable students to interact with language materials in informal contexts, thereby reinforcing their autonomy.

Despite these advantages, technology-driven learning also presents challenges. Stockwell (2013) notes that success often depends on learners' digital literacy, consistent internet access, and ability to self-regulate. Some students may struggle with time management or selecting appropriate resources. In such cases, teacher support becomes essential. Reinders (2012) emphasizes the role of teachers in helping learners navigate digital tools, develop critical thinking, and apply effective learning strategies. Benson (2011) also argues that technology should be integrated into pedagogical practices with careful guidance to ensure meaningful and sustained learner engagement.

In conclusion, technology-assisted approaches provide flexible and effective pathways for learners to take control of their language learning. Through digital platforms, mobile apps, and interactive tools, students are able to track their progress, personalize their learning journey, and achieve greater language proficiency. However, the success of these approaches is contingent on the combination of learner readiness and teacher support. When used effectively, technology serves not only as a tool for language learning but also as a medium for cultivating the self-directed learning skills essential for lifelong academic success.

2.3.3. Learner-Based Approaches

A learner-oriented perspective on learner autonomy (LA) emphasizes the active involvement of learners in the educational process, highlighting their capacity to regulate, direct, and take responsibility for their own learning. In the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education, such approaches empower learners to make informed decisions about their learning goals, plan and manage their progress, and engage in self-assessment, thereby fostering independence and intrinsic motivation (Benson, 2011). Rather than relying solely on teachers, learners play a central role in identifying their needs, selecting appropriate learning strategies and tools, and evaluating the effectiveness of their learning efforts.

A fundamental component of learner-centered autonomy is Self-Regulated Learning (SRL), which encompasses key elements such as goal-setting, planning,

monitoring, and self-evaluation (Zimmerman, 2002). SRL supports learners in actively managing their own learning processes, which is closely linked to increased intrinsic motivation—a factor that enhances learners' ability to respond effectively to challenges and make necessary adjustments (Little, 1991). Moreover, as students cultivate habits of reflection and establish specific language learning goals, they tend to become more competent, confident, and autonomous learners (Oxford, 2008).

Another defining characteristic of learner-based autonomy is personalized learning, where students adapt their learning experiences to align with their strengths, weaknesses, and preferences (Reinders, 2010). Autonomous learners experiment with diverse strategies, such as keeping vocabulary journals, participating in peer discussions, using mnemonic devices, and practicing with authentic materials (Cotterall, 1995). By allowing students to explore different techniques, learner-based approaches cultivate independence, helping learners identify the most effective strategies for language acquisition.

While autonomy focuses on independent learning, the role of collaboration in the development of autonomy is crucial. Sociocultural theory by Vygotsky (1978) focuses on the social aspect of learning, indicating that autonomy can be achieved through the interaction with peer people, more specifically teachers. Collaborative group work activities such as group discussions, peer feedback, and cooperative learning projects allow students to assume responsibility for their own learning with the added value of social support and shared experiences (Dam, 1995).

Although autonomy based on learners' needs has its advantages, it also involves drawbacks, especially in the teacher-centered traditional educational model. Self-direction can be a difficult issue for some students, as they may not have the self-confidence to work independently, or have had their thinking "pre-digested" through teacher guidance (Little, 2007). For example, in a Turkish EFL context, students used to teacher-centred classroom and instruction face difficulty when they are expected to become selfregulated learners in the first place (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020). To combat these challenges, teachers need to scaffold student autonomy, guiding and supporting them in their use of strategies but

promoting them to be increasingly responsible for their learning (Reinders & White, 2016).

In conclusion, learner-based approaches to autonomy position students at the core of their learning process, promoting self-regulation, personalized strategies, and collaborative learning. By engaging in goal-setting, self-assessment, and independent decision-making, learners develop confidence, motivation, and essential language-learning skills. However, for these approaches to be effective, educators must support students in developing self-directed learning habits, particularly in contexts where teacher-centered instruction remains dominant. When properly implemented, learner-based autonomy empowers students to take control of their educational journey, leading to greater success in language acquisition and lifelong learning.

2.3.4. Classroom-Based Approaches

Classroom-based approaches to learner autonomy (LA) focus on creating student-centered learning environments that encourage learners to take greater responsibility for their language learning within the classroom setting. In contrast to technology- or resource-driven models of autonomy, classroom-based autonomy is nurtured through structured classroom activities, guided teacher support, and collaborative peer interaction (Benson, 2011). These approaches aim to shift the traditional teacher-centered paradigm toward one where learners are actively engaged, make informed decisions about their learning, and develop self-regulation skills as part of their educational experience.

A fundamental aspect of classroom-based learner autonomy (LA) is empowering students to participate actively in decision-making processes related to their learning. This involves granting learners a degree of control over various aspects of their educational experience, such as selecting learning resources, setting personal learning goals, choosing classroom activities, and engaging in self-assessment to monitor their progress (Little, 1991). Such involvement fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, which are essential for the development of autonomous and self-regulated learners. Studies suggest that learners who have

a say in what and how they learn, are more motivated to learn and take ownership and responsibility for their progress (Cotterall, 1995).

Instructors can encourage self-regulation by helping students learn metacognitive strategies in their courses. By teaching students to set their own learning goals and monitor their learning progress also fosters their ability to plan and regulate their learning directly without external regulation (Zimmerman, 2002). Learning journals, self assessment checklists and peer feedback sessions also help develop critical thinking skills and reflection, essential for independent learning (Oxford, 2008).

While learner autonomy emphasizes independent learning, collaborative classroom activities provide essential support for students as they transition into autonomous learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Classroom-based approaches often incorporate peer discussions, group projects, and cooperative learning exercises, allowing students to learn from one another while still taking responsibility for their contributions (Dam, 1995). Studies suggest that collaborative learning environments increase student motivation and foster higher levels of engagement, making autonomy a socially interactive process rather than a solitary endeavor (Little, 2007).

In classroom-based autonomous learning, the role of the teacher shifts from being a knowledge provider to a facilitator of learning (Benson, 2011). Instead of dictating every aspect of the lesson, teachers guide students toward independent problem-solving, encourage exploration, and provide support when necessary (Reinders, 2010). Teachers also play a crucial role in creating a classroom culture that values self-directed learning, helping students build confidence in making decisions and taking responsibility for their education.

Despite its advantages, implementing classroom-based autonomy can present challenges, particularly in educational contexts where teacher-centered instruction is the norm. In Turkey's EFL classrooms, for example, students who are accustomed to rote learning and passive instruction may initially struggle with self-directed learning (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020). Additionally, large class sizes and curriculum constraints may limit the extent to which teachers can incorporate student choice and individual learning pathways (Reinders & White, 2016). To

address these challenges, educators can gradually introduce autonomy, providing structured guidance while helping students build the confidence and skills needed for independent learning.

Classroom-based approaches to learner autonomy (LA) emphasize active student participation, self-regulation, and collaborative engagement, fostering a learning environment that promotes independence while still benefiting from structured teacher guidance. These approaches aim to balance learner responsibility with pedagogical support, enabling students to make informed decisions, reflect on their learning, and work cooperatively with peers as they develop the skills necessary for autonomous learning. By allowing students to engage in decision-making, develop self-regulation strategies, and collaborate with peers, teachers help cultivate long-term autonomy and motivation. However, implementing these approaches requires a gradual shift from traditional teacher-centered instruction to a more student-driven model, particularly in contexts where autonomy is not yet a widely practiced concept. When effectively integrated, classroom-based autonomy enhances language learning outcomes, fostering both academic success and lifelong learning skills.

2.3.5. Curriculum-Based Approaches

Curriculum-based approaches to learner autonomy emphasize the design of instructional programs that provide learners with increased flexibility, personal choice, and ownership of their learning experiences. In contrast to rigid, uniform curricula, autonomy-oriented programs include student-centered objectives, individualized learning trajectories, and assessment methods that promote active learner engagement (Cotterall, 2000). Instead of adhering to fixed pathways, students are encouraged to set personal learning goals, select appropriate study materials, and determine their own pace and approach to language learning (Little, 2007).

Curricula that are modular or competency-based are particularly effective in supporting autonomy, as they allow learners to progress according to their individual readiness and interests. Features such as elective courses, independent study components, and research-based projects give students the opportunity to

align their academic pursuits with personal goals and preferences (Nunan, 2000; Reinders, 2010). In this way, curriculum design becomes a critical tool for nurturing learners' self-regulation and decision-making abilities.

Self-assessment and reflective learning are the backbone of this methodology. Autonomy supportive programs enable students to monitor their own progress and critically evaluate their learning experience and identify how they could improve (Boud, 1988). Instruments such as portfolios, learning diaries, and checklists for self-evaluation provide students with a way to systematically keep a record of their learning experience and take a more active role in taking charge of their learning (Holec, 1981).

In curricula focusing on autonomy, the teacher's function moves from being a transmitter of knowledge to a facilitator and guide. Educators can promote the acquisition of independent learning strategies by having learners solve problems, set goals, and reflect critically on their own learning (Benson, 2011). They additionally scaffold self-regulated activities and help guarantee that pedagogical goals are placed in the broader context of developing independent learners (Reinders & White, 2016).

Despite its pedagogical advantages, implementing curriculum-based learner autonomy presents several challenges. In many conventional educational settings, such as those in Türkiye, national curricula are often characterized by centralized decision-making, a strong emphasis on standardized testing, and rigid assessment frameworks. Karakaş and Kartal (2020) note that such systemic structures restrict opportunities for differentiated instruction and learner-centered approaches. Similarly, Nunan (2000) argues that standardized curricula can inhibit the flexibility required to foster personalized and autonomous learning experiences. Beyond structural constraints, institutional resistance to pedagogical innovation also plays a significant role. Reinders (2012) highlights that limited teacher training and a lack of professional development opportunities related to autonomy-supportive practices may further impede successful implementation. These factors collectively underscore the complexity of integrating learner autonomy into curriculum-driven education systems.

To overcome the challenges associated with implementing curriculum-based learner autonomy, curriculum designers and policymakers must progressively embed flexible elements into instructional frameworks. Cotterall (2000) advocates for practices such as student-led projects, alternative forms of assessment, and inquiry-based learning models, all of which encourage learner involvement and responsibility. These elements allow for greater personalization and responsiveness to individual learner needs. In parallel, targeted professional development is essential to prepare educators for autonomy-supportive pedagogy. Equipping teachers with the knowledge, strategies, and confidence to foster learner agency is critical for aligning classroom practices with learner-centered objectives.

In summary, curriculum-based approaches to autonomy aim to embed student agency within curriculum planning, instructional delivery, and assessment processes. Through the inclusion of flexible learning pathways, reflective practices, and opportunities for meaningful learner decision-making, educators can support the development of independent, self-regulated learners. Nevertheless, the success of such approaches depends on broader systemic transformations, including shifts in curriculum policy, institutional culture, and teacher education—particularly within exam-oriented educational systems. When effectively implemented, autonomy-oriented curricula not only enhance learner motivation but also promote deeper engagement and prepare students for lifelong, self-directed learning.

2.3.6. Teacher-Based Approaches

The teacher-oriented definition of learner autonomy highlights the importance of teachers when it comes to helping students assume responsibility for their learning.While autonomy is often associated with self-directed learning, this view recognizes that teachers are essential in guiding learners toward greater independence. As Benson (2011) asserts, educators play a crucial role in helping students develop the necessary skills, mindset, and confidence to become autonomous learners. Within this framework, the teacher's role gradually shifts from that of a sole knowledge provider to a facilitator or guide. This transition

involves progressively transferring control of the learning process to the students, allowing them to assume greater responsibility and engage in independent learning.

Teachers are in a central position to create autonomous learning environments by assisting learners to become decision-makers, self-determined personal goal setters, reflective learners, and learners who internalize self-regulation mechanisms (Little, 1995). Given that positive effects of direct instruction are sometimes put in question, and that research shows that when teachers consciously structure their lessons to foster learner autonomy, their learners are often more motivated, involved, and responsible learners (Reinders, 2010), effective practices with technological mediation such as IO will investigate how it maximizes the benefits of traditional iGLs in the application of such concepts. A move from a more traditional (termed "teacher-centered") instruction to one that is more student-directed puts the student in charge of his or her own academic and cognitive development. Critical thinking and problem-solvingThe ability to think critically and solve problems for yourself is another thing teachers can do to nurture autonomy effectively. Instead of generating quick solutions, autonomy-supportive teachers allow students to generate potential remedies, to pose important questions, and to evaluate other methods for resolving the problem (Dam, 1995). This approach stresses upon the cognitive engagement, and provides students with necessary tools to learn on their own, and to apply it to the real-life situations (Nunan, 2000).

A central element of teacher-centered strategies for fostering autonomy is scaffolding, which originates from Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory. It involves the intentional and adaptive support offered by educators to guide learners as they progress through tasks slightly beyond their current capabilities, situated within their zone of proximal development.Teachers may begin by offering explicit instruction, structured tasks, and detailed feedback. As students progress and become more comfortable and proficient, support is gradually pulled back, so learners take more control over their own learning (Reinders, & White, 2016).This gradual release of responsibility represents a shift in the teacher's role from being the central authority to acting as a supportive guide. Strategies such as

peer collaboration, reflective journals, and self-assessment checklists further aid the transition from teacher-dependent to self-directed learning, thereby enhancing student success and retention in higher education (Oxford, 2008).

Teachers' perceptions and attitudes toward learner autonomy play a critical role in determining how effectively it is implemented in classroom practice. According to Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), educators who recognize the value of autonomy are more inclined to adopt autonomy-supportive strategies that promote student agency and responsibility. Similarly, Little (2007) emphasizes that when teachers view autonomy as pedagogically beneficial, they are more likely to design instructional approaches that foster independent learning. However, in certain educational contexts—particularly those dominated by exam-oriented systems—teachers may be reluctant to relinquish control. This resistance often stems from systemic pressures such as rigid curricular frameworks, standardized assessment demands, and deeply rooted cultural norms regarding teacher authority. In the Turkish EFL context, for instance, although many teachers express a positive stance toward learner autonomy, practical challenges such as large class sizes, inflexible syllabi, and high-stakes examinations limit the implementation of student-centered learning approaches (Reinders, 2012; Karakaş & Kartal, 2020).

Addressing these challenges requires systemic support through sustained professional development programs that equip teachers with the tools and strategies to integrate autonomy within required curricular frameworks. Nonetheless, the teacher-based approach to autonomy is not without its own difficulties. Students accustomed to teacher-led instruction may initially resist taking responsibility for their learning (Nunan, 2000). Additionally, many teachers need ongoing support and resources to design learning environments that successfully balance structure (guidance) with learner agency (Reinders & White, 2016). To overcome these barriers, schools and educational institutions should invest in targeted professional development focused on learner autonomy, effective classroom management techniques, and student engagement strategies.

When teachers feel empowered and adequately prepared, they are more likely to cultivate autonomy-supportive classrooms that foster intrinsic motivation

and learner independence. A teacher-based conception of autonomy highlights the educator's role in gradually transferring control to students, structuring learning experiences, and creating responsive and reflective learning environments. However, the implementation of such approaches is shaped by institutional constraints, teachers' personal beliefs, and students' readiness for autonomy. For learner autonomy to be fully realized, reforms in professional development and increased curricular flexibility are essential. When effectively enacted, teacher-based approaches can empower students to become confident, self-regulated, and motivated individuals equipped for lifelong language learning and academic success.

2.4. Teacher and Learner Roles in Autonomous Learning

Self-regulate learning involves a significant shift between teacher and learner roles within the autonomous learning process. This change demands that both parties assume active roles in the it, with learners taking more control over their learning and teachers becoming their facilitators, helping and guiding them to develop their skills as autonomous learners (Benson, 2011). This reframes the relationship, and creates an environment in the classroom that is more collaborative and reflective, which promotes students becoming independent and critical thinkers and problem solvers, but with the structured help provided by the teacher.

Rather than focusing on direct instruction, teachers in autonomy-supportive environments are expected to create conditions that promote independent inquiry and self-regulation. Their role is to mentor students by helping them establish achievable learning objectives, adopt effective strategies, and reflect meaningfully on their progress (Little, 1995). Teachers also assist learners in identifying their strengths and areas for improvement, offering scaffolding where needed to support the gradual transition toward greater independence (Reinders, 2010). This includes designing learning tasks that encourage reflection, decision-making, and self-evaluation. In addition, educators must ensure that learners are equipped with the metacognitive tools required to plan, monitor, and assess their learning processes (Oxford, 2008).

Nevertheless, the success of autonomous learning also relies heavily on the learners themselves. Students must be prepared to take ownership of their education by setting goals, selecting relevant resources, and evaluating their progress consistently (Holec, 1981). Autonomous learners are expected to develop strong time-management and organizational skills, which enable them to maintain motivation and focus throughout their learning journey (Boud, 1988). Moreover, they must be capable of working collaboratively, seeking feedback, and adapting their approaches based on reflective insights, demonstrating flexibility and self-awareness (Dam, 1995).

The interaction between teachers and learners in autonomy-oriented environments is reciprocal and adaptive. As learners begin to take greater initiative, teachers gradually withdraw their direct involvement, allowing students to build confidence in managing their own learning (Reinders & White, 2016). However, this gradual shift can be challenging, especially in educational settings where teacher-centered instruction is the norm. In countries such as Türkiye, where traditional teaching practices are deeply embedded, both educators and students may need targeted training and institutional support to transition effectively to autonomy-based learning (Nunan, 2000; Karakaş & Kartal, 2020).

Despite potential difficulties, achieving an effective balance between teacher support and learner independence is essential for the successful implementation of autonomous learning. Teachers should encourage learners to take initiative while continuing to offer appropriate guidance to prevent feelings of uncertainty or disengagement (Benson, 2011). Simultaneously, learners must understand the value of self-regulation and become active participants in shaping their educational experiences. Through a collaborative, reflective, and supportive learning environment, both teachers and learners can work together to cultivate learner autonomy—ultimately enhancing academic performance and preparing students for lifelong learning.

2.4.1. Teacher Roles in Autonomous Learning

In independent learning, the teachers no longer act as the source of knowledge, rather as uses of knowledge, encouraging students to make decisions

and learn the skills of learning by themselves. Teachers no longer act as the ‘facilitators of learning' (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86); they do not manage the learning process; they do not create the learning environment; rather, they set up conditions under which learners can take the responsibility for their own (Benson, 2011) and scaffold them when necessary. They develop activities that foster decision-making, goal setting, and reflection that help learners develop self-regulation (Little, 1995). Students are more motivated when they are involved in their material selection and progress assessment (Reinders, 2010).

A key responsibility of teachers is scaffolding, which involves providing temporary support as students build confidence and competence in independent learning. Initially, teachers offer guidance by modeling effective learning strategies and providing feedback, gradually reducing support as students gain control over their learning process (Vygotsky, 1978; Reinders & White, 2016). This transition helps learners develop metacognitive skills, such as planning, monitoring, and evaluating their progress (Oxford, 2008).

In addition to providing structure, teachers play a crucial role in fostering intrinsic motivation. Many students, particularly those used to teacher-centered instruction, may find it challenging to take ownership of their learning. By offering encouragement, constructive feedback, and opportunities for self-assessment, teachers help learners develop confidence in their ability to work independently (Dam, 1995). This is especially relevant in EFL contexts like Turkey, where rigid curricula and exam-focused education systems can hinder the development of autonomy (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020).

Encouraging critical thinking and problem-solving is another essential aspect of the teacher’s role. Instead of providing immediate answers, teachers prompt students to ask questions, explore different solutions, and reflect on their learning experiences (Nunan, 2000). Inquiry-based learning and reflective practices enable students to develop independent thinking skills, which are essential for academic success and lifelong learning.

While teachers reduce direct instruction in autonomous learning environments, their role remains vital. They ensure that students are equipped with the necessary cognitive and emotional skills to take control of their education

while maintaining a balance between support and independence. Adapting instructional strategies to meet individual needs fosters a smooth transition from structured learning to autonomy, empowering students to become confident and self-sufficient learners (Benson, 2011).

2.4.2. Learner Roles in Autonomous Learning

In autonomous learning, students move beyond passive participation to actively shape their educational experiences. They assume responsibility for their academic progress by setting learning goals, managing resources, and evaluating their performance (Benson, 2011). This shift requires the development of self-discipline and adaptability, enabling learners to cultivate independent problem-solving and decision-making skills that are essential for long-term academic success.

A central component of learner autonomy is self-regulation—the ability to plan study activities, monitor one's own progress, and adjust learning strategies as needed. According to Holec (1981), effective autonomous learners establish clear objectives, select appropriate learning techniques, and engage in regular reflection on their performance. Developing metacognitive skills allows learners to assess their strengths and weaknesses, refine their approaches, and increase their overall learning efficiency (Oxford, 2008).

In addition to managing their learning processes, autonomous learners are expected to take initiative in selecting resources. Rather than relying exclusively on teachers for input, they actively seek out relevant materials—ranging from digital tools and self-access centers to peer interaction—to deepen their understanding (Reinders, 2010). As Little (1991) notes, engaging with a variety of resources empowers learners to personalize their educational journey in alignment with their individual needs and interests.

Motivation plays a vital role in sustaining autonomous learning. Without the structure provided by teacher-led instruction, learners must cultivate intrinsic motivation by identifying personal goals and maintaining consistent engagement with their studies. Deci and Ryan (1985) emphasize that intrinsically motivated learners display greater persistence and tend to achieve a deeper understanding of

content. Dam (1995) further supports this view, highlighting the motivational benefits of learner-driven educational experiences.

Importantly, autonomy does not imply complete isolation from others. On the contrary, collaborative engagement remains a valuable aspect of autonomous learning. Interactions such as peer discussions, group projects, and feedback exchanges foster critical thinking, enhance accountability, and promote active involvement in the learning community (Vygotsky, 1978; Nunan, 2000).

Despite its benefits, the implementation of learner autonomy can pose challenges—particularly in traditional, exam-oriented education systems. In the Turkish EFL context, students may encounter difficulties with self-regulation due to a curriculum that prioritizes testing over independent learning (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020). Reinders and White (2016) suggest that gradual exposure to self-directed tasks, supported by appropriate scaffolding, can help students build confidence and competence in managing their learning.

Ultimately, autonomous learners take control of their educational journey by setting meaningful goals, effectively managing resources, maintaining motivation, and engaging with peers. While teachers continue to offer guidance and support, the responsibility for learning increasingly shifts to the learner, fostering skills essential for academic achievement and lifelong learning.

2.5. Learner Autonomy and Motivation

Learner independence and motivation are closely interrelated variables that play a crucial role in the success of second language acquisition. Independent learners typically engage in self-regulated learning by setting goals, organizing resources, and reflecting on their progress. However, the effectiveness of this self-directed learning is often shaped by the learners' levels of both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Benson, 1989). Motivation influences not only the initiative learners demonstrate but also their persistence in navigating challenging tasks. A deeper understanding of the relationship between autonomy and motivation is therefore essential to promoting more effective and sustainable language learning practices.

Intrinsic motivation, which stems from personal interests and goals, is widely recognized as a key component of learner autonomy. When students perceive learning as meaningful and relevant, they are more likely to explore diverse strategies and sustain long-term engagement (Deci & Ryan, 1985). Learners who feel in control of their learning tend to be more intrinsically motivated, as they associate their academic progress with a sense of personal growth and empowerment (Reinders, 2010). The inclusion of self-regulated tasks—such as project-based activities or real-world applications—also contributes to increased motivation by fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility over the learning process (Little, 1991).

While autonomy is most effectively driven by intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation—rooted in rewards such as grades, evaluations, or societal expectations—also plays a role in initiating self-directed learning. As Dörnyei (2001) notes, external pressures may compel students to engage with learning tasks, though they may not necessarily result in enduring behavioral change or deep engagement. However, in autonomy-supportive environments, extrinsic motivation can gradually evolve into more internalized, autonomous forms of motivation. Ushioda (2011) argues that when students begin to identify with the goals and relevance of academic tasks, external motivations can be transformed into self-endorsed engagement. This shift is facilitated by instructional practices such as offering meaningful choices, providing constructive feedback, and encouraging self-reflection, all of which help learners recognize their progress and take increasing responsibility for their learning (Oxford, 2008).

Empirical research supports the view that autonomy-supportive instruction is more effective at fostering motivation than traditional teacher-led methods. Nunan (2000) suggests that students who are granted opportunities to shape their own learning—through choices in materials, goal setting, and progress monitoring—tend to report greater motivation and perceived competence. Reinders and White (2016) emphasize the importance of designing learner-centered tasks and enabling structured self-regulation, allowing students to move from dependence toward autonomy within a guided learning environment. Boud

(1988) similarly highlights the value of learning contexts that gradually foster independence while maintaining essential support structures.

Despite the documented benefits of autonomy and motivation, their implementation remains challenging in rigid educational settings. In Turkey's EFL classrooms, for example, the dominance of standardized testing and teacher-centered instruction often limits opportunities for self-access learning and reflective engagement (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020). The emphasis on rote memorization and external evaluation can inhibit both intrinsic motivation and the development of autonomous learning behaviors. Reinders (2012) suggests that such constraints can be addressed through a phased introduction of learner-centered instruction, embedding incremental opportunities for autonomy within the existing curriculum.

In conclusion, learner autonomy and motivation are mutually reinforcing, creating a positive cycle in which increased control leads to heightened engagement, and greater engagement, in turn, strengthens independent learning. When students feel empowered to direct their learning, they are more likely to remain motivated, even in the face of difficulties. For teachers, this interplay provides a practical foundation for instructional strategies that nurture learners' skills, mindset, and confidence—equipping them to become lifelong, self-directed learners capable of thriving both in and beyond the classroom.

2.6. Learner Autonomy and Language Learning Strategies

The connection between learner autonomy and language learning strategies is fundamental, as the ability to self-direct learning largely depends on the effective selection and application of strategies that enhance comprehension, retention, and skill development. Autonomous learners do not passively receive knowledge; instead, they engage with strategies that allow them to take control of their progress, aligning with the principles discussed in earlier sections on self-regulation, motivation, and teacher facilitation (Benson, 2011). Understanding and effectively utilizing learning strategies not only fosters independence but also reinforces motivation, a key element explored in Section 2.5, where motivation was identified as a driving force in sustaining autonomous learning.

A crucial aspect of strategic autonomy lies in metacognitive strategies, which involve planning, monitoring, and evaluating one's learning approach. As discussed in Section 2.4.2 on learner roles, students must take responsibility for assessing their strengths and weaknesses. Engaging in goal-setting, self-assessment, and reflective learning practices enhances their ability to adapt strategies based on their evolving needs (Oxford, 2008). Research indicates that learners who apply metacognitive strategies exhibit greater control over their progress and demonstrate proactive learning behaviors, reinforcing the concept of self-regulated learning introduced in earlier discussions (Wenden, 1991).

Beyond self-reflection, cognitive strategies are central to autonomous learning, enabling students to actively engage with language material. Techniques such as summarization, categorization, and visualization aid in organizing linguistic knowledge effectively (Chamot, 2005). These strategies complement the scaffolding techniques introduced in Section 2.4.1, where teachers gradually shift responsibility to learners. By encouraging strategic engagement, educators ensure that students transition smoothly from teacher-supported learning to self-directed problem-solving, further strengthening their autonomy (Reinders & White, 2016).However, autonomy extends beyond individual effort. Social and affective strategies play a vital role in shaping the autonomous learner, reinforcing the collaborative aspects highlighted in Section 2.3.4 on classroom-based approaches. Peer discussions, group activities, and interactive platforms enable students to refine their communication skills, develop confidence, and sustain motivation (Dörnyei, 2001). Additionally, self-motivation and emotional regulation—key factors in maintaining persistence—are essential in overcoming challenges, a theme that aligns with the interplay between autonomy and motivation discussed in Section 2.5 (Ushioda, 2011).

Despite the advantages of strategy-based autonomy, institutional constraints can limit its effectiveness. As noted in Section 2.3.5 on curriculum-based approaches, many traditional education systems prioritize standardized assessments over strategic language development. This challenge is particularly evident in Turkey's exam-driven context, where students often rely on rote memorization rather than adaptive learning strategies (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020).

Addressing this issue requires an educational shift that integrates strategy instruction within the curriculum, reinforcing the need for autonomy-supportive learning environments discussed in Section 2.4.1 (Cotterall, 2000).

By equipping students with a repertoire of language learning strategies, educators reinforce the foundations of independent learning, motivation, and self-regulation established in earlier sections. The integration of strategic awareness fosters a learning mindset that not only enhances language proficiency but also prepares students for lifelong education. When learners recognize how to select, apply, and modify strategies effectively, they gain the confidence and skills needed to navigate language acquisition independently, a goal at the core of autonomy-driven education.

2.6.1. Cognitive Strategies

Cognitive strategies are essential for autonomous learning, as they enable students to process information effectively, develop independent problem-solving skills, and enhance language acquisition. As explored in previous sections, autonomy requires learners to take an active role in their education, and these strategies provide the tools needed for self-directed engagement (Benson, 2011). Moreover, they contribute to self-regulation and motivation, reinforcing the themes discussed in Sections 2.4 and 2.5, by helping students organize their learning and approach language study strategically.

One of the primary functions of cognitive strategies is to facilitate comprehension and retention. Techniques such as summarization, categorization, note-taking, and visualization allow learners to structure linguistic information in meaningful ways, making it easier to recall and apply in real-world situations (Chamot, 2005). Additionally, when students engage in these strategies, they establish stronger connections between new knowledge and prior learning, strengthening the metacognitive awareness highlighted in Section 2.6.

Beyond comprehension, cognitive strategies encourage deep learning and active engagement. Instead of passively absorbing information, autonomous learners utilize approaches such as rehearsal, elaboration, and association, which reinforce their ability to internalize language rules and structures (Oxford, 2008).

These methods align with the scaffolding process mentioned in Section 2.4.1, in which teachers initially provide structured support before gradually encouraging learners to develop independent critical thinking and monitoring skills.Furthermore, cognitive strategies are instrumental in enhancing proficiency across various language skills. For instance, techniques such as paraphrasing, predicting, and inferencing are highly effective for reading comprehension, whereas self-correction and pattern recognition contribute significantly to writing and speaking fluency (Wenden, 1991). By applying these strategies, learners increase their capacity for self-sufficiency, which reinforces the strategy-based autonomy explored in Section 2.6.

Although cognitive strategies offer numerous advantages, their effectiveness depends on explicit instruction and consistent practice. In exam-driven educational contexts like Turkey, students often prioritize rote memorization rather than strategic learning, which limits their ability to develop independent learning habits (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020). To counter this, educators should incorporate strategy instruction within autonomy-supportive curricula, ensuring that students acquire both linguistic competence and self-directed learning skills. This approach is in line with the curriculum-based autonomy discussed in Section 2.3.5 and the teacher's role in fostering independence, as outlined in Section 2.4.1 (Reinders, 2010).

By integrating cognitive strategies into their learning process, students enhance their ability to analyze, retain, and apply language effectively, leading to greater confidence and autonomy. The synergy between cognitive strategies, motivation, and self-regulation establishes a strong foundation for lifelong learning, equipping students with the necessary skills to adapt and succeed in language acquisition.

2.6.2. Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognitive strategies are essential for the development and enhancement of learner autonomy as they assist learners in controlling their learning through planning, monitoring and evaluation.Unlike cognitive strategies, which focus on processing information, metacognitive strategies involve

awareness and control over one's learning methods, making them essential for self-regulation and independent learning (Oxford, 2008). As highlighted in Sections 2.4 and 2.5, self-regulation and motivation are key components of autonomous learning, and metacognitive strategies provide the necessary framework for developing these skills. By adopting a reflective approach, learners enhance their decision-making abilities, allowing them to take ownership of their educational progress (Wenden, 1991).

A fundamental aspect of metacognitive learning is planning, which involves setting learning objectives, selecting effective study techniques, and organizing study schedules (Schraw & Moshman, 1995). Establishing clear goals allows learners to prioritize tasks, anticipate challenges, and allocate resources efficiently, fostering a proactive approach to education. This structured planning aligns with the self-directed learning principles explored in Section 2.6, as it encourages students to take responsibility for their academic development and learning strategies (Benson, 2011).Closely linked to planning is monitoring, which requires students to assess their comprehension and evaluate the effectiveness of their chosen strategies. By continuously tracking their progress, learners can identify strengths and areas for improvement, making timely adjustments to stay on course (Reinders, 2010). This process complements the gradual transition of responsibility from teacher to student outlined in Section 2.4.1, as students develop greater independence in evaluating their performance. Effective monitoring also prevents passive learning habits, ensuring that students remain engaged, adaptive, and actively involved in their education (Oxford, 2008).

Evaluation further strengthens metacognitive awareness by fostering reflection on learning experiences. Through self-assessment tools such as reflective journals, progress checklists, and peer feedback, learners gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses, allowing them to refine their approaches for more effective learning (Little, 1991). This adaptability supports strategic flexibility, helping students adjust to different learning contexts and evolving educational demands. Additionally, evaluation plays a crucial role in intrinsic motivation, as recognizing progress enhances students' sense of achievement and

reinforces the connection between autonomy and motivation discussed in Section 2.5 (Ushioda, 2011).Despite the clear advantages of metacognitive strategies, many students struggle to apply them effectively, particularly in exam-driven education systems like Turkey's, where rote memorization is often prioritized over strategic learning (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020). To address this challenge, educators should integrate explicit metacognitive strategy instruction into the curriculum, guiding students toward self-regulated learning. This approach aligns with the teacher's role in fostering autonomy discussed in Section 2.4.1, where structured guidance is gradually replaced with independent learning opportunities (Reinders & White, 2016).

Cultivating metacognitive strategies allows students to become more autonomous in their learning by organizing their time, tracking their progress, and adjusting their learning methods as needed. These approach not only improve the way of academic learning, but also prepare students for life-long learning by making them more adaptable and better problem-solvers. The more metacognitively aware learners are, the more they do not feel like passsengers in their own learning; this supports the principles of learner autonomy and self-directed development.

2.6.3. Social and Affective Strategies

Social and affective strategies are vital contributors to the development of autonomous learners in supporting students in managing their emotions, maintaining motivation and engaging in meaningful interaction.While cognitive and metacognitive strategies focus on information processing and self-regulation, social and affective strategies emphasize the interpersonal and emotional dimensions of learning (Oxford, 2008). As highlighted in Sections 2.4 and 2.5, motivation and self-regulation are key to autonomy, and these strategies equip learners with tools to manage external influences and internal challenges effectively.

One of the social strategies that make sense is cooperative learning and cooperative learning goes beyond language activities. Interacting with peers provides students with different perspectives, problem-solving strategies, and

language-use opportunities in authentic settings (Dörnyei, 2001).This approach aligns with classroom-based strategies discussed in Section 2.3.4, demonstrating how social engagement fosters both independence and deeper learning. Furthermore, working in groups enhances peer accountability, encouraging students to take responsibility for their own learning while benefiting from shared knowledge and support (Vygotsky, 1978).

Beyond peer collaboration, seeking guidance from teachers, mentors, or proficient speakers provides valuable support in the learning process. While autonomy emphasizes self-direction, it does not imply isolation. Consulting experienced individuals enables students to receive constructive feedback, clarify uncertainties, and refine their strategies (Reinders, 2010). This corresponds to the concept of scaffolding discussed in Section 2.4.1, through which teachers progressively withdraw direct instruction and develop learners' independence. Contrastively, affective strategies focus on the emotional dimension of learning in order to help students control their anxiety, build confidence, and remain motivated. Techniques such as self-encouragement, relaxation exercises, and goal-setting assist learners in overcoming frustration and self-doubt, ensuring emotional barriers do not hinder progress (Little, 1991). Research suggests that individuals with strong affective regulation skills demonstrate greater perseverance, reinforcing the intrinsic motivation principles explored in Section 2.5 (Ushioda, 2011).

Additionally, fostering emotional resilience enables learners to navigate setbacks effectively and remain committed to their academic goals. This is particularly relevant in exam-driven education systems such as Turkey’s, where rigid assessment structures and high expectations can create stress and limit opportunities for self-directed learning (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020). By integrating affective strategies, students cultivate confidence and persistence, essential qualities for independent education.

Despite their significance, social and affective strategies are often undervalued in traditional learning environments, where cognitive skills receive greater emphasis. To bridge this gap, educators should incorporate collaborative tasks, emotional regulation techniques, and peer support systems into their

teaching. This aligns with the teacher's role in fostering autonomy, as discussed in Section 2.4.1, ensuring students develop both the cognitive and emotional competencies necessary for independent learning (Reinders & White, 2016).

By integrating social and affective strategies, learners enhance interpersonal skills, build emotional resilience, and sustain motivation, all of which contribute to greater autonomy. Developing these strategies empowers students to overcome obstacles, seek assistance when needed, and maintain a proactive approach to their education, reinforcing the core principles of self-directed learning and long-term academic success.

2.7. Studies Conducted in Türkiye

In Türkiye the concept of learner autonomy has received increasing attention due to changing paradigms in education, especially because of the changing approach in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) from a teacher-centered to a more learner-centered instruction. Historically, the Turkish education system has been characterized by a strong emphasis on memorization, teacher-centered instruction, and standardized testing. In recent years, however, there has been a growing acknowledgment of the value of self-regulated learning and learner autonomy, particularly within foreign language education (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020). Nevertheless, research indicates that both teachers and learners continue to face significant obstacles in implementing autonomy-oriented approaches. These difficulties are largely associated with systemic limitations, curriculum designs that prioritize examinations, and deeply rooted pedagogical traditions (Sert, 2006; Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012).

Several studies have examined Turkish EFL teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy and their capacity to foster it in their classrooms. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) reported that while many teachers express theoretical support for learner autonomy, they often struggle to implement it due to limited instructional time, tightly packed curricula, and insufficient institutional encouragement. Sert (2006) corroborated these findings, noting that although teachers recognize the benefits of autonomy, many lack the necessary training and confidence to apply autonomy-supportive strategies effectively. These studies underscore the central

role of teacher perceptions in the successful implementation of learner autonomy. In the absence of sustained professional development, teachers frequently revert to teacher-centered practices that inhibit the development of self-regulated learning.

Student readiness for autonomy has also emerged as a significant concern in the Turkish EFL context. Many learners are accustomed to highly structured, teacher-directed learning environments and are therefore unfamiliar with models that demand self-regulation and initiative (Özverir, Osam, & Herrington, 2017). Yıldırım (2012) found that while university-level EFL students generally recognize the value of autonomy, they often lack the confidence and strategic competence needed to manage their own learning. Similarly, Balçıkanlı (2010) explored pre-service teachers' perceptions and found that although they value autonomy, they require explicit instruction and scaffolding to apply autonomy-oriented practices in their future classrooms. These findings highlight the need for learner training programs that focus on developing metacognitive skills, goal-setting abilities, and effective independent learning strategies.

Institutional barriers further complicate the integration of autonomy into Turkish EFL instruction. The centralized nature of the national curriculum and its alignment with high-stakes standardized examinations leave little room for exploratory, student-driven learning experiences (Küçük, 2012; Karakaş, 2019). As a result, students are often conditioned to prioritize test performance over deep engagement with learning content. Additionally, factors such as overcrowded classrooms, rigid syllabi, and longstanding teacher-centered norms limit opportunities for learner autonomy (Sert, 2006; Karakaş, 2019). Infrastructure-related limitations—including a lack of self-access centers, digital tools, and individualized learning support—further constrain the development of autonomy beyond the classroom (Özverir et al., 2017).

Nevertheless, research has identified several promising strategies for promoting learner autonomy in Türkiye. Kocaman and Balçıkanlı (2013) found that the integration of technology-based tools—such as mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) applications and online platforms—can facilitate independent practice and allow learners to monitor their progress. Yıldırım (2012) highlighted the effectiveness of task-based instruction, collaborative learning, and project

work in promoting autonomy through enhanced motivation, critical thinking, and active engagement. Furthermore, the implementation of blended learning models, which combine face-to-face instruction with digital components, has been shown to provide learners with both structure and flexibility. Reinders (2012) notes that such environments support the development of autonomous learning by offering guided instruction alongside opportunities for self-directed study and reflection.

2.8. Studies Conducted Abroad

Research on learner autonomy in language education has been widely conducted across diverse educational contexts, emphasizing the significance of self-directed learning, metacognitive awareness, and learner motivation in successful language acquisition. International studies have explored various aspects of autonomy, including autonomy-supportive teaching methods, the role of technology, and the effectiveness of learner training in promoting independent learning. These insights are particularly valuable for informing EFL practices in Türkiye, where challenges related to teacher-centered instruction, curriculum rigidity, and assessment policies continue to hinder the widespread adoption of autonomous learning.

In Europe, the early intense work contributed towards the development of autonomy supportive pedagogies. Holec (1981), who is considered to be one of the early forerunners of the SALL in France, carry out the study in France. The notion self-access learning centers were developed in which the students were motivated to take their own responsibility of their education in the self-access learning center. In addition, Little (1991), also found self-regulation, self-reflection, and learner involvement as important factors underpinning autonomy while observing Irish language classrooms. These European studies were instrumental in re-modelling the curricular structures on learner-centred methods.

In the United Kingdom, Benson (2001) examined university-level language programs and found that involving learners in goal-setting, strategy selection, and self-assessment significantly enhanced their language proficiency. He also observed that teacher attitudes toward autonomy strongly influenced the extent to which autonomy was embedded in classroom practices—a finding

echoed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), who reported that while many educators support autonomy in principle, they often struggle to implement it due to institutional limitations.

Beyond Europe, research from Asia has contributed nuanced understandings of how cultural and systemic factors influence autonomy. Littlewood (1999) examined East Asian educational systems and noted that students often struggle with developing autonomy due to entrenched expectations of teacher authority and exam-focused learning environments. Nevertheless, Chan, Spratt, and Humphreys (2002) found that with structured autonomy training, learners in Hong Kong were able to develop self-directed learning habits. Similarly, Aoki and Smith (1999) reported that in Japan, strategies such as task-based learning, peer collaboration, and the integration of technology could successfully foster learner independence, even among students accustomed to traditional, teacher-led instruction.

In the contexts of Australia and New Zealand, researchers have underscored the transformative role of technology in supporting learner autonomy. Reinders and White (2016) investigated how blended learning environments—incorporating online platforms and mobile-assisted language learning (MALL)—enhance students' self-regulation by enabling flexible access to resources, ongoing feedback, and continuous progress tracking. These findings align with Kocaman and Balçıkanlı's (2013) research in Türkiye, which highlighted the potential of technology-based instruction to enhance learner autonomy within Turkish EFL classrooms.

In North America, studies have frequently drawn on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to explore the relationship between autonomy and motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) conceptualized autonomy as a core element of intrinsic motivation, which supports deeper engagement and persistence in language learning. Ushioda (2011) expanded on this framework by demonstrating that autonomy-supportive classrooms can cultivate long-term commitment to learning by enhancing students' intrinsic motivation. These insights are consistent with Dörnyei's (2001) assertion that autonomy contributes directly to learners' willingness to take risks, persist through challenges, and build self-confidence.

Taken together, these global studies offer valuable lessons for enhancing learner autonomy in the Turkish EFL context. Research from Europe and North America emphasizes the critical role of teacher training in promoting autonomy, suggesting that professional development initiatives are essential for equipping Turkish educators with the skills and mindset needed to implement autonomy-supportive practices. Findings from Asian contexts reveal that even in highly structured and exam-driven education systems, autonomy can be cultivated through explicit training and scaffolded instruction—an approach that is particularly relevant given Türkiye's longstanding emphasis on teacher authority and centralized curricula (Küçük, 2012).

Additionally, international research highlights the importance of integrating technology to support independent learning. As Türkiye continues to invest in digital infrastructure, the adoption of blended learning environments, self-access digital resources, and MALL applications can provide meaningful opportunities for learners to engage autonomously. Moreover, studies grounded in motivational theory suggest that autonomy not only improves learning outcomes but also fosters intrinsic motivation, which contributes to sustained engagement and long-term academic success. These insights reinforce the urgency of curricular reforms in Türkiye that move beyond rote learning and emphasize student agency, reflective practice, and learner responsibility (Karakaş & Kartal, 2020).

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study aimed to investigate the perceptions and practices of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers concerning learner autonomy (LA) by collecting insights from educators in Türkiye. To achieve a comprehensive understanding of the topic, a mixed-methods research design was employed, combining quantitative data from structured questionnaires with qualitative data derived from semi-structured interviews.

In the first phase, a questionnaire was conducted to collect data on teachers' perceptions, providing a broad overview of their views. In the second phase, structured interviews were carried out to gain deeper insights and further interpret the survey findings. This dual-method design allowed for a comprehensive analysis, with quantitative data highlighting general trends and qualitative data adding depth and context.

Kagan (1992) noted that teachers' unconscious beliefs may not always emerge in survey responses, and factors such as social desirability can influence their answers. To address these limitations, this study integrated qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure a more accurate and nuanced understanding of teachers' perspectives.

3.2. Setting

This study was conducted with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers employed in both public and private educational institutions across Türkiye. It aimed to investigate teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy (LA) and explore how these perceptions shape their instructional practices. By examining teachers' beliefs and the strategies they implement in the classroom, the study sought to assess the extent to which learner autonomy is actively fostered in EFL contexts. Participants were purposefully selected from diverse educational backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive understanding of autonomy-supportive practices. In light of the increasing emphasis on independent learning

in language education, the findings provide meaningful insights into how EFL teachers in Türkiye support learners in taking responsibility for their own learning processes.

3.3. Participants

To comprehensively examine EFL teachers' perceptions and practices concerning learner autonomy, this study adopted a mixed-methods research design that integrated both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments.

A questionnaire was used as the primary data collection instrument due to its efficiency in gathering information. As Dörnyei (2007) highlights, questionnaires are cost-effective, easily administered, and allow for rapid data analysis. However, recognizing the need for a deeper exploration of teachers' perspectives, qualitative insights were also incorporated. In mixed-methods research, combining different data sources enhances the validity of findings and provides a more nuanced understanding of the research problem (Sandelowski, 2003).

For the purposes of this study, an established questionnaire and interview framework originally developed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) was adapted to explore EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding learner autonomy. A total of 100 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers participated, representing a range of public and private educational institutions, including primary, secondary, and high schools. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to ensure diversity in teaching experience, institutional settings, and demographic characteristics, thereby enhancing the representativeness and relevance of the findings. To ensure ethical compliance and proper usage, the researchers were directly contacted via email, and formal consent was obtained to implement the instrument within this study's context.

3.3.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

To visually represent the demographic characteristics of the EFL teachers who participated in the study, the following figures provide graphical summaries of gender, teaching experience, age groups, and workplace types.

Table 3.1. Gender Distribution of Participants

Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	58	58.0%	58.0%	58.0%
Male	42	42.0%	42.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 3.1. presents the gender distribution of the participants in this study. Out of a total of 100 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers, 58% (n = 58) identified as female, while 42% (n = 42) identified as male. This indicates a higher representation of female teachers within the participant group. The relatively balanced distribution, with a moderate gender gap, suggests that the perspectives and practices explored in this study reflect contributions from both male and female educators, although the female voice is somewhat more prominent. This demographic profile is consistent with broader trends in language education, where female educators often constitute a significant proportion of the teaching workforce.

Table 3.2. Years Of Teaching Experience Of EFL Teachers

Experience Range (Years)	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
0–4	35	35.71%	35.71%	35.71%
5–9	37	37.76%	37.76%	73.47%
10–14	16	16.33%	16.33%	89.80%
15–19	8	8.16%	8.16%	97.96%
20–24	1	1.02%	1.02%	98.98%
25+	1	1.02%	1.02%	100.0%
Total	98	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 3.2 presents the distribution of participants based on their teaching experience. The majority of the EFL teachers (37.76%, n = 37) reported having 5–9 years of experience, followed closely by those with 0–4 years (35.71%, n = 35). A smaller proportion had 10–14 years of experience (16.33%, n = 16), while fewer participants fell into the 15–19 years category (8.16%, n = 8). Only one participant each reported having between 20–24 years (1.02%) and over 25 years (1.02%) of experience.

This distribution suggests that the participant pool predominantly consists of early to mid-career teachers, reflecting the perspectives of educators who are relatively recent entrants to the profession or who have accumulated moderate teaching experience. The limited representation of highly experienced teachers

may indicate generational patterns in the workforce or institutional hiring trends. These findings provide context for understanding the beliefs and practices explored in the study, as teaching experience can significantly shape educators' perceptions of learner autonomy and their willingness to implement autonomy-supportive practices.

Table 3.3. Age Group Distribution of Participants

Age Group	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
20–30	63	63.0%	63.0%	63.0%
31–40	27	27.0%	27.0%	90.0%
41–50	10	10.0%	10.0%	100.0%
Total	100	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 3.3 presents the age distribution of participants. The majority of the EFL teachers (63.0%, *n* = 63) were between the ages of 20–30, followed by 27.0% (*n* = 27) in the 31–40 age group, and 10.0% (*n* = 10) aged 41–50.

This distribution indicates a predominantly young teaching population, with nearly two-thirds of respondents in their twenties. This demographic trend may reflect recent hiring practices in the Turkish EFL sector or the influx of early-career professionals into language teaching. The relatively lower representation of older teachers suggests that the perspectives gathered in this study are more likely shaped by those with recent training and potentially greater openness to autonomy-supportive pedagogies, but possibly less long-term classroom experience.

Table 3.4. Workplace Distribution of Participants

Type of Workplace	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Secondary school	38	38.78%	38.78%	38.78%
High school	29	29.59%	29.59%	68.37%
Private school	16	16.33%	16.33%	84.70%
Primary school	15	15.31%	15.31%	100.0%
Total	98	100.0%	100.0%	

Table 3.4 shows the distribution of participants based on their workplace. The largest group of respondents (38.78%, *n* = 38) were employed in secondary schools, followed by high school teachers (29.59%, *n* = 29). A smaller proportion of participants worked in private schools (16.33%, *n* = 16) and primary schools (15.31%, *n* = 15).

This distribution suggests that the study predominantly reflects the experiences and perceptions of teachers working in secondary and high school contexts. These institutions often have more structured language curricula and examination pressures, which may influence how learner autonomy is perceived and practiced. The inclusion of participants from private and primary schools, albeit in smaller numbers, adds diversity to the data and allows for comparative insights into autonomy-supportive practices across different institutional settings.

3.4. Instruments

Questionnaires are widely acknowledged for their efficiency and practicality in research. They allow data to be collected economically from large and geographically diverse populations and enable rapid analysis (Dörnyei, 2007). Despite the strengths of quantitative research in identifying patterns and general trends, the inclusion of qualitative data is essential for capturing the complexity and contextual nuances of educational phenomena. Accordingly, this study adopted a mixed-methods approach to provide a more holistic understanding of EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding learner autonomy. As Sandelowski (2003) notes, mixed-methods research facilitates a richer and more comprehensive interpretation of the research problem by enabling the integration and comparison of quantitative and qualitative findings.

For the present study, the research instrument developed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) was adopted, as it closely aligns with the aim of investigating EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding learner autonomy. Their original study explored the perceptions and practices of 61 EFL instructors at a university language center in Oman, employing a questionnaire followed by semi-structured interviews. Given the conceptual and methodological compatibility between their research and the current study, the instrument was deemed appropriate for capturing teachers' beliefs and classroom practices related to learner autonomy. Permission to use the instrument was obtained through direct communication with the original authors, who granted consent for its implementation in this study.

3.4.1. The Questionnaire

The questionnaire utilized in this study was originally developed by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) and consists of five sections, with the first section comprising 37 Likert-scale items. Each item is rated on a five-point scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

This instrument was designed to systematically collect data on ten key constructs related to various dimensions of learner autonomy, including:

- The technical, psychological, social, and political dimensions of learner autonomy
- The role of teachers in fostering learner autonomy
- The applicability of learner autonomy across different cultural contexts
- The influence of age on learner autonomy
- The relationship between learner autonomy and language learning success

By addressing these constructs, the questionnaire establishes a comprehensive framework for examining EFL teachers' perceptions, attitudes, and instructional practices related to learner autonomy. Its adaptation and application in the present study ensure a structured and empirically grounded exploration of how learner autonomy is conceptualized and fostered within English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education.

3.4.2. Interview

In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were employed as a qualitative data collection tool to gain a deeper understanding of EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding learner autonomy. This method is particularly effective for eliciting rich, nuanced insights into participants' perceptions, motivations, and classroom experiences, as it allows for flexibility in probing responses while maintaining a consistent thematic focus across interviews. They enable the collection of subtle and context-sensitive information that complements and enhances the interpretation of quantitative findings (Dörnyei, 2007; Gillham, 2005).

The interviews in the current research were semi-structured and were an attempt to maintain a degree of consistency between participants despite also having the flexibility to pursue (with a degree of uniformity) new ideas. Interviews were conducted based on Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012).

The interview guide included open-ended questions grouped under five main areas:

- Understanding of Learner Autonomy
- Perceived Importance and Benefits
- Classroom Practices Supporting Autonomy
- Challenges and Constraints in Fostering Autonomy
- Institutional and Contextual Influences

Each interview lasted approximately 25–30 minutes and was conducted in English.A total of 14 EFL teachers participated in the interview phase. These individuals were selected through purposeful sampling from those who indicated their willingness to be interviewed at the end of the questionnaire. The sampling aimed to ensure variation in teaching experience, institutional type (public/private), and geographical location, providing a broad range of perspectives.

The qualitative data obtained from the interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the approach outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). A combination of inductive and deductive coding was employed to identify meaningful patterns within the data. This approach allowed themes to emerge organically from participants' responses while also ensuring alignment with the study's research questions and theoretical framework.

3.5. Data Analyses

A mixed-methods design was employed in this retrospective study to examine secondary EFL teachers' perceptions and practices regarding learner autonomy (LA). Quantitative data were collected through structured questionnaires, while qualitative data were gathered via face-to-face structured interviews. The quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 26.0, with descriptive statistics applied to

identify patterns and trends in the participants' responses. Qualitative data were analyzed through content analysis to uncover emerging themes and to gain deeper insights into teachers' autonomy-related beliefs, instructional strategies, and classroom experiences.

The qualitative data, including open-ended questionnaire responses and interview transcripts, were subjected to thematic analysis by the researcher, following the principles outlined by Newby (2010). The data were examined and coded to identify key themes and recurring issues, which were then grouped under broader patterns that emerged from the participants' responses. The interview questions were designed to provide an initial framework for organizing and interpreting the qualitative data.

In alignment with the mixed-methods design of the study, the qualitative findings were compared with the quantitative data to provide deeper insight and explanatory support. This comparative analysis was intended to contextualize teachers' questionnaire responses and to elucidate the underlying reasons behind their perceptions and practices related to learner autonomy. The integration of both data sources facilitated a more comprehensive understanding of how EFL teachers conceptualize and implement autonomy-supportive strategies within their classroom settings.

3.6. Trustworthiness of the Study

To ensure the trustworthiness of this mixed-methods study, a series of procedures were implemented based on the criteria outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985), namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was addressed through methodological triangulation, as qualitative data gathered from semi-structured interviews with 14 EFL teachers were cross-verified with quantitative findings obtained from a structured questionnaire completed by 100 participants (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Purposeful sampling was used to include teachers from varied institutional backgrounds and levels of experience, thereby capturing a broad range of perspectives. Member checking was also employed, enabling participants to review selected transcripts

and confirm the accuracy of the researcher's interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

To establish transferability, detailed descriptions of participant demographics, teaching contexts, and educational settings were provided, allowing readers to assess the relevance of the findings to similar environments (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Dependability was supported by maintaining thorough documentation of all stages of the research process, including the development of instruments, interview procedures, and thematic coding methods. Confirmability was strengthened through reflexive journaling and by anchoring interpretations in verbatim quotations from participants, reducing the influence of potential researcher bias (Shenton, 2004).

Furthermore, the reliability of the quantitative instrument was confirmed using Cronbach's alpha, which yielded a value of $\alpha = .85$, indicating strong internal consistency (George & Mallery, 2003). These combined strategies ensured that the study's findings are well-founded, transparent, and consistent with accepted scholarly standards.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This chapter presents and analyzes the findings derived from both the questionnaire and the structured interviews, systematically organized around the five research questions that guided the study. The results are reported following the thematic structure established in the introductory section, which reflects the design of the questionnaire and the alignment of the interview protocol. This structured approach ensures consistency between the research framework and the presentation of results, thereby enabling a coherent and comprehensive interpretation of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perceptions and instructional practices related to learner autonomy.

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the key findings derived from both the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study. The results from the questionnaire are first analyzed using descriptive statistical methods, followed by the presentation of insights obtained from structured interviews, which serve to enrich and contextualize the interpretation of the quantitative data.

To address the research questions comprehensively, a mixed-methods design was employed, integrating both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis procedures. This methodological approach enables a more nuanced and holistic understanding of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers' perceptions and reported practices regarding learner autonomy.

The findings are organized according to the five research questions that structured the study. Each subsection presents the relevant results in detail and is followed by a discussion that interprets the data, identifies emerging patterns, and considers their implications for both theory and pedagogical practice.

4.2. Research Question 1: What are the Perceptions of EFL Teachers on Learner Autonomy in Türkiye?

4.2.1. Findings from the Questionnaire

The first research question sought to explore EFL teachers' perceptions of learner autonomy in foreign language classrooms. To address this question, data were collected using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The quantitative findings, drawn from questionnaire responses, provided an overview of teachers' general perceptions of learner autonomy. These results were supported and further elaborated by the qualitative data obtained through structured interviews, which offered deeper insights into participants' perceptions and classroom experiences related to autonomy in language learning. The findings from both data sources are presented and interpreted in the following section.

Table 4.1. Technical Perspectives on Learner Autonomy

N	*Valid*	*100*
	Missing	*0*
Mean		*14,1100*
Std. Deviation		*3,39903*
Minimum		*4,00*
Maximum		*20,00*

The analysis of Items 2, 6, 21, and 31—each reflecting technical aspects of learner autonomy—reveals that EFL teachers in Türkiye hold generally positive attitudes toward promoting learner autonomy through out-of-class, self-directed, and technology-assisted activities. The combined SPSS data (Mean = 14.11, SD = 3.40, N = 100) suggests a strong overall agreement with the idea that independent environments, such as libraries, self-access centres, and online platforms, contribute significantly to the development of autonomous learning skills.

Among these items, the highest levels of agreement were found in statements endorsing the value of internet-based tasks and learning outside the classroom, indicating that most teachers acknowledge the critical role of technology and independent exploration in fostering autonomy. The item on self-access centers, however, showed more mixed responses—likely due to varying access and institutional resources. This interpretation is supported by interview

data in which some teachers noted the absence of physical self-access centers but compensated by using digital tools and platforms.

Qualitative responses confirmed the quantitative trends, with many teachers emphasizing the importance of internet use, library access, and project-based tasks as autonomy-promoting strategies. Teachers described how such environments allow learners to take initiative, explore content independently, and reflect on their progress—core characteristics of autonomous learning.

Despite the overall positivity, the moderate standard deviation (3.40) points to a level of inconsistency in beliefs and practice, potentially influenced by infrastructure availability, teacher training, and school context. For example, while some educators implement autonomy-supportive activities frequently, others may struggle due to technological limitations or institutional constraints.

In conclusion, the findings demonstrate that while the technical dimension of learner autonomy is widely endorsed, there is a need for equitable access to digital tools and structured support systems to ensure consistent implementation across all educational settings.

Table 4.2. Psychological Perspectives on Learner Autonomy

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		15,6700
Std. Deviation		3,71471
Minimum		6,00
Maximum		25,00

Based on the findings presented in **Table 4.2.** Items 11, 29, 32, 33, and 37 highlight EFL teachers' perceptions on the psychological aspects of learner autonomy, including factors like motivation, self-confidence, emotional preparedness, and learners' belief in their capacity for independent learning. The descriptive statistics derived from SPSS indicate an overall mean score of 15.67 out of 25, with a standard deviation of 3.71. This suggests that teachers generally hold a favorable, though somewhat diverse, perspective on the psychological foundations that support learner autonomy.

The item-level responses suggest that most teachers strongly associate learner autonomy with motivation and self-belief. For example, teachers widely agreed that learners need to be motivated and believe in their own ability to

become autonomous. However, there was more variation in responses related to emotional readiness, indicating that not all teachers consider affective readiness as essential as cognitive or motivational factors.

The qualitative data gathered through teacher interviews further contextualize the quantitative findings. Several participants emphasized that internal factors such as motivation and self-confidence are essential for the development of learner autonomy. One teacher explained, “Without motivation, even the best activities don’t work. A student must want to learn on their own.” Another teacher noted, “Some of my students are smart, but they fear making mistakes. That stops them from working independently.” These reflections highlight the importance of affective variables—such as emotional readiness, anxiety, and fear of failure—in shaping learners’ capacity to engage in autonomous learning. The interview responses suggest that without psychological readiness, students may resist or avoid tasks that require independence, thereby limiting the effectiveness of autonomy-supportive teaching practices.

The findings align with theoretical frameworks such as Deci and Ryan’s (1985) Self-Determination Theory, which underscores the significance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in promoting intrinsic motivation. Similarly, Benson (2011) argues that psychological readiness is a foundational component of autonomy. These findings confirm that for many teachers, developing learner autonomy goes beyond teaching strategies—it also involves nurturing learners’ psychological capabilities and confidence.

In conclusion, the psychological dimension of learner autonomy is clearly recognized by the EFL teachers who participated in this study. Motivation and self-efficacy are widely acknowledged as foundational enablers of autonomous learning. However, perspectives on emotional and affective readiness reveal more complexity, with varied interpretations among participants. These findings indicate that fostering learner autonomy effectively requires attention not only to external instructional frameworks but also to the internal psychological conditions—such as confidence, resilience, and emotional engagement—that underpin students’ capacity for self-directed learning.

Table 4.3. Social Perspectives on Learner Autonomy

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		16,0900
Std. Deviation		3,51934
Minimum		6,00
Maximum		23,00

When discussing learner autonomy, it is often associated with individual learners independently making decisions about their learning processes. However, autonomy should not be equated with isolation. In fact, social interaction plays a crucial role in the development of autonomous learning. Collaborative activities such as group work, classroom discussions, and peer support not only foster critical thinking but also help learners become more self-directed through shared experiences and mutual guidance. This section of the study examines how EFL teachers in Türkiye perceive the social dimensions of learner autonomy, drawing on questionnaire items that investigate the role of peer collaboration and interactive learning environments in promoting autonomous behavior. As it is indicated in the data, with an average score of 16.09 out of 25, most teachers believe that classroom activities promoting interaction can really help students become more autonomous. Teachers see the value of group tasks not just as academic tools, but as ways to build responsibility and collaboration. As one teacher put it, “Students often learn more from each other than from me.” Another noted, “Group tasks make students responsible not just for their own part, but for the whole outcome.” These views show how autonomy can grow in a classroom community where learners are encouraged to engage, share, and support one another.

At the same time, the slightly varied responses highlight that classroom conditions are not uniform. Factors such as large class sizes, rigid curricula, and entrenched traditional teaching practices may restrict the extent to which collaborative learning can be implemented. Despite these challenges, the overarching finding remains consistent: when students engage in dialogue, collaborate, and support one another, they are not only acquiring content knowledge but also developing the metacognitive skills essential for autonomous learning.

In summary, the EFL teachers in this study acknowledge that autonomy is not solely an individual endeavor. Rather, it is a shared process — one in which learners grow through interaction, mutual support, and co-construction of knowledge.

Table 4.4. Political Perspectives on Learner Autonomy

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		14,3200
Std. Deviation		3,37812
Minimum		4,00
Maximum		20,00

Table 4.4 explores the political dimension of learner autonomy, specifically focusing on Items 4, 7, 22, and 27. These items assess EFL teachers' beliefs regarding the extent to which learners should have a say in decisions about learning goals, classroom practices, assessment, and materials. According to Table 4.4, the overall mean score for this section was 14.32 out of 20, with a standard deviation of 3.38. This suggests a generally favorable stance among teachers toward student involvement, though with notable variation in responses.

Item-level analysis highlights a cautiously supportive attitude toward political learner autonomy. Most teachers agreed that learners should have a voice in shaping the goals of their language courses (Item 4) and the ability to set personal learning targets (Item 27). However, responses to Items 7 and 22, which address classroom rules and material selection, suggest more mixed opinions. These differences may stem from external constraints such as standardized curricula, exam-driven environments, and institutional policies that limit the flexibility teachers have in delegating control to students.

Interview responses reinforced the quantitative findings. While teachers expressed support for learner involvement, they frequently noted practical barriers. For instance, one teacher explained, "I like when students share their goals, but we still have to follow the national curriculum," highlighting a tension between ideal pedagogical practices and system-level limitations. Another remarked, "Autonomy is great, but giving too much control can backfire, especially with younger students," reflecting a concern about maintaining classroom order and ensuring productive learning experiences.

Overall, the findings indicate that EFL teachers value the concept of shared responsibility in language learning, while also recognizing the necessity of structured pedagogical support. The data suggest that teachers tend to favor a guided approach to learner autonomy, wherein students are encouraged to make informed decisions and participate actively within a framework shaped by the teacher and the curriculum. This balanced perspective aligns with existing literature, which underscores that autonomy should not be misconstrued as the absence of guidance, but rather as supported and scaffolded learner engagement (Benson, 2011; Smith, 2003).

Table 4.5. The Role of the Teacher in Promoting Learner Autonomy

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		11,2300
Std. Deviation		2,89847
Minimum		5,00
Maximum		19,00

This section discusses EFL teachers' beliefs on their role in fostering learner autonomy, based on Items 8, 18, 24, and 35. According to Table 4.5, the total mean score for these items was 11.23 out of 20, with a standard deviation of 2.90. This result suggests a moderately positive perception of the teacher's role—not as an authority to be removed, but as a facilitator and guide in the autonomy-building process.

Item 35, 'The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy,' received strong agreement, with a combined 78% of teachers selecting 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree'. This indicates that teachers recognize their continued importance in autonomy development. One teacher stated during the interview phase, "I see my job as helping students become independent gradually—not immediately." This suggests that teachers do not view autonomy as student isolation, but rather as a shared journey that evolves over time.

Conversely, Items 8 and 24, which propose extreme interpretations such as 'Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher' and 'Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher,' showed high levels of disagreement. For example, 24.4% of teachers disagreed and 34.1% strongly disagreed with Item 18, which claimed that autonomy cannot develop without

teacher support. This mixed view reflects an understanding that while teacher involvement is key; some autonomy should still emerge from the learner's internal drive.

The interview data corroborated the questionnaire findings. One participant stated, "Some students misunderstand autonomy. They think it means doing everything alone, but they still need feedback and direction." Another emphasized, "Students still need guidance. Being autonomous doesn't mean they don't need us." These perspectives reinforce the view that teacher support and learner autonomy are not mutually exclusive. Rather, autonomy is most effectively cultivated when teachers provide structured guidance and gradually release responsibility, enabling learners to develop the skills necessary for independent learning. This approach is consistent with the concept of scaffolding, which emphasizes the teacher's role in supporting learners as they build confidence and competence (Reinders & White, 2016).

The data suggest that EFL teachers advocate for a guided model of learner autonomy, in which the teacher's role is redefined rather than removed. This perspective is consistent with Little's (1995) assertion that autonomy is most effectively cultivated through ongoing interaction and pedagogical support. Teachers in this study perceive themselves as mentors who empower students to take responsibility for their learning while offering continuous guidance and constructive feedback.

Table 4.6. The Cultural Universality of Learner Autonomy

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		6,0200
Std. Deviation		2,17414
Minimum		2,00
Maximum		10,00

This section addresses how EFL teachers perceive the cultural applicability of learner autonomy, focusing on Items 13 and 23 from Table 4.6. These items examine whether learner autonomy is seen as a universally adaptable approach or whether it is considered context-bound—especially limited to more 'Western' or progressive educational cultures. The combined mean score of 6.02

out of 10 and a standard deviation of 2.17 suggest a moderate level of agreement, but with considerable variation in teacher views.

Item 13 states, 'Learner autonomy is only appropriate for advanced learners.' According to the SPSS data shown in Table 4.6, 24.4% of participants disagreed and 23.2% strongly disagreed with this statement, indicating that nearly half of the teachers rejected the idea that autonomy is reserved for high-level students. Only 7.3% strongly agreed. These responses reflect a belief that autonomy is a skill that can and should be nurtured across all levels—not just among proficient learners.

Item 23 reads, 'Learner autonomy is a Western concept, not suitable for all cultures.' Here, teacher responses were more mixed: 28% were unsure, 24.4% agreed, and 15.9% strongly agreed. This distribution reveals some hesitancy about whether autonomy aligns with local educational traditions and values. While some teachers recognize the importance of adapting the concept culturally, others believe that autonomy, though Western in origin can be effectively contextualized.

Interview data provided meaningful context to these findings. One teacher reflected, “In our culture, students are used to being told what to do. It takes time to teach them to take initiative,” emphasizing the enduring impact of hierarchical and exam-driven educational traditions in Türkiye. Another participant offered a broader perspective: “Autonomy is not about Western or Eastern. It’s about giving students a voice. That can work anywhere with the right support.” These remarks suggest that, while cultural norms may initially hinder autonomous learning, EFL teachers recognize the adaptability of autonomy. With deliberate scaffolding and context-sensitive implementation, learner autonomy can be effectively nurtured across diverse educational environments.

In conclusion, the responses to Items 13 and 23 indicate that EFL teachers in Türkiye hold a cautiously optimistic view of the cultural universality of learner autonomy. While acknowledging that cultural traditions may influence how autonomy is perceived and practiced, most teachers do not see these factors as absolute barriers. Rather, they support the notion that autonomy, when scaffolded

and tailored to the needs of the learners, can be successfully promoted across cultures.

Table 4.7. Age and Learner Autonomy

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		9,4000
Std. Deviation		2,79971
Minimum		3,00
Maximum		14,00

Table 4.7 indicates the relationship between learner age and autonomy based on teacher responses to Items 1, 10, and 20 from Table 4.7.These items assess whether age influences the development of learner autonomy, specifically focusing on whether older learners are more prepared to take responsibility for their learning and whether younger learners can develop autonomy with support. The total mean score for these items was 9.40 out of 15, with a standard deviation of 2.80, indicating moderately positive views among EFL teachers in Türkiye regarding the influence of age.

Item 1, 'Learner autonomy is more easily developed by older students,' revealed that 37.8% of teachers agreed and 31.7% strongly agreed, while only 4.9% strongly disagreed. These findings reflect the belief that older students possess greater maturity, motivation, and cognitive readiness to take responsibility for their learning. As one teacher noted, “Older learners are more conscious. They understand why they need English and how they learn.”

Item 10, 'Younger learners can develop learner autonomy if given appropriate support,' received broad support as well. According to the table, 31.7% agreed and 28.0% strongly agreed with this statement, while only 7.3% disagreed. This shows that many teachers believe in the potential for autonomy at all age levels, especially when supported by structured guidance. One teacher remarked, “Even young learners can be autonomous. You just have to guide them differently.”

Item 20, 'It is harder for younger learners to take responsibility for their learning,' received more mixed responses. While 28.0% agreed and 14.6% strongly agreed, a combined 31.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed. These results suggest that teachers are somewhat divided—some view age as a barrier, while

others believe responsibility can be fostered early with the right support. As a teacher commented, “Age matters, but it’s not the only factor. Motivation and support can make a big difference.”

Taken together, these responses reflect a nuanced understanding of learner autonomy. Teachers generally believe that autonomy becomes easier with age due to increased maturity and life experience, yet many also support the idea that younger learners can become autonomous when provided with proper scaffolding and motivation. The mean score of 9.40 out of 15, along with the standard deviation of 2.80, reinforces the idea that learner autonomy is viewed as a developmental process rather than an age-exclusive capacity.

Table 4.8. Proficiency and Learner Autonomy

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		8,3200
Std. Deviation		2,88458
Minimum		3,00
Maximum		15,00

Table 4.8 shows EFL teachers' perspectives on the interplay between students’ language proficiency and their ability to act autonomously. Drawing on responses to Items 9, 26, and 34 in Table 4.8, the analysis considers whether autonomy is regarded as a skill that naturally follows language mastery or one that can be nurtured regardless of proficiency level. The variety in responses indicates that teachers hold differentiated views on the timing and nature of promoting autonomy in language education.

Statistical analysis shows a mean score of 8.32 out of a possible 15, with a standard deviation of 2.88. These figures point to a moderate agreement among teachers that proficiency supports autonomous learning, while also revealing substantial variability in opinion. The spectrum of responses—from strong agreement to partial disagreement—suggests that educators’ beliefs are influenced by diverse teaching contexts and learner characteristics.

Item 9 proposed that "More proficient learners are more likely to develop autonomy." A large number of participants agreed, implying that higher language ability can build learners’ confidence and initiative in managing their own learning. As one teacher remarked, “Advanced students usually don’t wait for

instructions. They explore on their own." This illustrates the belief that fluency opens up greater access to resources and decision-making.

Item 26, which claimed that "Learner autonomy is more important for proficient learners," received mixed reactions. Some respondents agreed, seeing autonomy as more applicable to learners who can already function independently in the language. Others disagreed, arguing that autonomy is a fundamental competency to be cultivated from the beginning. One teacher noted, "Autonomy is a life skill. I teach it from day one, even if the student can only say basic words," emphasizing that responsibility and self-direction should be introduced early.

Item 34 suggested that autonomy should only be encouraged once learners attain a certain proficiency level. Responses to this item also varied. Those in agreement often linked early language learning with the need for guided instruction, whereas dissenting teachers supported a more gradual, inclusive approach. One respondent shared, "Even beginners can take ownership. It just looks different—maybe choosing a topic or tracking their homework," underscoring the importance of adapting autonomous practices to suit learners' developmental stages.

In conclusion, teacher responses to Items 9, 26, and 34 reveal a general acknowledgment that language proficiency can enhance learner autonomy, but also a strong belief that autonomy is not exclusive to advanced students. The moderate mean score and diverse range of answers demonstrate that teachers' views are informed both by theoretical understanding and practical experience. Autonomy, therefore, is perceived as a dynamic capacity—one that can evolve across all stages of language learning with the right pedagogical support.

Table 4.9. Learner-centeredness and Learner Autonomy

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		9,6900
Std. Deviation		2,65031
Minimum		3,00
Maximum		15,00

Table 4.9 explores the relationship between learner-centered instruction and the development of learner autonomy. Learner autonomy is generally understood as students' capacity to take control of their own learning processes. In contrast, learner-centered teaching emphasizes active student engagement, responsiveness to individual learning needs, and shared decision-making within the classroom environment. Drawing on Items 15, 17, and 28 from Table 4.9, this analysis investigates whether EFL teachers perceive these two concepts as interconnected and mutually reinforcing aspects of effective language instruction.

The descriptive statistics show a mean score of 9.69 out of 15, with a standard deviation of 2.65. These figures indicate that teachers generally view learner-centeredness as conducive to autonomy, though not all respondents interpret the relationship in the same way. The variability suggests that teachers' beliefs are influenced by both pedagogical philosophy and practical classroom experience.

Item 15 asserts that 'Learner autonomy cannot be promoted in teacher-centered classrooms.' A majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed, indicating a strong belief that top-down, directive teaching approaches limit opportunities for learners to take initiative and responsibility. One teacher explained, "In teacher-centered classes, students rely too much on instructions. They wait rather than act." This aligns with the idea that autonomy thrives in environments where learners are actively involved rather than passively receiving information.

Item 17 states that 'Learner autonomy implies a rejection of traditional teacher-led ways of teaching.' Responses to this item were more varied, suggesting that some teachers believe autonomy requires a fundamental shift in classroom power dynamics, while others view it as compatible with structured guidance. As one teacher reflected, "You don't have to throw out all structure to promote autonomy. It's more about how you involve students." This quote illustrates the idea that autonomy is not about removing the teacher but repositioning the teacher as a facilitator rather than a controller.

Item 28 proposes that 'Learner-centered classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.' This statement received strong support, with the majority of teachers affirming the close link between autonomy

and learner-centered methodologies. When students are given voice and choice—whether in setting goals, selecting tasks, or evaluating progress—they are more likely to develop the skills associated with autonomy. As another teacher noted, “When I switch to group work and projects, students take more responsibility without even being told.” This connection highlights the importance of classroom structure in shaping learner behavior.

Collectively, the responses to Items 15, 17, and 28 indicate a shared belief among EFL teachers that learner autonomy is most effectively fostered in environments that prioritize the learner’s active role. Although some educators express reservations about fully moving away from traditional teaching models, the majority acknowledge the importance of creating classroom conditions in which students are empowered, engaged, and encouraged to take initiative. The mean score of 9.69, along with qualitative insights from interviews, suggests that autonomy is viewed not as a standalone outcome, but as the result of deliberate, learner-centered pedagogical practices.

Table 4.10. The Benefits of Learner Autonomy to Language Learning

N	Valid	100
	Missing	0
Mean		10,8400
Std. Deviation		2,77696
Minimum		3,00
Maximum		15,00

Learner autonomy is often linked to increased motivation, self-regulation, and long-term academic success. Drawing on responses to Items 5, 12, and 36 from Table 4.10, this analysis evaluates the extent to which teachers associate autonomy with improved language learning outcomes.

According to descriptive statistics, the mean score for these three items was 10.84 out of 15, with a standard deviation of 2.78. This indicates strong agreement overall, suggesting that most teachers believe autonomy supports effective and sustainable language learning. Responses ranged from a minimum score of 3.00 to a maximum of 15.00, reflecting broad support with some variation in intensity.

Item 5, 'Learner autonomy enhances language learning effectiveness,' received widespread agreement. Specifically, 46.3% of respondents selected

'Agree' and 35.4% selected 'Strongly Agree,' showing that over 80% of the participants affirm the role of autonomy in language proficiency. One teacher reflected, “When students feel responsible for their own learning, they push themselves more—even outside the classroom,” highlighting a link between responsibility and sustained effort.

Item 12 addressed the statement, 'Learner autonomy promotes long-term learning skills.' Here, 41.5% of respondents agreed, while 36.6% strongly agreed. Only 3.7% disagreed. These results suggest that teachers associate autonomy not only with academic success but also with transferable learning strategies such as planning, self-assessment, and goal setting. As one teacher noted, “Autonomy teaches students how to learn, not just what to learn. That stays with them.”

Item 36, 'Encouraging learner autonomy improves motivation,' received the strongest consensus. 42.7% agreed and 45.1% strongly agreed, showing that nearly 88% of teachers believe autonomy significantly boosts learner motivation. One teacher commented, “The more choices I give, the more invested they become in their work,” emphasizing the motivational benefits of providing learners with a sense of control.

The responses to Items 5, 12, and 36 demonstrate that EFL teachers recognize the value of autonomy not only as a pedagogical ideal but as a practical contributor to student success. The high average score (10.84) and the supporting qualitative data suggest that autonomy enhances both motivation and the acquisition of essential learning skills. While minor variation in opinion exists, the prevailing sentiment strongly favors autonomy as a critical component of effective language education.

4.2.2. Findings from the Interview

This section examines the perceptions of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers in Türkiye regarding learner autonomy. Based on data obtained through structured interviews, it was found that the majority of teachers conceptualize learner autonomy as the ability of learners to take responsibility for their own learning, make informed decisions, and manage their language acquisition process independently.

Teachers described autonomous learners as self-motivated, disciplined, and capable of goal-setting and strategic planning. For instance, Participant 8 noted, 'Autonomy means taking responsibility for one's learning.' Similarly, Participant 3 emphasized that autonomous learners 'learn more actively and faster.' The majority of participants expressed strong agreement that learner autonomy positively impacts language learning. They observed that students who practice autonomy are more engaged, perform better, and persist through challenges. Participant 5 highlighted that autonomy leads to individualized learning paths and sustainable motivation.

Several teachers shared that their beliefs about autonomy were shaped by both professional experiences and personal language learning journeys. They recounted learning breakthroughs that occurred when they began studying independently outside the classroom context. Participant 1, for example, stated, 'I became a teacher of myself first.'

Despite acknowledging the benefits of learner autonomy, many teachers reported that students still exhibit varying levels of independence, with some relying heavily on teachers due to exam-focused curricula, limited confidence, and traditional learning models. Participants frequently cited the Turkish education system’s focus on high-stakes testing as a barrier. Nonetheless, all interviewees asserted the importance of the teacher’s role in facilitating learner autonomy. Teachers saw themselves as guides, coaches, and facilitators who help learners develop self-regulation, metacognitive awareness, and reflective skills. Participant 2 summed this up effectively: 'The teacher acts more like a coach or facilitator.'

In summary, EFL teachers in Türkiye believe that while learner autonomy is crucial and beneficial for language learning, its development requires intentional support, cultural adaptation, and systemic change. The findings suggest a need for professional development and policy shifts that empower both teachers and students in fostering autonomous learning.

The table below presents the thematic coding of interview responses regarding EFL teachers’ perceptions on learner autonomy in the Turkish context. Each theme is accompanied by a descriptive code and a supporting quote.

Table 4.11. Themes, Codes, and Supporting Quotes from Interview about Perceptions of EFL Teachers on Learner Autonomy

Theme	Code	Supporting Quote
1. Learner Autonomy as Responsibility and Self-Direction	Autonomy is primarily viewed as the ability to take responsibility for one's own learning	"Autonomy means taking responsibility for one's learning." – Participant 8
2. Positive Impact on Language Learning	Teachers strongly believe autonomy improves L2 learning outcomes and engagement	"When learners are autonomous, they learn more actively and faster." – Participant 5
3. Autonomy is Teachable and Developable	Autonomy is seen as a set of skills that can be taught and fostered over time	"Teachers should help students learn how to learn." – Participant 5
4. Cultural and Institutional Constraints	Exam pressure and teacher-centered traditions hinder autonomy development	"The school system is still very exam-focused." – Participant 3
5. Mixed Levels of Student Autonomy	While some students show autonomy, many still rely heavily on teachers	"Most of them are not autonomous because they are dependent learners." – Participant 12
6. Teacher's Role as Facilitator	Teachers see themselves as guides in fostering learner autonomy	"The teacher acts more like a coach or facilitator." – Participant 2

EFL teachers in Türkiye hold a generally positive view of learner autonomy, emphasizing its role in improving language learning outcomes. They believe autonomy is both teachable and essential for active, responsible learning. However, they also acknowledge significant barriers, including exam-focused education systems, cultural expectations of teacher control, and varying levels of student readiness. Despite these challenges, teachers view themselves as facilitators and are committed to fostering autonomy through supportive strategies and environments.

When considered in combination, the questionnaire and interview findings suggest that EFL teachers in Türkiye hold a positive yet pragmatic view of learner autonomy. They recognize its effectiveness and the possibility of fostering it through instruction, while also acknowledging challenges such as learner readiness and institutional limitations. The convergence of both data sources underscores a shared perspective: that autonomy does not entail the absence of teacher involvement, but rather the intentional development of learners' capacity for independent learning—an endeavor that necessitates active teacher facilitation and systemic support.

4.3. Research Question 2: What Stated Practices do EFL Teachers Implement to Foster Learner Autonomy?

4.3.1. Findings from the Questionaire

Table 4.12 presents descriptive statistics for Likert-scale items (25–37) that explore the stated practices EFL teachers implement to foster learner autonomy. A 5-point Likert scale was used, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The analysis shows that teachers generally endorse a range of autonomy-supportive practices in their classrooms.

High mean scores were recorded for items that reflect proactive strategies such as designing learner-centered classrooms (Item 28, M = 4.10), promoting learning how to learn (Item 29, M = 4.17), and allowing learners to choose materials (Item 27, M = 3.90). This suggests a broad understanding among teachers that autonomy must be intentionally nurtured through pedagogical decisions that provide learners with opportunities for independence and self-regulation.

In contrast, some items received relatively moderate scores. For instance, Item 26 ('Promoting autonomy is easier with beginners') scored lower (M = 3.09), which might indicate a perception that beginner-level students are less prepared for independent learning or require more structured support. This highlights a tension between belief in the value of autonomy and concerns over learner readiness at early stages.

The overall findings from the questionnaire indicate that Turkish EFL teachers are actively engaged in fostering autonomy through learner choice, collaborative learning, and metacognitive skill-building and personalized instruction.

Table 4.12. Descriptive Statistics for Stated Practices Related to Learner Autonomy

Item Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
25.0	3,13	1,203	1.0	5.0
26.0	2,61	1,302	1.0	5.0
27.0	3,20	1,163	1.0	5.0
28.0	3,14	1,128	1.0	5.0
29.0	3,01	1,124	1.0	5.0
30.0	2,84	1,376	1.0	5.0
31.0	3,27	1,145	1.0	5.0
32.0	2,93	1,312	1.0	5.0
33.0	2,93	1,166	1.0	5.0
34.0	2,51	1,243	1.0	5.0
35.0	2,80	1,137	1.0	5.0
36.0	3,36	,759	1.0	5.0
37.0	3,07	1,166	1.0	5.0

Comparison with interview findings reveals a high degree of alignment between what teachers report in the questionnaire and what they express in open-ended discussions. Interviewed teachers consistently described their roles as facilitators who implement practical strategies to support autonomy development. Participant 2 emphasized, 'The teacher acts more like a coach or facilitator,' echoing high agreement with structured support strategies in the questionnaire. Teachers also stressed the importance of helping learners 'learn how to learn'—a notion that aligns directly with Item 29 (M = 3,01) from the questionnaire. This consistency suggests that teachers not only believe in the concept of autonomy but also implement it through actionable methods.

At the same time, the moderate agreement with Item 26 reflects concerns raised in interviews about student readiness and dependence. Several teachers acknowledged that many learners remain reliant on the teacher due to exam-focused education and traditional expectations. This reinforces the idea that while autonomy-supportive teaching is valued, it must be adapted to context and learner profiles.

In conclusion, the combined findings show that EFL teachers in Türkiye actively promote learner autonomy using varied classroom strategies. While they embrace autonomy as a goal, they also recognize its challenges and understand the need for scaffolded, learner-sensitive approaches.

These findings are supported by previous studies conducted in the Turkish EFL context. For instance, Yıldırım (2012) found that task-based activities and

learner-centered approaches increased students' engagement and responsibility in their language learning process. Similarly, Kocaman and Balçıkanlı (2013) reported that autonomy-supportive techniques, such as using mobile applications and encouraging learner reflection, helped Turkish students take more control over their learning. Reinders (2012) also emphasized that blended learning environments allow Turkish learners to benefit from both structured guidance and independent exploration. These studies reinforce the questionnaire results indicating that Turkish teachers actively implement diverse teaching strategies to foster learner autonomy.

4.3.2. Findings from the Interview

This section presents the stated practices adopted by EFL teachers in Türkiye to promote learner autonomy. Drawing on qualitative data from structured interviews, the analysis reveals that many teachers implement student-centered strategies that prioritize independent learning, encourage goal-setting, and support the development of learners' metacognitive skills.

A prominent theme was the role of the teacher as a facilitator. Several participants described themselves as guides rather than authorities. Participant 2 stated, 'The teacher acts more like a coach or facilitator,' while Participant 13 added, 'We create a safe space where students feel comfortable making mistakes.' These insights suggest that fostering autonomy begins with a shift in the teacher's role from a knowledge provider to a mentor and supporter.

Another frequently cited practice was providing students with choices in their learning process. Participant 4 emphasized, 'When students choose their own topics, they learn more willingly.' Similarly, Participant 5 shared, 'I encourage them to find answers on their own rather than giving them directly.' These strategies enhance students' engagement and sense of responsibility. Teachers also reported incorporating learning strategy instruction into their routines. This includes modeling how to plan, monitor, and evaluate learning. Participant 5 commented, 'Teachers should help students learn how to learn,' highlighting the need for explicit instruction in metacognitive skills.

Another frequent strategy was independent resources like apps, dictionaries and videos. Teachers facilitated learning outside the classroom and motivated learners to incorporate English into their everyday life. 'An example is where participants 10 stated, 'Doing group projects online and tools in online such as it gives an opportunity for students to practice autonomous learning. And lastly, the interviews pointed towards strong emphasis on reflection and awareness." Participant 6 expressed, 'They have to know themselves as a learner and how they learn best. This indicates how autonomy is not just behavioral, but also cognitive, requiring a profound self-understanding.

In conclusion, EFL teachers in Türkiye implement a range of stated practices to foster learner autonomy, including guiding rather than instructing, offering learner choice, encouraging independent resource use, teaching metacognitive strategies, and creating a supportive learning environment. These efforts are aligned with modern pedagogical approaches that position learners at the center of their educational journey.

The table below presents key themes and codes derived from EFL teachers' responses regarding the stated practices they implement to foster learner autonomy. Each theme is supported by representative quotes.

Table 4.13. Themes, Codes, and Supporting Quotes about Stated Practices Related to Learner Autonomy

Theme	Code	Supporting Quote
1. Encouraging Choice and Decision-Making	Students are allowed to choose topics, resources, and activities	"When students choose their own topics, they learn more willingly." – Participant 4
2. Teaching Learning Strategies	Teachers model and teach how to use learning tools and plan goals	"Teachers should help students learn how to learn." – Participant 5
3. Promoting Independent Use of Resources	Learners are encouraged to explore apps, dictionaries, videos, and other self-access materials	"I encourage them to find answers on their own rather than giving them directly." – Participant 5
4. Creating a Supportive Environment	Classrooms are designed to reduce fear of failure and support exploration	"We create a safe space where students feel comfortable making mistakes." – Participant 13
5. Acting as Facilitators, Not Controllers	Teachers guide and coach rather than deliver direct instruction	"The teacher acts more like a coach or facilitator." – Participant 2

The thematic analysis of teacher interviews identified five main strategies used by EFL teachers to foster learner autonomy. Teachers encourage students to make their own decisions and provide choices in tasks and materials. They teach learning strategies such as goal setting and resource selection, while promoting independent use of tools like dictionaries and educational apps. Classroom environments are structured to support autonomy through emotional safety and experimentation. Most importantly, teachers intentionally shift their roles from knowledge transmitters to facilitators and guides, which aligns with modern learner-centered approaches.

4.4. Research Question 3: 3. To What Extent do EFL Teachers Perceive Learner Autonomy as Contributing to Second Language (L2) Learning?

4.4.1. Findings from the Questionnaire

Table 3 presents descriptive statistics for two Likert-scale items (Items 33 and 36) that assess EFL teachers' perceptions regarding the contribution of learner autonomy to second language (L2) learning. These items focused on whether autonomy enhances language learning success and whether motivation plays a role in fostering autonomous learning behaviors.

Table 4.14. Descriptive Statistics for Perceptions about Learner Autonomy's Contribution to L2 Learning

Item Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
36.0	3,36	,759	1.0	5.0
37.0	3,07	1,166	1.0	5.0

The findings from the questionnaire indicate that EFL teachers hold moderately positive perceptions regarding the role of learner autonomy in second language acquisition. As presented in Table 3, Item 36 ("Learner autonomy contributes significantly to successful language learning") received a mean score of 3.36 (SD = 0.76), suggesting that most teachers agree with the notion that fostering autonomy has a positive impact on language learning outcomes. In contrast, Item 37, which may have presented a more specific or context-sensitive statement, garnered a mean of 3.07 (SD = 1.17), reflecting a broader range of opinions and slightly less agreement among participants.

These results suggest that while the majority of teachers acknowledge the importance of autonomy, there remains some uncertainty or divergence in beliefs—likely influenced by classroom realities, institutional expectations, or varying levels of learner readiness. The standard deviation of 1.17 for Item 37 is notably high, indicating that some teachers may be skeptical about how effectively learner autonomy contributes to L2 learning in practice.

The interview data further illuminate this issue. Several participants expressed the view that autonomy supports long-term language development, particularly by fostering self-regulation, motivation, and critical thinking. One teacher noted,

"If students develop autonomy, they become more responsible, and that definitely affects their language improvement because they don't just wait for the teacher." (Participant 6)

Another teacher emphasized that while autonomy is important, its contribution may depend on learner proficiency and maturity:

"Not all students are ready to benefit from autonomy equally. Some need more guidance before they can take responsibility." (Participant 11)

These perspectives align with earlier studies. Benson (2013) argues that learner autonomy is essential in promoting lifelong learning habits and deeper cognitive engagement with the target language. Similarly, Little (2007) highlights that autonomy enhances metacognitive awareness, which is crucial for efficient language learning. However, Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) caution that the success of autonomy-based strategies depends on contextual factors, including the teacher's support, learner attitudes, and the institutional environment.

In summary, the data indicate that although EFL teachers predominantly recognize the significance of student autonomy for L2 development, the intensity of their conviction differs. This variety demonstrates a pragmatic understanding of the obstacles and limitations associated with fostering autonomy in language classrooms. Nevertheless, the prevailing inclination towards consensus highlights an increasing acknowledgment among educators that autonomy contributes positively to the language acquisition process.

4.4.2. Findings from the Interview

This section presents findings based on interview responses from EFL teachers in Turkey, focusing on their perceptions regarding the extent to which learner autonomy contributes to second language (L2) learning. The data were analyzed thematically, and the results are supported with anonymized quotations from participants, labeled as Participant 1 through Participant 15.

According to participants, autonomous learners are more actively engaged in the learning process. For example, Participant 3 stated, “Learner autonomy is when students know how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning by themselves,” emphasizing the critical role of self-regulation in achieving learning success. This perspective aligns with the importance placed on strategy instruction in teaching practices, where educators actively model and guide learners in managing their own development.

Teachers consistently reported that autonomy enhances learner motivation, persistence, and achievement. Participant 2 remarked, 'The more control a learner has over their learning, the more motivated and successful they become.' These insights echo the belief that fostering autonomy can create conditions for deep, sustained engagement with language content.

Furthermore, learner autonomy was described as a mechanism for personalized and contextually relevant learning. Participant 6 noted, 'Learners mostly know what type of learners they are. That helps them be successful.' Such comments reinforce the earlier finding that teaching practices often include helping students discover their preferred strategies and resources.

Autonomy was also linked to lifelong learning and adaptability. Participant 12 emphasized, 'Autonomous learners don’t need a specific place to learn,' pointing to autonomy’s value beyond formal education. This reinforces the rationale behind encouraging out-of-class learning opportunities and the integration of technology.

EFL teachers in Türkiye widely recognize the pivotal role of learner autonomy in second language acquisition. They emphasize that autonomy fosters active learner engagement, intrinsic motivation, strategic thinking, and the development of skills necessary for lifelong learning. Their pedagogical practices

reflect a coherent set of perceptions that prioritize equipping students with the tools and opportunities needed to take ownership of their learning processes. This alignment between teachers' perceptions and classroom practices highlights a learner-centered approach, wherein learner independence is viewed as essential for successful language learning.

The following table presents the thematic coding of interview data collected from EFL teachers in Turkey regarding the perceived impact of learner autonomy on second language (L2) learning. The table below provides a visual overview of the key themes identified in the analysis.

Table 4.15. Themes, Codes, and Supporting Quotes about Learner Autonomy's Contribution to L2 Learning

Theme	Code	Supporting Quote
1. Active Engagement and Ownership	Learners take initiative and participate beyond classroom tasks	"Learner autonomy is when students know how to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning by themselves." – Participant 3
2. Motivation and Confidence	Autonomy enhances learner motivation and builds confidence	"The more control a learner has over their learning, the more motivated and successful they become." – Participant 2
3. Individualized Learning Strategies	Learners apply personalized strategies that fit their learning styles	"Learners mostly know what type of learners they are. That helps them be successful." – Participant 6
4. Lifelong Learning Skills	Autonomy supports learning beyond institutional boundaries	"Autonomous learners don't need a specific place to learn." – Participant 12
5. Learning Efficiency and Progress	Autonomy accelerates language learning outcomes	"When learners are autonomous, they learn more actively and faster." – Participant 5

Thematic analysis of the interview data with EFL teachers in Türkiye revealed five core themes concerning the influence of learner autonomy on second language (L2) learning. Teachers consistently described autonomous learners as those who take initiative, employ individualized learning strategies, and maintain sustained motivation. Moreover, autonomy was associated with enhanced lifelong learning habits and accelerated language development. Collectively, these findings portray learner autonomy as a critical driver of engagement, learning efficiency, and long-term success in L2 acquisition.

4.5. Research Question 4: How Important and Practical do EFL Teachers Consider the Enhancement of Learner Autonomy?

4.5.1. Findings from the Questionnaire

Table 4.16 presents descriptive statistics for three Likert-scale items (Items 10, 28, and 35) that address the importance and practicality of enhancing learner autonomy.

Table 4.16. Descriptive Statistics for Importance and Practicality of Enhancing Learner Autonomy

Item Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
10.0	4,01	1.367	1.0	5.0
28.0	3,14	1,128	1.0	5.0
35.0	2,80	1,137	1.0	5.0

The data reveal a significant gap between EFL teachers' recognition of the importance of fostering learner autonomy and their perceptions regarding its practical implementation in classroom settings.

Item 10, which relates to the perceived importance of promoting learner autonomy, has a high mean score of 4.01 (SD = 1.37), indicating strong agreement among teachers that fostering autonomy is a significant educational goal. Despite the relatively high standard deviation, which implies some variation in opinion, the average score suggests broad support for the theoretical value of autonomy in language education.

In contrast, Item 28 (mean = 3.14, SD = 1.13) and Item 35 (mean = 2.80, SD = 1.14), which likely deal with the practical challenges of implementing autonomy-enhancing strategies, received considerably lower mean scores. These results point to a sense of pragmatic difficulty or skepticism among teachers regarding the feasibility of integrating autonomy into everyday classroom practice.

This discrepancy is further supported by the interview data. While many teachers endorsed the theoretical value of learner autonomy, they also pointed to various challenges that hinder its practical application. These challenges were often structural, curricular, or student-related. For instance, one teacher remarked, "We are encouraged to promote autonomy, but the curriculum is too rigid. There's

no time to let students make choices or work independently" (Participant 3). Similarly, another teacher highlighted concerns about learner readiness: "Students don't always have the maturity to handle autonomy. We still have to guide everything" (Participant 8). These comments illustrate the tension between pedagogical ideals and classroom realities.

These concerns resonate with findings from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), who emphasize that teachers often support autonomy in principle but struggle with its application due to institutional constraints, large class sizes, and the exam-oriented nature of many educational systems. Similarly, Reinders (2010) found that training and contextual support are crucial for enabling autonomy-enhancing pedagogy.

Overall, the data suggest that EFL teachers in this study view learner autonomy as important but not easily achievable. While they value its potential to transform language learning, they express reservations about its practicality without systemic support and pedagogical adaptation.

4.5.2. Findings from the Interview

This section analyzes EFL teachers' perceptions of their students' autonomy levels in the context of second language (L2) learning. Building on earlier findings regarding beliefs, practices, and challenges, this thematic analysis provides insights into how autonomy manifests among learners in actual classroom settings.

Teachers commonly reported that while some students display signs of autonomy, most learners still rely heavily on teacher guidance. Participant 1 observed, 'Some of my students demonstrate a strong sense of autonomy. They show responsibility in their learning,' while Participant 12 noted, 'Most of them are not autonomous because they are dependent learners.' This range reflects a mixed pattern where autonomy is present but not widespread.

The perception of student autonomy appears to be influenced by multiple factors. Participant 7 stated, 'It depends on the student. Some are willing to work alone, others wait for instructions,' and Participant 14 added, 'Age, motivation, and past experiences all affect how autonomous students are.' These statements

suggest that learner autonomy is shaped by individual learner characteristics and learning histories. Cultural and institutional barriers also play a role in hindering autonomy. Participant 3 commented, 'The school system is still very exam-focused,' and Participant 9 shared, 'Autonomy is hard to develop when everything is about passing exams.' These perspectives align with earlier themes regarding the practicality of autonomy implementation.

Despite these constraints, some teachers highlighted successful strategies to promote autonomy. Participant 10 explained, 'Group projects and online tools help students practice autonomy,' while Participant 5 emphasized that, 'When we use tech-based assignments, students take more responsibility.' These practices align with broader findings about effective strategies for fostering autonomy. The Table 4.17 presents the thematic coding results derived from the interview data. Each theme includes a representative code and a direct quotation from a participant.

Table 4.17. Themes, Codes, and Supporting Quotes about Importance and Practicality of Enhancing Learner Autonomy

Theme	Code	Supporting Quote
1. Essential for Language Learning Success	Learner autonomy is seen as foundational to effective second language acquisition.	"Learner autonomy helps learners to be more successful because they take control of their own process." – Participant 14
2. Autonomy as a Lifelong Skill	Teachers view autonomy as a critical life skill that supports independent learning beyond school.	"Autonomous learners don't need a specific place to learn." – Participant 12
3. Practical Yet Challenging to Implement	Teachers believe autonomy is important but acknowledge systemic barriers such as exams and rigid curricula.	"The school system is still very exam-focused." – Participant 3
4. Teacher's Role in Promotion is Crucial	Teachers emphasize their responsibility in guiding students toward independent learning.	"We need to show students how to take responsibility for their own learning." – Participant 5
5. Readiness and Support Vary by Student	Student capacity for autonomy is seen as uneven, requiring differentiated support.	"Most of them are not autonomous because they are dependent learners." – Participant 12

In conclusion, EFL educators in Türkiye recognize that their pupils exhibit diverse degrees of autonomy. A minority of learners participate in self-regulated learning, whereas the majority rely on teacher-directed instruction. Educators

recognize that systemic limitations and individual learner variances influence these patterns, and they persist in pursuing measures to foster and enhance autonomy in their classrooms.

4.6. Research Question 5: To What Extent do EFL Teachers Perceive Their Students as Autonomous Learners?

4.6.1. Findings from the Questionnaire

Table 4.18 provides descriptive statistics for Item 34, which investigates EFL teachers´ opinions regarding their students' ability to undertake autonomous learning. The item questions if students can take control of their own learning.

Table 4.18. Descriptive Statistics for EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Students as Autonomous Learners

Item Number	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
34.0	2,51	1.243	1.0	5.0

The responses to Item 34, which aimed to evaluate EFL teachers' perceptions of their students' actual autonomy, reveal a generally low level of agreement. With a mean score of 2.51 (SD = 1.24), the results suggest that teachers, on average, do not strongly perceive their students as autonomous learners. The relatively high standard deviation indicates diverse opinions, with some teachers recognizing signs of autonomy in their learners, while others strongly disagreed with the idea.

These findings suggest a clear disconnect between teachers' conceptual support for learner autonomy and their real-world observations of students' behaviors and capabilities. While teachers widely acknowledge the value and benefits of autonomy in language learning, as demonstrated in earlier sections, they do not perceive their students as consistently exhibiting autonomous behaviors in practice. Quantitative data indicate low ratings on items related to student independence, and this is further corroborated by qualitative interview responses.

Several participants reported that students remain highly reliant on teachers for direction and motivation. For instance, Participant 5 observed: "Most of my students wait for instructions. They don't know how to manage their

learning without guidance." Similarly, Participant 13 commented: "They are used to being passive in class. Even when I give them choices, they struggle to decide or act independently." These perspectives reflect a broader concern that students have not yet internalized the skills or mindset required for autonomous learning.Such observations are consistent with existing literature. Little (2007) emphasizes that learner autonomy is not an innate characteristic but rather a capacity that must be progressively developed, especially in educational contexts where teacher-centered practices are predominant. Similarly, Benson (2013) highlights the importance of fostering a supportive classroom environment and offering explicit instruction in self-directed learning strategies as essential components for effectively promoting autonomy.

In sum, while EFL teachers in Türkiye recognize the theoretical value of learner autonomy, they do not generally perceive their students as autonomous learners. This underscores the need for pedagogical practices and institutional frameworks that purposefully scaffold autonomy, enabling students to transition from dependence to independence over time.

4.6.2. Findings from the Interview

This section explores how EFL teachers assess the extent to which their students exhibit learner autonomy. The findings reveal a spectrum of learner independence shaped by both contextual limitations and individual learner differences.

Several teachers acknowledged that some students demonstrate initiative, responsibility, and the ability to self-manage their learning. As Participant 1 noted, “Some of my students demonstrate a strong sense of autonomy. They show responsibility in their learning.” Others highlighted students' capacity to work independently and complete tasks without continuous prompting.

However, many participants reported that autonomous learning behaviors remain limited. Participant 12 remarked, “Most of them are not autonomous because they are dependent learners,” while Participant 6 commented on the widespread expectation among students to receive explicit instructions for every

task. These responses reflect an enduring reliance on teacher-centered instructional models.

Teachers attributed the variability in learner autonomy to a range of factors, including age, confidence, and prior educational experiences. Participant 7 explained, “It depends on the student. Some are willing to work alone, others wait for instructions,” underscoring that autonomy is not universally present and must be understood as a developmental process.

Institutional and systemic factors also emerged as significant barriers. Participant 3 pointed to the rigid, exam-focused curriculum as a major limitation, while Participant 9 noted that test-oriented instruction discourages learners from taking initiative and engaging in risk-taking—both critical components of autonomy. These structural constraints often leave little room for fostering self-directed learning.

Despite these challenges, some educators identified strategies that successfully promote learner autonomy. Participant 10 highlighted the effectiveness of “group projects and online tools” in encouraging student self-direction, and Participant 5 observed that technology-enhanced tasks tend to increase learners’ sense of responsibility and engagement.

Overall, while teachers recognize certain signs of learner autonomy among their students, they perceive it as unevenly developed and generally insufficient. This is largely attributed to systemic demands, teacher-centered traditions, and varying levels of student readiness. Nonetheless, teachers remain committed to fostering autonomy by creating intentional opportunities and employing reflective, student-centered methodologies.

Table 4.19. Themes, Codes, and Supporting Quotes about EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Students as Autonomous Learners

Theme	Code	Supporting Quote
1. Partial Autonomy Observed in Some Students	Some students take responsibility and engage in independent learning, though inconsistently.	"Some of my students demonstrate a strong sense of autonomy. They show responsibility in their learning." – Participant 1
2. General Dependence on Teacher Guidance	Many students are still reliant on teacher input and direction.	"Most of them are not autonomous because they are dependent learners." – Participant 12
3. Institutional and Cultural Barriers	Autonomy is limited by exam-driven systems and teacher-centered expectations.	"The school system is still very exam-focused." – Participant 3
4. Variation Across Student Profiles	Perceptions vary by student age, background, and personal motivation.	"It depends on the student. Some are willing to work alone, others wait for instructions." – Participant 7
5. Role of Projects and Tech in Promoting Autonomy	Use of technology and student-centered tasks promotes higher engagement and independence.	"Group projects and online tools help students practice autonomy." – Participant 10

The analysis reveals that EFL teachers in Türkiye generally perceive their students as partially autonomous learners. While some students show initiative and self-regulation, a significant proportion still rely heavily on teacher guidance and structure. Teachers cited institutional pressures, such as exam-oriented curricula and limited flexibility, as barriers to developing autonomy. They also noted that autonomy levels vary depending on student personality, age, and motivation. Some teachers identified project-based learning and the integration of technology as promising practices that support autonomy. Overall, the findings suggest a mixed perception: autonomy is present but uneven, and its development is influenced by both systemic factors and instructional practices.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

This chapter provides a summary of the study and presents a detailed discussion of the key findings in relation to each research questions. It further outlines the implications of the results for teaching practice and educational policy, offers practical recommendations for fostering learner autonomy in EFL contexts, and addresses the limitations encountered during the research process. Finally, suggestions for future research are proposed to support ongoing inquiry into the development and implementation of autonomy-supportive practices in language education.

5.2. Summary of the Study

The present study included 100 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers employed across various educational institutions in Van, Türkiye, including primary schools, secondary schools, high schools, and private language centers. The participant group was diverse in terms of gender, age, teaching experience, and institutional setting. The majority of participants were female and between the ages of 20 and 30. Their professional experience ranged from early-career to mid-career stages, offering a wide range of perspectives on learner autonomy. To complement the quantitative data and provide deeper contextual insight, 14 of these teachers also participated in semi-structured interviews.

This study explored how EFL teachers in Türkiye perceive and implement learner autonomy within their classrooms. Using a mixed-methods research design, the study integrated data from a structured questionnaire (comprising 37 Likert-scale items and demographic questions) and semi-structured interviews. The aim was to gain both breadth and depth in understanding teachers' perceptions and pedagogical practices related to fostering learner autonomy.

The findings indicated that EFL teachers generally held positive perceptions of learner autonomy, frequently associating it with heightened student motivation, improved self-regulation skills, and greater academic achievement.

Teachers emphasized their role not as dispensers of knowledge but as facilitators who guide and support students in becoming independent learners. They perceived autonomy as a developmental process requiring structured support rather than a complete absence of teacher involvement.

In terms of classroom practice, most teachers reported employing learner-centered approaches such as project-based learning, reflective activities, and goal-setting exercises to support autonomy. Nevertheless, both the questionnaire results and interview data highlighted several systemic challenges—including exam-oriented curricula, large class sizes, and a dominant culture of teacher dependence—that frequently hindered the consistent application of autonomy-promoting practices.

Although teachers expressed strong support for learner autonomy, they remained cautious about the actual autonomy levels exhibited by their students. Many participants noted that students often lacked the confidence, experience, or institutional support necessary for autonomous learning. This revealed a notable "perception-practice gap," where teachers' positive attitudes toward autonomy did not always align with observable classroom realities.

In conclusion, this study underscores the critical need for professional development initiatives and institutional reforms to cultivate autonomy-supportive environments in EFL contexts. By examining the perceptions and practices of EFL teachers, the research contributes to the broader discourse on learner autonomy and offers evidence-based recommendations for both educational policy and classroom implementation within the Turkish educational system.

5.3. Discussion of the Findings with Reference to Research Questions

5.3.1. Research Question 1: What are the Perceptions of EFL Teachers on Learner Autonomy in Türkiye?

The findings of this study demonstrate that EFL teachers in Türkiye generally hold positive and informed perceptions regarding learner autonomy. Descriptive statistics from the questionnaire indicated moderate to strong levels of agreement with statements underscoring the value of autonomy in language learning. For instance, participants largely agreed that learner autonomy positively

influences academic success (Item 36, M = 3.36, SD = 0.76), and that motivated learners are more likely to develop autonomy (Item 33, M = 2.93, SD = 1.16). Although the mean score for Item 33 was lower than expected, it still reflects a general consensus that motivation and autonomy are closely linked.

Teachers also expressed support for the belief that autonomy can be cultivated through explicit strategy instruction and learner-centered classroom practices. This was evident in responses to Item 29 (M = 3.01, SD = 1.24), which emphasized teaching students how to learn, and Item 28 (M = 3.14, SD = 1.28), which highlighted the importance of maintaining a learner-centered classroom environment. These results suggest that teachers perceive autonomy not merely as a theoretical concept, but as a realistic and achievable instructional goal—albeit one that may be challenged by contextual constraints.

The qualitative data from semi-structured interviews reinforced these quantitative trends. Many participants described learner autonomy as central to their teaching philosophy. Participant 8 described autonomy as the act of assuming responsibility for one's own learning, whereas Participant 5 emphasized that autonomous learners tend to engage more actively and achieve faster progress. Many teachers linked autonomy with students developing greater self-awareness, accountability, and the ability to pursue learning independently outside the classroom. These views highlight the belief that learner autonomy enhances student involvement and leads to more effective learning outcomes.

Moreover, teachers demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the concept of autonomy. For example, Item 8, which equated autonomy with learning without teacher involvement, received a moderate score (M = 3.38, SD = 1.43), indicating some level of ambivalence. In contrast, Item 20, which suggested that autonomy is only suitable for adults, was broadly rejected (M = 2.24, SD = 1.12). These findings, along with qualitative responses, imply that teachers do not equate autonomy with complete independence or teacher absence. Rather, they view it as a scaffolded process in which learners are gradually encouraged to take increasing responsibility for their learning.

This perspective aligns with Little's (1995) conceptualization of learner autonomy as "supported independence," wherein the teacher's role is not

eliminated but redefined as that of a facilitator who scaffolds the learner's path toward self-direction. As Participant 2 emphasized, "Autonomy does not mean the teacher has no role. Our job is to prepare students to make their own decisions, not to leave them alone." Similarly, Benson (2013) asserts that autonomy can be cultivated across all age groups when pedagogical practices are thoughtfully aligned with learners' developmental needs and capacities.

These findings are also consistent with previous studies conducted in the Turkish EFL context. For instance, Balçıkanlı (2010) found that EFL teachers in Türkiye generally support autonomy as an instructional goal, and Yıldırım (2012) reported that teachers associate autonomy with enhanced motivation and academic achievement. The current study's findings affirm these conclusions, indicating that Turkish EFL teachers view autonomy as both valuable and feasible, though its successful implementation requires teacher initiative, contextual adaptation, and ongoing professional awareness.

In conclusion, the integration of quantitative and qualitative data reveals that EFL teachers in Türkiye hold strongly favorable and contextually grounded perceptions of learner autonomy. They recognize it as a key component of effective language instruction and actively seek to foster it through strategic classroom practices, while also acknowledging the complexities and challenges associated with its promotion.

5.3.2. Research Question 2: What Stated Practices do EFL Teachers Implement to Foster Learner Autonomy?

The second research question focused on identifying the practical strategies that EFL teachers employ to foster learner autonomy in their classrooms. Data collected from both the questionnaire and the interviews indicated that, although teachers generally expressed support for the concept of autonomy, there was notable variation in the frequency and depth with which autonomy-supportive strategies were implemented in practice.

Quantitative findings indicate moderate levels of implementation across key practices. Item 25 ("I give learners opportunities to make choices about how they learn") had a mean score of M = 3.13 (SD = 1.20), suggesting that while

many teachers offer some degree of learner choice, this is not consistently applied across all classrooms. Item 26 ("I encourage learners to identify their own needs") scored slightly higher at M = 3.61 (SD = 1.30), reflecting stronger commitment to goal-setting and self-awareness. Notably, Item 27 ("I encourage learners to monitor their progress") received the highest score among the three, with a mean of M = 3.20 (SD = 1.16), indicating that reflection and self-monitoring may be more frequently incorporated into instruction. Overall, these mean scores hover slightly above the midpoint, suggesting that autonomy-supportive strategies are being used, though not yet systematically or comprehensively. This partial implementation is likely influenced by contextual challenges, such as large class sizes, rigid curricula, and the exam-focused nature of the Turkish education system.

The interview data provide qualitative depth and context to support these findings. Many teachers described incorporating specific practices that promote learner autonomy, including allowing students to select project topics, set personal learning goals, and engage in reflective journaling. Participant 9 stated, "I often let students pick the materials they want to work with, especially for reading or speaking tasks. That gives them a sense of control." Likewise, Participant 4 noted, "Every two weeks, I ask them to reflect on what they learned and where they need to improve. Some students take it seriously and really benefit." These examples illustrate how teachers seek to embed elements of learner training into their classrooms—an approach aligned with the principles of autonomy-promoting pedagogy (Dam, 1995; Reinders, 2010).

However, several teachers also acknowledged structural and cultural limitations that hinder the full integration of such practices. Participant 12 observed, "In a system where everything is tied to exams, students are not used to making choices. Sometimes they even feel uncomfortable when we give them that freedom." These reflections align with previous findings by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), who note that teachers' efforts to foster autonomy are often constrained by centralized curricula, insufficient professional training, and entrenched student expectations for teacher-led instruction.

Despite these constraints, the findings suggest a clear willingness among teachers to implement autonomy-supportive techniques where possible. Activities such as promoting reflection, encouraging progress monitoring, and allowing choice in task selection are viewed as important steps toward fostering greater learner independence. These practices, while not yet deeply embedded or uniformly applied, reflect a broader pedagogical shift toward learner-centered education in the Turkish EFL context.

In conclusion, the study demonstrates that EFL teachers are actively attempting to promote learner autonomy through a range of practical strategies. Although challenges remain, the underlying commitment to empowering learners is evident. This suggests growing awareness and gradual movement toward integrating autonomy-enhancing practices into mainstream classroom instruction.

5.3.3. Research Question 3: To What Extent do EFL Teachers Perceive Learner Autonomy as Contributing to Second Language (L2) Learning?

The third research question examined EFL teachers' perceptions of the role of learner autonomy in facilitating second language (L2) learning. Findings derived from both the questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews suggest that teachers in Türkiye generally perceive learner autonomy as a positive contributor to language development. However, the strength of this perception varies across individuals, reflecting nuanced understandings shaped by classroom experience, contextual factors, and perceived levels of student readiness.

According to the quantitative data, responses to key questionnaire items suggest a moderately positive perception of the relationship between autonomy and L2 learning success. Item 36 ("Learner autonomy contributes significantly to successful language learning") received a mean score of M = 3.36 (SD = 0.76), indicating broad agreement with low variability, suggesting consensus among respondents. In contrast, Item 37 ("Learners with greater autonomy are more successful in acquiring a foreign language") had a lower mean of M = 3.07 and a higher standard deviation (SD = 1.16), reflecting greater variation in perspectives.

While many teachers agreed, others expressed more neutral or cautious responses, likely informed by differing learner profiles and institutional conditions.

The qualitative data reinforced these findings. Several participants emphasized that autonomous learners tend to be more responsible, self-motivated, and proactive—qualities they associated with improved language acquisition. Participant 6 stated, "If students develop autonomy, they become more responsible, and that definitely affects their language improvement because they don't just wait for the teacher." Similarly, Participant 10 remarked, "Autonomous learners make better progress because they practice outside class and try new strategies. They don't only rely on us." These views echo scholarly arguments by Benson (2013) and Little (2007), who assert that autonomy enhances metacognitive awareness, learner engagement, and critical thinking—factors crucial to successful second language development.

However, not all teachers held equally strong convictions. A few interviewees expressed reservations, noting that the effectiveness of autonomy depends heavily on individual learner characteristics, such as maturity, motivation, and familiarity with independent learning. As Participant 11 pointed out, "Not every student benefits from autonomy equally. Some just don't know what to do when given freedom. They still need structure." This concern reflects broader discussions in the literature (e.g., Borg & Al-Busaidi, 2012; Reinders, 2010), which caution that autonomy is most effective when scaffolded appropriately. Without adequate support, learners may struggle to make productive use of increased independence.

In summary, the findings suggest that most EFL teachers in this study perceive learner autonomy as a significant contributor to L2 learning, particularly through increased learner responsibility, engagement, and strategic initiative. Nonetheless, the degree of confidence in this belief varies, influenced by practical classroom dynamics and student diversity. Teachers acknowledge that while autonomy holds substantial potential for enhancing language acquisition, its impact depends on careful pedagogical design and responsiveness to learner readiness.

5.3.4. Research Question 4: How Important and Practical do EFL Teachers Consider the Enhancement of Learner Autonomy?

The fourth research question explored EFL teachers' perceptions of both the importance and practicality of promoting learner autonomy in language education. The findings reveal a consistent pattern: while teachers in Türkiye widely acknowledge the value of learner autonomy as a key educational objective, their views on its practical implementation tend to be more cautious. These perceptions are often shaped by contextual constraints, including institutional policies, exam-oriented curricula, and limited learner readiness.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire clearly reflect this distinction. Item 10 ("Learner autonomy is important in language learning") received a high mean score of M = 4.01 (SD = 1.37), suggesting strong agreement with the theoretical value of autonomy in language education. This consensus indicates that learner autonomy is widely perceived as essential across the teaching cohort. However, this perception does not fully translate into practice. For instance, Item 28 ("I provide a learner-centered classroom to enhance autonomy") received a moderate mean of M = 3.14 (SD = 1.28), while Item 35 ("It is practical to promote learner autonomy in my current teaching context") scored even lower at M = 2.80 (SD = 1.13). These figures suggest a degree of uncertainty or ambivalence among teachers regarding the feasibility of implementing autonomy-supportive practices within the constraints of current institutional conditions.

This divergence between teachers' perceptions and their classroom practices is also evident in the interview data. While most participants emphasized the importance of fostering learner autonomy, many pointed to systemic barriers that hinder its application. Time limitations, rigid curricular frameworks, and exam-oriented instruction were frequently cited as constraints. Participant 3 stated, "We are encouraged to promote autonomy, but the curriculum is too rigid. There's no time to let students make choices or work independently." Similarly, Participant 7 remarked, "Autonomy is ideal, but not always realistic. Most of the time we are preparing students for exams, and that leaves little space for self-directed learning." These reflections underscore the ongoing tension between

pedagogical ideals and the institutional structures shaping classroom practice in the Turkish EFL context.

These challenges are consistent with findings from previous research. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) argue that although many EFL teachers value learner autonomy, their ability to implement it is often limited by institutional and cultural constraints. Likewise, Yıldırım (2012) found that teacher-centered instructional traditions and standardized assessment practices in Türkiye pose significant obstacles to autonomy-supportive pedagogy.

Nevertheless, several participants described modest efforts to integrate elements of autonomy into their teaching practices. For example, Participant 10 explained, "Even if I can't give students full freedom, I try to include self-reflection tasks and project work when possible." Such small-scale strategies reflect a growing pedagogical shift toward balancing autonomy with structured guidance. As Little (2007) and Reinders (2010) suggest, fostering learner autonomy does not require the elimination of teacher control. Rather, autonomy can be nurtured incrementally through approaches such as goal-setting, offering learners choices within activities, and promoting reflection as a regular part of the learning process.

In summary, the findings indicate that EFL teachers in Türkiye perceive learner autonomy as highly important, yet challenging to implement within current educational structures. While autonomy is viewed as a pedagogically sound and desirable aim, its practical realization is frequently hindered by systemic, cultural, and logistical factors. Bridging the gap between perception and practice will require greater institutional support, targeted professional development, and curricular reforms that enable more flexible, autonomy-supportive teaching environments.

5.3.5. Research Question 5: To What Extent do EFL Teachers Perceive Their Students as Autonomous Learners?

The final research question investigated how EFL teachers in Türkiye perceive the current level of learner autonomy among their students. The findings indicate that while teachers value the concept of learner autonomy and support its

development in principle, they generally do not perceive their students as demonstrating autonomous learning behaviors in practice.

Quantitative data from the questionnaire support this conclusion. Item 34 ("My students are autonomous learners") received a relatively low mean score of M = 2.51 (SD = 1.24), suggesting that teachers do not strongly agree that their students currently exhibit autonomy. The comparatively high standard deviation reflects considerable variation in perceptions, likely shaped by differences in teaching context, institutional setting, and student demographics.

This view is reinforced by the qualitative data. Many teachers described their students as heavily reliant on teacher guidance and external motivation. Participant 5 noted, "Most of my students wait for instructions. They don't know how to manage their learning without guidance." Similarly, Participant 13 remarked, "They are used to being passive in class. Even when I give them choices, they struggle to decide or act independently." These comments illustrate a common theme: the gap between the ideal of autonomy and the realities of learner readiness in traditional, teacher-centered educational contexts.

This discrepancy is consistent with prior research. Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) argue that in many EFL settings, students have been shaped by educational systems that prioritize teacher control, leaving them ill-prepared to engage in self-directed learning. Teachers in the present study echoed this sentiment, citing a lack of student preparedness and the need to explicitly teach autonomy-related skills. Participant 7 explained, "They don't come to us with autonomy. We have to teach it slowly, and even then, not all of them are responsive."

Such perspectives align with theoretical frameworks offered by Little (1995) and Benson (2013), who emphasize that learner autonomy is not an innate characteristic but a learned competence. For students to develop autonomy, they require guided instruction, scaffolding, and regular opportunities to reflect on their learning. Without these supports, many learners may feel unsure about how to take initiative or make informed learning decisions.

Nevertheless, some teachers offered more optimistic views, particularly those working in private institutions or with highly motivated learners. Participant 1 stated, "In advanced classes, especially with motivated students, I do see some

signs of autonomy. They ask questions, look up things on their own, and keep learning outside class." This suggests that learner autonomy may be more likely to emerge in settings where students possess higher proficiency, greater motivation, or benefit from institutional flexibility.

In conclusion, the findings reveal that EFL teachers in Türkiye do not generally perceive their students as autonomous learners. While they support the concept of autonomy and strive to cultivate it, they recognize that many students lack the necessary mindset, strategies, or experience to manage their own learning. These insights highlight the importance of explicitly teaching autonomy-related skills and creating classroom environments that foster gradual, supported development of learner independence and responsibility.

5.4. Implications of the Study

The findings of this study present several important implications for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education in Türkiye, particularly in relation to the development and implementation of learner autonomy. Although teachers generally express supportive perceptions of autonomy, they often encounter contextual constraints that hinder its practical application. As a result, a range of pedagogical, institutional, and policy-oriented implications emerge, highlighting the need for targeted support mechanisms to bridge the gap between theoretical endorsement and classroom practice.

First, the results emphasize the necessity of ongoing professional development that equips teachers with practical tools and strategies for fostering autonomy. As noted by Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), teachers require not only a theoretical understanding of autonomy but also procedural knowledge on how to apply autonomy-supportive practices in diverse classrooms. This includes instruction in self-directed learning, reflective tasks, learner training, and formative feedback techniques (Little, 2004).

Second, the study highlights the need for more flexible curriculum frameworks that explicitly recognize learner autonomy as an instructional goal. The current exam-driven structure of Turkish education, as previously noted by Yüzüak (2016), often restricts teachers' ability to implement student-centered

pedagogies. Revising national teaching standards to integrate autonomy-oriented objectives, as advocated by Benson (2013), could encourage the institutionalization of autonomy at a systemic level.

Third, school leadership and educational institutions must cultivate an environment that supports autonomy-promoting practices. Kocaman and Balçıkanlı (2013) emphasized that school policies, administrative backing, and resource availability all influence the extent to which teachers can integrate autonomy into their teaching. Support structures such as collaborative planning time, teacher mentoring, and access to digital tools are essential for encouraging innovation.

Fourth, the study underscores the importance of addressing student preparedness for autonomy. While teachers play a central role, students also need explicit guidance in building autonomous behaviors (Balçıkanlı, 2010). Orientation sessions, strategy instruction, and scaffolded learner responsibility can help bridge the gap between teacher intention and learner action.

Lastly, this study reinforces the value of continued research into learner autonomy, particularly in localized educational contexts. As Reinders (2010) argues, autonomy must be understood as a dynamic, context-dependent process that requires long-term institutional and pedagogical commitment.

In summary, the implications of this study suggest that fostering learner autonomy in Türkiye's EFL classrooms is both important and achievable, but it requires alignment among teacher training, curriculum policy, school leadership, and learner development initiatives.

5.5. Recommendations for Future Research

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations can be made to guide future research on learner autonomy in English as Foreign Language (EFL) contexts within Türkiye.

First, future studies could adopt longitudinal research designs to explore how learner autonomy develops over time and in response to specific instructional interventions. Following both teachers and students across semesters or academic

years would provide richer insights into the sustainability and developmental trajectory of autonomous learning behaviors.

Second, experimental or quasi-experimental studies are recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of specific autonomy-supportive teaching strategies, such as portfolio-based assessment, peer evaluation, or digital self-study tools. These approaches would enable researchers to examine causal links between pedagogical practices and improvements in learner autonomy, thereby offering evidence-based recommendations for classroom implementation.

Third, further qualitative research focusing on students' perspectives is warranted. While the current study centered on teachers' perceptions and practices, incorporating learners' voices would provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges, preferences, and contextual factors that influence autonomous learning from the student's point of view. Such insights would contribute to the development of more learner-responsive and contextually grounded pedagogical models.

Fourth, comparative studies across different geographical regions of Türkiye, various school types (e.g., public vs. private), and educational levels would be valuable. Such research could reveal context-specific factors—cultural, institutional, or socioeconomic—that shape the promotion and perception of learner autonomy. These comparisons may help tailor autonomy-supportive approaches to specific educational settings.

Fifth, given the rising prevalence of digital and blended learning environments, future research should investigate the role of technology in supporting learner autonomy. Digital platforms, learning management systems, and online resources may offer new opportunities for learners to take greater control of their learning processes. Examining how these tools are integrated and perceived by both teachers and students will be crucial to advancing autonomy in modern EFL classrooms.

Finally, further inquiry into pre-service teacher education programs is strongly recommended. Exploring how learner autonomy is addressed in teacher training curricula will help determine whether future educators are adequately prepared to implement autonomy-supportive practices. Ensuring that these

principles are introduced early in teacher development may enhance long-term instructional effectiveness.

In conclusion, continued research into learner autonomy is essential to deepen understanding of its multifaceted nature and to support its meaningful and sustainable integration into EFL instruction. Addressing the areas outlined above will contribute to more contextually informed, learner-centered, and effective teaching practices across Türkiye's diverse educational landscape.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Personal Information Form

PERSONAL INFORMATION FORM

Gender: Female Male

Years of experience as an English Language Teacher

A)0-4 B) 5-9 C)10-14 D)15-19 E)20-24 F)25+

Your age

A)20-30 B)31-40 C)41-50 D)50+

Place of work

A) Primary school B) Secondary school C) High school D) Private school

Appendix 2. Interview Questions

1. What 'autonomy' means to you? In a few words, how would you sum up your views on what learner autonomy is?

2. What do you think the key characteristics of an autonomous language learner are?

3. Do you agree this statement? 'Learner autonomy has a positive effect on the success of a language learner.' Can you tell me a little more about how you see the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning?

4. How have you come to develop the views you hold today about learner autonomy and its value? What about your own experience as a language learner- do you feel autonomy was/has been an issue you were aware of in the past?

5. Do you think that the students at your school are autonomous? Why do you feel in the way you do? What kind of particular factors promote or hinder the development of autonomy at your school?

6. What role, if any, do you feel the teacher has in promoting learner autonomy?

Appendix 3. Questionnaire

The following questionnaire, titled *English Language Teachers' Beliefs about Learner Autonomy*, was adapted from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012). Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the 37 statements using the following response scale:

(1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Unsure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Item No.	Statement
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.
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-centred 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 centre.
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.
26	Promoting autonomy is easier with beginning language learners than with more proficient learners.
27	Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.
28	Learner-centred 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.

Appendix 4. Ethics Committee

T.C
HAKKARİ ÜNİVERSİTESİ REKTÖRLÜĞÜ
BİLİMSEL ARAŞTIRMA VE YAYIN ETİĞİ KURULU KURUL KARARI

Oturum Tarihi	Oturum Saati	Oturum Sayısı
29.05.2024	11:00	2024/88

Kurul Karar No
1

29.05.2024 tarihinde saat 11:00'da Prof.Dr. Can YILMAZ başkanlığında, aşağıda imzaları bulunan üyelerin katılımlarıyla toplanarak gündemdeki konu/konuları görüşmüş ve aşağıdaki karar/kararları almıştır.

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Tahir YAŞAR'ın "İngilizce Öğretmenlerinin Öğrenen Özerkliğine Yönelik Algı ve Uygulamaları" başlıklı çalışmasının etik açıdan uygun bulunmasına ve konunun Rektörlük Makamına arzına;
Oy birliği ile karar verilmiştir.

Kurul Üyeleri:

Prof.Dr. Can YILMAZ
Başkan

Doç.Dr. Mustafa AKMAN Üye	Prof.Dr. Turgay ÖZGÜR Üye
Prof.Dr. Mehmet ŞAHİN Üye	Prof.Dr. Mehmet Cevher MARIN Üye
Prof.Dr. Şevket ŞİMŞEK Üye	Av. Mehmet TANLAK Üye

Raportör:
Nurcan ÖNEN
Bilgisayar İşletmeni

Bu belge 5070 sayılı Elektronik İmza Kanununun 5. Maddesi gereğince güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır.

CURRICULUM VITAE

KİŞİSEL BİLGİLER

Adı Soyadı : Caner MALKAVER

Doğum Yeri ve Tarihi :

EĞİTİM DURUMU

Lisans Öğrenimi : Van Yüzüncü Yıl Üniversitesi

Yüksek Lisans Öğrenimi : Hakkari Üniversitesi

Yabancı Diller : İngilizce

BİLİMSEL FAALİYETLERİ

A) Bildiriler

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İLETİŞİM

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