

**Exploring Chilean EFL teachers' beliefs
and practices in learner autonomy as
language learners and language teachers
by Stephanie Llanos Gonzalez**

British Council's Master's Dissertation Awards 2020
Commendation

Exploring Chilean EFL Teachers' Beliefs and Practices in Learner Autonomy as Language Learners and Language Teachers

A dissertation submitted in part requirement for the degree
of MEd TESOL

School of Education

Word count: 14 979

August 2019

Permission is granted from the author to submit this dissertation and summary for the
ELT Master's Dissertation Award 2109, and to publish the dissertation and summary
free of charge online.

Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor for his generous support and helpful guidance throughout this project. I am very grateful for his constant encouragement and willingness to share his knowledge with me. I would also like to thank my TESOL tutors and classmates for their constructive feedback and recommendations on my project presentations.

I am very grateful to all the teachers who took part in this research and generously shared their experiences with me. I sincerely thank them for their time and commitment and for making this study possible. I would also like to thank my colleagues in Chile who helped me during the research recruitment process.

I am deeply indebted to my parents, my sisters and my friends in Chile for giving me their unconditional support and constant encouragement during these years away from home. I would like to thank them for always being there for me despite the distance.

Finally, I owe my deepest gratitude to my partner for his love and patience during this intensive academic year and for standing by me all these years.

Abstract

Learner autonomy has been a topic of major discussion in the field of language learning and teaching for more than 30 years, during which its development and its benefits in students' language learning and motivation have been widely researched. Conversely, limited studies have investigated teachers' beliefs and interpretations of the subject, particularly in the Chilean context, creating a significant gap that is addressed in this research.

The study used a mixed methods approach to explore the beliefs and practices in learner autonomy of fifteen Chilean teachers of English working in public and subsidized schools in the country. Their perspectives as language learners and language teachers were investigated using an online questionnaire and follow-up online interviews, enabling the collection of in-depth information about their perceptions, experiences and practices regarding learner autonomy.

The findings revealed that teachers held positive views about learner autonomy, which had been strongly influenced by their personal experiences as autonomous language learners. However, a number of internal and external constraints made them feel less positive about extent to which they could efficiently develop autonomy inside their classrooms. The challenges they identified were related to the Chilean educational system, the lack of students' motivation and abilities to be autonomous learners, the absence of support from the school community and parents; and the lack of teachers' awareness of contextually-relevant approaches to foster autonomy in their complex teaching contexts, suggesting the need for incorporating the development of students' learner autonomy into teacher education programmes.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements.....	2
Abstract	3
List of Tables	6
List of Figures	7
Abbreviations.....	8
Introduction.....	9
Chapter 1 Literature Review.....	11
1.1 Introduction.....	11
1.2 What is autonomy?	12
1.2.1 Versions of autonomy.....	14
1.3 Learner autonomy and language learning.....	15
1.4 Learner autonomy in difficult circumstances	17
1.5 Teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy	19
1.6 Education system in Chile	21
1.6.1 English language education in Chile	22
1.6.2 Teaching and learning English in Chile: A difficult situation	23
1.7 Conclusion.....	24
Chapter 2 Methodology.....	26
2.1 Introduction.....	26
2.2 Participants.....	26
2.3 Recruitment methods.....	26
2.4 Research design.....	27
2.5 Research questions.....	28
2.6 Data collection instruments.....	28
2.6.1 The online questionnaire	29
2.6.2 The interview	29
2.7 Pilot study.....	30
2.8 Language options	30
2.9 Ethical considerations.....	31

2.10	Data analysis	32
2.11	Limitations	32
2.12	Conclusion.....	33
Chapter 3	Results and Discussion	34
3.1	Introduction.....	34
3.2	Research question 1: What does “learner autonomy” mean to participant Chilean EFL teachers working in public and subsidized schools?	34
3.3	Research question 2: To what extent do participants believe learner autonomy contributes to students' language learning?	38
3.4	Research question 3: To what extent have participants exercised their learner autonomy to improve their language skills since they became EFL teachers?	40
3.5	Research question 4: To what extent do participants experiences as self-directed language learners influence their efforts to foster learner autonomy in their classrooms?	42
3.6	Research question 5: What challenges do participants face in promoting learner autonomy in their teaching context?	45
	Conclusion.....	49
	References	52
	Appendix A: Organization of the Questionnaire	62
	Appendix B: Questionnaire	63
	Appendix C: Indicative Interview Questions	70
	Appendix D: Plain Language Statement	72
	Appendix E: Interview Consent Form.....	74
	Appendix F: Example of Analysis Procedure	76
	Appendix G: Questionnaire Descriptive Statistics	79

List of Tables

Table 1: Organization of the questions in the applied questionnaire.....	62
Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire's quantitative data.....	79

List of Figures

Figure 1: Mean levels of support for the different dimensions of learner autonomy.....	35
Figure 2: Levels of support for the technical orientation to learner autonomy.....	37
Figure 3: Participants' beliefs about the influence of learner autonomy on language learning.....	38
Figure 4: Difference between promoting learner autonomy and giving opportunities for its development.....	43

Abbreviations

CEFR: Common European Framework of References for Languages.....	22
CLT: Communicative Language Teaching.....	11
EFL: English as a Foreign Language.....	9
ELT: English Language Teaching.....	11
EOD: English Opens Doors Programme.....	22
L1: First Language	30
L2: Second Language	9
OECD: Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development	21

Introduction

The notion of learner autonomy has been gradually incorporated in the field of second language (L2) learning since the late 1970s (Benson 2013). Since Holec (1981, p.3) defined the concept as “the ability to take charge of one’s own learning”, a number of different definitions have been proposed; however, they all seem to highlight the importance of learners’ active involvement in their learning process as a way to enhance learning, increase motivation and promote lifelong learning (Van Hout-Worters *et al.* 2000). Although learner autonomy was first related to adult education (Candy 1991; Knowles 1975), its implementation has also been successful in school settings (Dam 1995; Dam and Legenhausen 1996). Recently, Kuchah and Smith (2011) have proposed fostering learner autonomy in contexts where teaching is carried out under difficult circumstances, stating that it could be a pragmatic and sensible response towards a more effective and engaging language learning (Ibid., p.271).

My motivation for researching learner autonomy comes from my professional experience working in public and subsidized schools in Chile. According to Rebolledo *et al.* (2016, p.5), teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Chilean public and subsidized schools is being conducted under difficult situations, characterized by crowded classrooms, normally between 35 and 45 students whose different individual needs and interests cannot be fully addressed (Ibid.), with teachers who have limited expertise in the use of the language (Agencia de la Calidad de la Educación 2019)¹ and with a curriculum that Glas (2013; cited in Glas and Cárdenas-Claros 2013, p.4) describes as alienating and inappropriate for the Chilean cultural and social context, possibly leading to a lack of motivation among students. In light of this context, it is clear that initiatives need to be taken to overcome the difficulties present in Chilean public and subsidized schools and improve the quality of foreign language teaching and learning. Promoting learner autonomy among students could be one approach to reach this goal.

Although the topic of learner autonomy has been widely researched in Western and East Asian countries (Smith *et al.* 2018, p.8), there has been little contribution to the literature on learner autonomy from a Chilean perspective. Furthermore, most of the studies involving autonomy in language learning have ignored teachers’ beliefs on the matter

¹The original Spanish name “Agencia de la Calidad de la Educación” will be used throughout to refer to the Chilean government agency responsible for evaluating the quality of education in the country.

(Shahsavari 2014, p.271). This is a substantial gap considering the influence that teachers' beliefs could have on their professional practice (Pajares 1992). Furthermore, understanding teachers' beliefs is considered crucial for effective planning and implementation of policies that promote educational change (Wedell 2009). It is in this context that the interest arises for researching Chilean EFL teachers' beliefs about their own autonomy as lifelong language learners and their perspectives, as teachers, of learner autonomy in their classrooms.

Considering the research gap, this study will focus on exploring the beliefs and practices of fifteen Chilean EFL teachers regarding learner autonomy. The research will collect information about (1) the meanings these teachers attach to learner autonomy, (2) their beliefs about the relation between learner autonomy and language learning, (3) their previous experiences as autonomous language learners, (4) the potential influence that these experiences can have in their professional practice and (5) the challenges of exercising learner autonomy in their teaching contexts. Researching teachers' beliefs on learner autonomy could potentially shed light on understanding their professional practice and hopefully inform future educational changes in English language teaching and learning in Chile.

Chapter 1 Literature Review

1.1 Introduction

The development of the individual has become the core of many educational policies around the world that assign educational institutions the responsibility of producing active citizens who can contribute positively to the betterment of the society (Benson 2013). In Chile, the development of autonomous individuals has been incorporated in recent educational policies, such as decrees N°439 and N°614 (Ministerio de Educación² 2012, 2014). These policies, which establish the foundations of the national curriculum, seem to view autonomy as an essential element for academic success and responsible citizenship.

The development of autonomy in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) has attracted the researchers' interest for the past three decades. Such enthusiasm for investigating learner autonomy coincided with the adoption of the Communicative Language Teaching approach (CLT) (Jacobs and Farrell 2003). When it emerged, CLT represented a new paradigm that focused its attention on the role of the learner rather than on external stimuli. This change of perspective of language learning necessarily required a shift from the very common teacher-centered lessons to a more learner-centered approach where learners engaged actively with their own learning. According to Jacobs and Farrell (2003, p.10), the implementation of CLT has brought major changes to ELT. One of them is the importance of learning from interacting and negotiating meaning with peers. Another important contribution, which is central to this study, is the relevance of learner autonomy.

In order to review the literature on learner autonomy, the first section of this chapter presents the different definitions of the concept and outlines some of the most relevant debates in the field. Since the meaning of learner autonomy was a central discussion during the late 1980s and early 1990s (Benson 2013), this section offers old citations to describe the historical development of the concept. The following sections provide an overview of the research on learner autonomy and language learning, the development of autonomy in difficult teaching circumstances and the studies on teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy. The final sections provide a description of the education system in Chile and describe the difficult situations in which English is being taught in public and

² "Ministerio de Educación" is the original Spanish name of the Chilean Ministry of Education.

semi-private schools where the development of learner autonomy could represent one possible way to overcome the challenges of teaching and learning in these contexts.

1.2 What is autonomy?

Despite the significant amount of literature on learner autonomy, there is not a consensus on what learner autonomy means and entails. Holec (1981), for example, postulates that autonomy is an acquired ability that develops through formal learning. In contrast, researchers such as Candy (1988) and Thomson (1996) view autonomy as an innate capacity that may be suppressed by formal education. More recently, Little *et al.* (2017, p.10) have explained that autonomy is a “universal human capacity and drive” and that it is the teachers’ role to channel this pre-existing capacity to benefit learning.

The social dimension of autonomy has also been a subject of debate. Dickinson (1987, p.11) argues that learner autonomy in its greatest sense means learning in complete independence from teachers and institutions, whereas Boud (1988), Kohonen (1992) and Dam (1995) assert that autonomy develops in collaboration. In relation to this, Kohonen (1992, p.19) states that autonomy implies “interdependence” as personal decisions are influenced by social aspects such as traditions and norms. Similarly, Little (1991, p.5) stresses that “as social beings, our independence is always balanced by dependence”. In his view, autonomy does not mean learning in isolation or without a teacher, since learning can take place in cooperation between teachers and students. An example of this was the work of Dam (1995), who used negotiation of curriculum and learning tasks to effectively develop autonomy in secondary school settings. Recently, studies on social and virtual learning spaces (see, for example, Murray 2014) have also emphasized the social dimension of autonomy, investigating how students learn in interdependence with their social context, either physical or virtual, and other individuals.

The idea of autonomy developing in collaboration is profoundly influenced by Vygotsky’s Zone of Proximal Development (Little *et al.* 2017), described as the distance between what learners can do on their own and what they can achieve in collaboration with more knowledgeable peers (Vygotsky 1978, p.86). In this sense, when receiving help, students’ learning is enhanced, enabling them to perform tasks independently (Murray 2014, p.6). Thus, the development of learner autonomy is believed to involve “individual-cognitive and social-interactive dimensions” (Ibid.).

The variability of learner autonomy adds to the difficulties of defining the concept. According to Nunan (1997, p.193), learner autonomy is not an absolute concept, since

students can develop different degrees of autonomy depending on their personalities, their goals, and the socio-cultural context in which learning takes place. In Nunan's view, learners can move back and forth from one level of autonomy to another. Similarly, Little (1991, p.5) affirms that autonomy is not a stable state since "its permanence cannot be guaranteed" and suggests that autonomy tends to be domain-specific. In other words, students may have the ability and willingness to take responsibility for their learning in one subject matter; and lack the skills or the motivation to be autonomous in another. As Littlewood (1996, p.428) claims, ability and willingness are the main components of autonomy. In addition, Little (1991, p.4) attests that autonomy is not "a single, easily described behaviour" as learners can be autonomous in different and often non-comparable ways.

The different interpretations of autonomy have led researchers to describe it as a "multidimensional capacity that will take different forms for different individuals, and even for the same individual in different contexts or at different times" (Benson 2013, p.58). The most prevailing definition of learner autonomy corresponds to the description given by Holec (1981). He defines learner autonomy as "the ability to take charge of one's own learning" (*Ibid.*, p.3), taking responsibility for all aspects concerning learning, such as setting objectives, deciding on content, selecting methods and strategies, monitoring and assessing learning. This rather technical view of autonomy, which centers on learners' ability to make decisions regarding the organization and management of their learning, was later criticized by Little (1991, p.4) who argued that learners' ability to manage learning necessarily involved a psychological dimension determined by the learners' capacity to control cognitive processes, such as critical reflection, decision-making, independent action and the transfer of learning to wider contexts. In this way, Little expanded Holec's view of what autonomous learners can do by explaining how they can do it.

The previous definitions of learner autonomy outline learners' capacity to take control over cognitive processes and learning management. However, Benson (2013, p.60) describes a third essential dimension: the capacity to control learning content. According to Benson (*Ibid.*), this dimension of control is in conflict with the original idea of autonomous learners setting their own personal goals and selecting the learning content on their own, as this could only be possible if students learn in isolation. However, the classroom is a social context and learning is strengthened by interacting with others, particularly when learning languages (Swain 1995). Then, full individual control over the learning content tends not to be the main priority in the autonomy classroom. As Benson

highlights (1996, p.33), control over the learning content necessarily involves the learners' ability to negotiate.

The different dimensions of control involve active learning. According to Van Hout-Wolters *et al.* (2000), active learning can be divided into self-directed learning and independent work. The former describes learners formulating their own goals, selecting appropriate materials and strategies and assessing their progress with or without the help of others. Whereas in independent learning, students actively use their mental capacity to perform pre-specified learning tasks independently without constant teacher supervision. In this case, the teacher controls the learning goals, activities and assessments, while the learner exercises control over cognitive processes.

1.2.1 Versions of autonomy

According to Benson (2013, p.61) the three dimensions in which learners can exercise control (i.e. learning management, cognitive processes and learning content) are interdependent; however, teachers and researchers tend to favour one over the others. These dimensions are closely related to the three different versions of autonomy postulated by Benson (1997). He distinguishes technical, psychological and political orientations of autonomy. The technical version is concerned with learning outside formal education settings and without the intervention of a teacher; therefore, the development of skills and strategies for self-direction are essential. In this sense, a technical vision of autonomy focuses primarily on control over the management of learning. In turn, the psychological version centers on cognitive abilities that enable learners to take responsibility for their learning; thus, control over cognitive processes is emphasized. On the other hand, the political view of autonomy aims to empower learners by giving them control over the learning content and their process of learning.

Since Benson's contribution in approaches to learner autonomy, many other researchers have presented different ways to conceptualize its application. Littlewood (1999) makes a distinction between proactive and reactive autonomy. In proactive autonomy, learners take full charge of their learning by making all the relevant decisions regarding their learning process. In this way, learners set their own agenda which "affirms their individuality and sets up directions in a world which they themselves have partially created" (Ibid., p.75). On the other hand, learners who exercise reactive autonomy are able to make decisions and organize their resources once a direction has been initiated. In turn, Smith (2003, pp.130-131) differentiates between weak and strong forms of pedagogy for learner autonomy. A weak version assumes that learners lack the capacity

to be autonomous; therefore, they need training in “good learning” strategies. In this sense, autonomy is seen as a product of instruction rather than a learner’s attribute. Conversely, a strong version centers on the notion that learners are already autonomous individuals to a greater or lesser extent. In this approach it is essential to co-create favorable conditions for the development of learners’ existing autonomous capacities through constant reflection. Thus, the goal of a strong pedagogy for autonomy is the continuous improvement of the learners’ present capacities, rather than a product of strategy training. Similar to Smith’s weak and strong versions of autonomy, Kumaravadivelu (2003) distinguishes between narrow and broad views of learner autonomy. Akin to Benson’s technical dimension, narrow views focus on equipping learners with strategies to learn how to learn on their own and reach their learning objectives. Whereas broad views seem to be aligned with Benson’s political version of autonomy, since they center on empowering learners to be critical thinkers capable of overcoming socio-political impediments throughout their lives. In other words, while the goal of a narrow version of autonomy is academic achievement and the realization of learning potential, the aim of a broad version is to help students liberate and realize their human potential (Ibid., p.141).

This section provided an overview of the numerous definitions, debates and versions of learner autonomy. As stated earlier, learner autonomy can be regarded as a multidimensional capacity that does not have a permanent stable state (Little 1991). Learners can be autonomous in one situation, but that does not necessarily mean that they will be so in others. The difficulty of defining learner autonomy, its different interpretations and components have led researchers to support the idea that autonomy has different degrees (Nunan 1997), that autonomous behavior can take a number of different forms (Little 1991), that autonomy is not limited to learning without a teacher or in isolation, since it can develop in collaboration (Kohonen 1992; Little 1996), and that autonomy is influenced by contextual factors such as the educational environment in which learning takes place (Nunan 1997). As Oxford (2003, p.90) states, research on learner autonomy should acknowledge its various perspectives, and “no single perspective should be considered antithetical to any other”.

1.3 Learner autonomy and language learning

Learners’ active participation in their learning process is not only considered essential for the development of autonomy, but it can also benefit the learning process itself (Benson 2007, p.733). According to Dickinson (1987), learning is enhanced when learners take responsibility for their own learning, as this process involves cognitive,

social and affective aspects that enable learners to work more effectively. From Little's (1994, p.431) point of view, "all genuinely successful learning is in the end autonomous", since it requires the active involvement of the learners in constructing their knowledge. In turn, Little and Dam (1998) assert that reflection and self-awareness, two key elements of learner autonomy, produce better learning.

Regarding language learning, researchers have supported the development of learner autonomy inside and outside the classroom due to the benefits that this approach could bring. It is commonly recognized in the literature that communicative language use has a pivotal role in the acquisition of a second or foreign language (see, for example, Swain 1995, 2000). Meaningful communication and language use are regarded as essential factors for developing learners' communicative competence, described as the ability to communicate successfully in a given situation using the knowledge of the language (Thornbury 2006, p.37). According to Swain (2000, p.99), the use of the target language "may stimulate learners to move from the semantic, open-ended strategic processing prevalent in comprehension to complete grammatical processing needed for accurate production". Consequently, this deep language processing procedure is likely to enhance language learning. Considering that learner autonomy can be developed in collaboration with others (Little 1996) and that language learning requires meaningful language use, autonomous learners may take advantage of every opportunity in their learning environment to use the target language, increasing their communicative competence as a result. In this sense, Benson (2007, p.737) asserts that successful language learners are those capable of using the target language to communicate their own meaning for their own purposes, involving in the process "some degree of control over management, acquisition and content". He suggests that if language learning promotes the active involvement of learners and their agency through the use of the target language, then "autonomous language learning is, almost by definition, equivalent to effective language learning" (Ibid.).

The research on the benefits of autonomy in language learning has been usually based on assessing students' gains in language proficiency (Benson 2007). A seminal work in this area is the four-year longitudinal study carried out by Dam and Legenhausen (1996). The research revealed that learners in autonomous classrooms in Denmark acquired greater proficiency in aspects of grammar and vocabulary and developed greater pragmatic competence than learners in traditional classrooms in Denmark and Germany. Although the researchers claimed their findings could not be generalizable, they firmly believe that learner autonomy does not harm students' learning.

1.4 Learner autonomy in difficult circumstances

Promoting learner autonomy in under-resourced teaching contexts has emerged as a pragmatic and sensible response towards a more effective and engaging language learning (Smith *et al.* 2018). Researchers in the field have focused their studies on developing countries where there seems to be a dissonance between what learners want or need and what their formal education systems can offer. According to Smith (2011) these contexts have been largely ignored in the ELT literature; however, they represent the most common settings in which English is being taught nowadays. And it is precisely in these contexts, as pointed out by Smith *et al.* (2018, p.7), that learner autonomy can be one of the most effective pedagogies to overcome the challenges of teaching and learning under difficult circumstances. However, researchers such as Riley (1988) and Jones (1995) have suggested that learner autonomy, an originally Western concept, may be culturally inappropriate to non-Western contexts.

Unlike Riley and Jones, Little and Dam (1998) recognize autonomy as a universal goal whose practices need to be contextually appropriate. Similarly, Sinclair (2000, p.6) suggests that approaches to develop autonomy should consider “the interpretation of the particular cultural, social, political and educational context in which [autonomy] is located”. A major contribution in this discussion has been the work of Palfreyman and Smith (2003) whose definition of culture goes beyond national and ethnic levels. They define culture as a “value system current in a particular group or setting” (Ibid., p.11). From this perspective, small groups can have their own culture, for example, the culture of a school or the culture of a classroom (Breen 1985). In each of these contexts, the interpretation of autonomy can vary (Sinclair 1997). In other words, what it is considered an autonomous practice in one school may not be so in others. In general terms, researchers who do not consider cultural differences as impediments for autonomy seem to agree on contextually-relevant approaches to develop this capacity.

The phrase “teaching in difficult circumstances” was introduced in the field of ELT by Michael West in the early 1960s. He defined this concept as unfavorable circumstances consisting of large classes of more than 30 students, working in hot weather in an under-resourced environment with a teacher who is not fully competent in the use of the language (Kuchah and Smith 2011, pp.133-134). Under these circumstances, many teachers may adopt a teacher-centered methodology, with textbook-based lessons and a strong emphasis on grammar, vocabulary and receptive skills. However, as Nation (1975, p.21) firmly states, teacher-centered lessons are ineffective when teaching under difficult circumstances. He advocates an autonomy-oriented approach with minimal

teacher intervention, where students have the responsibility to select the material and activities that best suit their needs.

The challenges of teaching in poorly-resourced contexts make the engagement of autonomy an appropriate approach, particularly in large classes. As West (1960, p.15) argues:

the larger the class and the more difficult the circumstances, the more important it is to stress learning as the objective. And the higher the elimination [i.e. 'drop-out'], the more necessary it is to do so: if a pupil has learnt how to learn he can go on learning afterwards.

Similarly, in her research about individualization techniques for large classes Sarwar (2001) points out that fostering autonomy and training learners to monitor their own learning in large classes is equally or even more important than in small ones, since supervising each individual student in a large class is extraordinarily difficult, if not impossible.

Teaching and learning in challenging circumstances tend to be so difficult that fostering learner autonomy can be seen as a valid response to overcome the challenges and enhance students' learning (Kuchah and Smith 2011). This claim is reflected in Kuchah's (Ibid.) account of his experience teaching English to more than 200 students in a poorly-resourced secondary school in Cameroon. To handle the situation, he decided to negotiate goals and tasks with his students, giving them a relevant role in the decisions concerning the classroom and their own learning, engaging students' autonomy in the process. The students worked in groups, brought and created their own materials, participated in group discussions and were constantly engaged in many different activities, while Kuchah participated as a consultant. As a result, students' interest in English increased as well as their motivation. They started to use English more often, even outside the classroom.

Kuchah's autonomy-oriented approach can be seen as bottom-up, emerging from the need to cope with the challenges of teaching under difficult circumstances. In relation to this, Kuchah and Smith (2011, p.130) make a distinction between "pedagogy for autonomy" and "pedagogy of autonomy". In the former, the development of students' autonomy is the teacher's ultimate goal; whereas in the latter students' autonomy is engaged but its development is not explicitly in the mind of the teacher. According to this distinction, Kuchah's practice could be classified as a "pedagogy of autonomy", since his main goal was to overcome the difficulties in his teaching context so that his students

could learn English effectively. However, the strategies he took in the process helped to foster his students' autonomy. Kuchah's work and many others (see, for example, Dam and Legenhausen 1996) have demonstrated that fostering students' personal and social autonomy through collaboration and interdependence can be a suitable methodology not only for Western cultures and well-resourced classrooms, but it can also be applied effectively in other cultures and regions where the teaching and learning circumstances are less favourable.

1.5 Teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy

A central aspect of this research is teachers' beliefs. According to Pajares (1992, p.316), beliefs can be described as the "individual's judgement of the truth or falsity of a proposition". Similarly, Skott (2014, p.18) interprets beliefs as subjective constructs which are true for the person in question. Regarding teachers' beliefs, recent literature suggests that they are shaped by teachers' cultural backgrounds and social contexts. As Barcelos (2006, p.8) explains, beliefs "are born out of our interactions with others and with our environment"; therefore, they are considered to be context-dependent, dynamic and variable (Kalaja and Barcelos 2011).

According to Kalaja and Barcelos (2006), to get a deep understanding of teachers' beliefs it is necessary to investigate them in context, using a variety of qualitative methods, such as observations, interviews and ethnographies. These qualitative methods differ greatly from the positivist methodology used in belief studies during the 1980s. At that time, teachers' beliefs were considered to be stable cognitive entities that were mainly studied using closed questionnaires (Kalaja and Barcelos 2011). As the social and contextual aspects of beliefs became essential, the use of questionnaires started to be criticised for treating beliefs as fixed, context-independent ideas and for limiting respondents' choices to a set of pre-established answers (Barcelos 2006). Nowadays, many studies on beliefs have adopted an interpretivist paradigm, acknowledging the importance of the social context in their formation (Barcelos 2000; Borg 2011; Navarro and Thornton 2011).

The relation between teachers' beliefs and their practices has been extensively investigated. While some scholars suggest that teachers' beliefs are not necessarily consistent with classroom practices (Jorgensen *et al.* 2010; Lim and Chai 2008; Liu 2011), others assert that they can considerably influence teachers' day-to-day practices (see, for example, Pajares 1992; Levin *et al.* 2013). According to Skott (2014, p.19) teachers' beliefs "have a significant impact on [teachers'] interpretations of and contributions to classroom practice". In this sense, as Levin (2015, p.49) points out,

teachers' perceptions about their subject, their students and their teaching role can powerfully affect what they do in the classroom; therefore, their students' opportunities to learn. Moreover, researchers suggest that teachers' beliefs are critical for the implementation of curriculum reforms, since they act as interpretative frameworks that can transform curricular modifications (Pajares 1992; Bryan 2012). Consequently, if teachers' beliefs influence their professional practice and have such impact on educational changes, then their understanding should be of critical importance for teacher education as well as for creating initiatives to improve teaching and learning.

In terms of learner autonomy, teachers' beliefs about this topic may influence the extent in which autonomy is promoted in the classroom. Thus, understanding teachers' beliefs on the matter becomes crucial for designing professional development programmes directed to promote learner autonomy (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012). Although there are few studies about teachers' beliefs on learner autonomy, their findings have offered valuable information about teachers' perceptions on the subject. A study carried out by Camilleri (1999) in six European countries (Belorussia, Estonia, Malta, Poland, The Netherlands and Slovenia) revealed that teachers had positive views about certain aspects of autonomy, such as involving learners in decisions about a range of activities and encouraging students to reflect on their learning procedures and find their own explanations to classroom tasks. However, teachers showed resistance towards involving learners in the selection of textbooks and time and place of the lessons. This study was later replicated by Camilleri Grima (2007) in Malta where educational reforms had been implemented. She obtained similar results to the original study; although the teachers in her research showed more positive perspectives about students setting their own short-term goals and selecting materials.

Recent studies have come to the conclusion that teachers' positive beliefs and attitudes towards learner autonomy are not necessarily indicative of their practices as these are constrained by external and internal factors (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012; Bullock 2011; Szócs 2017). For example, in Borg and Al-Busaidi's study, the main factors hindering the development of learner autonomy were institutional constraints and learners' lack of capacities and willingness to engage in autonomous practices. In addition, the study revealed that teachers' definitions of learner autonomy reflected commonly accepted concepts in the literature, such as choice, independence, control and responsibility. Furthermore, most participants related learner autonomy with opportunities for independent learning and with Benson's (1997) psychological dimension of autonomy, stressing the importance of mental attributes and cognitive skills needed for learning how to learn.

In summary, the studies on teachers' beliefs in learner autonomy have demonstrated that teachers are positively disposed towards autonomy. However, these beliefs may not be necessarily translated into classroom practices, since there are a number of internal and external constraints affecting teachers' pedagogical decisions. Notwithstanding, investigating teachers' beliefs is pivotal for an effective implementation of new approaches and educational reforms as they can inform policies by assessing their compatibility with the affected context and foreseeing and resolving potential difficulties.

1.6 Education system in Chile

The neoliberal economic policies introduced during Pinochet's dictatorship (1973-1990) limited the role of the state as an education provider (Moreno and Gamboa 2014). As a result, the Chilean education system acquired a highly segmented structure, which is still in place today, with schools for the poor, for the middle class, and for the rich (Matear 2008). Although Chile returned to democracy in 1990, this discriminatory system still prevails, affecting the country's commitment to provide quality education for all (Ibid.).

The adoption of a free-market economy, the considerable reductions in social expenditure and the privatization of education in the mid-1970s, profoundly impacted the Chilean education system. According to Matear (2006), education provision was no longer considered a fundamental right, but a market that treated citizens as consumers. Under this logic, wealthy families have access to a wide range of well-resourced private schools that deliver high-quality education, whereas children from less privileged backgrounds usually attend municipal-subsidized schools or public schools with less resources. The gap between the quality of education in state-funded schools and the private sector is substantial. The newspaper "La Tercera" (Said 2019) reported that only 30% of public-school students who took the "Prueba de Selección Universitaria" [University Admission Test] were admitted into university. That figure contrasts with the 43.5% of subsidized-school students and the 79% of students from private schools who secured their place in tertiary education. Consequently, this system that segregates children by socio-economic criteria appears to prevent the provision of quality education for all, limiting the opportunities for social mobility and preserving inequality (Barahona 2015). The seriousness of this situation has been recognized by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2017) which has named Chile as the most unequal country among OECD members and has urged the government to improve the quality of its education system to reduce the present inequalities.

1.6.1 English language education in Chile

In the last two decades, teaching English in South America has become a fundamental necessity. As the use of English as an international lingua franca has been directly connected to globalization, international commerce and trade (Jenkins 2009), South American governments have established the teaching of the foreign language as a necessary duty to support their economic development (Barahona 2015). In doing so, they have introduced educational reforms that aim to educate competent citizens who can make use of the language as a medium for international communication.

In Chile, English became a compulsory subject in 1998 (Pereira and Rosas, 2017). At that time, English was taught to children aged between 12 and 18 years old. Since then, the importance of English has grown exponentially to the extent that nowadays it is the only compulsory foreign language taught in publicly-funded schools (Barahona 2015, p.27). As a result of the economic growth of the last decade and the paramount need to properly prepare the population to become active participants in the globalized world, in 2004 the government published Decree N°81 to reinforce the teaching and learning of English in the country (Ministerio de Educación 2004). This legal document recognizes the value of the English language as a crucial element to strengthen (1) the country's economic development through international commercial agreements, (2) the learners' employment prospects and income and (3) their possibilities of succeeding at university and becoming entrepreneurs (Ibid.). Thus, English is seen as a way of promoting equal opportunities for all Chilean students (British Council 2015, p.20) which is somewhat undermined by the segregated schooling system. This policy also establishes international standards based on the Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) and sets the goal of having independent language users by the end of secondary school.

In order to reach the objectives described, in 2004 the government implemented the "English Opens Doors Programme" (EOD) to promote the learning of the language in public and subsidized schools, aiming at having bilingual students by 2018 (Barahona 2015). The EOD has promoted activities such as English camps and spelling contests for students and opportunities for continuous professional development and exchange programmes for teachers (Ministerio de Educación 2019). In recent years, the programme has also encouraged native English speakers to volunteer as language assistants (Ibid.). Another significant measure was increasing the number of years of English language provision from 6 to 8 years, starting in Year 5 up to the end of secondary school (Matear 2008). Nowadays, the programme funds between 2 and 3

hours of English instruction per week (Ibid.). Then, the cost of additional hours has to be covered by the school itself.

By the end of President Piñera's first administration (2010-2014), a series of measures were delineated in the "National English Strategy 2014-2030" (Gobierno de Chile 2014)³. The strategy aims to "accelerate the integration of Chile into a global world to improve [its] competitiveness" (Ibid., p.9). This document reaffirms previous governments' objective of having bilingual students. The strategy is also reflected in the EFL curriculum, which states that by the end of Year 8 students should reach an upper-elementary level (equivalent to A2 on the CEFR), while students in Year 12 should at least obtain a B1 level of proficiency (Ministerio de Educación 2018, p.268).

Unfortunately, the reforms so far have had little impact on students' language proficiency (Barahona 2015). The reason for students' low achievement is often related to the distance between the policies and objectives of the government and the reality of many public and subsidized schools in the country (Glas 2008). As it will be explained below, these are complex contexts with many factors affecting the teaching and learning of the language, and some of which may be addressed by learner autonomy.

1.6.2 Teaching and learning English in Chile: A difficult situation

Despite the educational reforms previously outlined, consecutive governments have failed to provide equal opportunities for all students to learn English successfully. This was reflected in the last national English test administered in 2017 to students of Year 11 who, at that time, had received a minimum of 7 years of English instruction. The results showed that 85% of private school students obtained elementary and intermediate levels of proficiency, while only 9% of students from disadvantaged backgrounds reached those levels (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación 2018). Moreover, the results demonstrated that the EOD programme failed to accomplish its goal of having bilingual students in government-funded and subsidized school by 2018.

According to the test report, one factor influencing such unsatisfactory performance in semi-private and public schools is that teachers are not fully competent in the use of the language, stating that 40% of the teachers included in the study have an A2 level of

³ The original Spanish name "Gobierno de Chile" will be used throughout to refer to the Chilean Government.

English, when the Ministry of Education has set the standards for the required language proficiency of EFL teachers to a minimum level of B2 for in-service teachers and a C1 level for student-teachers (Agencia de Calidad de la Educación 2019). On the other hand, teachers relate the poor performance to several other factors beyond their control, such as teaching in crowded classrooms, normally between 35 and 45 students, whose different individual needs and interests cannot be fully addressed (Rebolledo *et al.* 2016, p.5); insufficient number of hours dedicated to the subject, lack of resources and limited opportunities to use the language outside the school context (Barahona 2015). Furthermore, Glas (2013, cited in Glas and Cárdenas 2013, p.24) argues that the current EFL curriculum is alienating and inappropriate for the Chilean cultural and social context, possibly leading to a lack of motivation among students. In this situation, fostering learner autonomy could potentially impact students' motivation by enabling them to "experience the sense of personal agency and self-determination that is vital to developing their motivation from within" (Ushioda 2011, p.224).

In short, the situation in which the foreign language is taught in public and semi-private schools in Chile is suboptimal. Several factors related to EFL teachers' professional development, students' lack of motivation, and environmental constraints derived from the educational system and the existing policies are likely to make teaching and learning English challenging. In relation to this, Rebolledo *et al.* (2016, p.5) argue that Chilean EFL teachers working in these contexts are teaching under "difficult circumstances", similar to the ones described in section 1.4. Taking Kuchah's experience as a model, it could be suggested that fostering learner autonomy in Chilean language classrooms might help to enhance the teaching and learning of the language. In other words, promoting learner autonomy could be one way to overcome the challenges present in Chilean public and subsidized schools and provide meaningful language learning opportunities for all students regardless of their socio-economic background.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter provided an overview of the literature on learner autonomy, considering its multiple definitions, its relation to language learning and its impact on teachers' beliefs and practices. In addition, the Chilean educational system was described along with a brief account of the policies implemented by the government to improve the teaching and learning of the language in the country. The characteristics in which English is being taught in Chilean public and subsidized schools were linked to the ones described in the literature on teaching under difficult circumstances where the promotion of learner

autonomy is regarded as an effective response to overcome the challenges of teaching in those contexts.

Considering the current situation in which the language proficiency of Chilean EFL teachers has been regarded as deficient, particularly of those working in partial and fully government-funded schools, it might be expected to find these teachers already working on improving their English skills, using their autonomy to direct their own learning and fulfil their particular needs. These autonomous learning experiences can potentially impact teachers' practices. As argued by Benson (2013, p.188), teachers who have experience as autonomous learners, not only of the art of teaching, but also of the foreign language could be more likely to promote learner autonomy in their classrooms.

The benefits of developing learner autonomy outlined in this literature review could be the rationale for incorporating it in the Chilean language classrooms, particularly in contexts where teaching is carried out under difficult circumstances. However, as it was pointed out in section **1.5**, an effective implementation of new methodologies and educational reforms requires a profound understanding of teachers' beliefs which can be obtained through research. Following this logic, the current research aims to explore teachers' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy and present findings relevant for possible future educational changes in Chile.

Chapter 2 Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This chapter illustrates the procedures followed to address the research questions, which will be presented below. The research used a mixed methods approach for gathering and analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. The information was collected through an online questionnaire and follow-up online interviews, enabling the researcher to explore the participants' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy in more depth.

A description of the participants is presented, including the methods used for their recruitment. The research design along with the research questions, data collection instruments and ethical procedures are described in detail in this chapter. The data analysis processes are also explained and evaluated, illustrating the steps taken for organizing, relating and interpreting the data. Finally, the limitations of the study are acknowledged

2.2 Participants

A total of 15 Chilean EFL teachers participated in the study. All of them completed the questionnaire, while three consented to be interviewed. The participants have an average of 8 years of teaching experience and between 1 to 38 years of experience working in public or subsidized schools. This was a significant feature because it allowed the researcher to analyze the answers of teachers with an extensive experience in the contexts studied and the contributions of teachers who have recently joined these sectors. Moreover, all the responses received were used as valid data, since the respondents complied with the selection criteria of being Chilean EFL teachers with at least one year of experience teaching English in public or subsidized schools in the country.

2.3 Recruitment methods

Participants were first recruited by contacting the researcher's colleagues in Chile. Then, a snowball sampling method was followed. According to Cohen *et al.* (2018, p.121) snowball sampling involves the identification of a small number of people whose characteristics fit the research selection criteria. These people serve as informants as they put the researcher in contact with other potential participants; these, in turn, may

contact others. This method is useful when access to participants is difficult (Ibid.) as in this remote research. In addition, teachers were also contacted via social media. As the research was conducted remotely, all contact with the participants was made online.

2.4 Research design

In the literature, the mixed methods approach is referred to as a systematic combination of quantitative and qualitative approaches. It is also seen as a way to enrich the research by compensating for the weakness of each method and taking advantage of their strengths (Clark and Ivankova 2016). The methodology applied in this study was based on Johnson's *et al.* (2007, p.123) definition of mixed methods research, which combines elements of quantitative and qualitative approaches, such as viewpoints, data collection instruments, analysis and interpretative techniques "for the broad purposes of breadth and depth of understanding and corroboration".

The research benefited from the strengths of quantitative research as it made the questionnaire less time-consuming to answer and analyse. The quantitative information collected provided precise numerical data about the targeted topics. As discussed in section 1.5, belief studies require the use of qualitative methods (Kalaja and Barcelos 2006). In this case, qualitative data were collected, providing "in-depth and rich information about participants' worldviews and their personal perspectives and subjective meanings" (Johnson and Christensen 2014, p.634). The qualitative aspect of the research was of critical importance for the exploration of teachers' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy.

According to Mertens (2005; cited in Dörnyei 2007, p.164), combining quantitative and qualitative methods is particularly suitable when exploring complex social or educational contexts. It also allows the researcher to expand the understanding of the phenomenon under study by carrying out multi-level analyses that converge statistical trends and detailed qualitative information. The quantitative data obtained through the closed questionnaire items were complemented by the participants' answers to open-ended questions in the same instrument and also in follow-up interviews, giving participants the freedom to expand on their answers and provide detailed information about the topics discussed.

Another relevant aspect of the mixed methods paradigm is its potential to increase the research validity (Dörnyei 2007, p.45). Obtaining similar evidence from different data

collection methods can allow the researcher to corroborate findings and consequently improve the validity of the research.

2.5 Research questions

The theoretical framework presented in **Chapter 1** identified the different interpretations of learner autonomy and its possible influence in language learning. It also provided an overview of the literature on teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy, the potential relationship between their beliefs and their professional practice, and the research on autonomy in difficult circumstances, linking this area to the challenging situations experienced in public and semi-private schools in Chile. In order to address these topics and explore Chilean EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy from their perspectives as language learners and language teachers, the study drew on mixed methods approach to answer the following research questions:

Teachers' beliefs

1. What does "learner autonomy" mean to participant Chilean EFL teachers working in public and subsidized schools?
2. To what extent do these teachers believe learner autonomy contributes to students' language learning?

Teachers' practices

3. To what extent have these teachers exercised their learner autonomy to improve their language skills since they became EFL teachers?
4. To what extent do their experiences as self-directed language learners influence their efforts to foster learner autonomy in their classrooms?
5. What challenges do they face in promoting learner autonomy in their teaching context?

2.6 Data collection instruments

The study gathered data using two different tools: an online questionnaire and follow-up online interviews. The answers in the questionnaire helped to design a personalized

semi-structured interview for each teacher who agreed to share their experiences. Both instruments enabled the collection of relevant information to answer the research questions.

2.6.1 The online questionnaire

The online questionnaire allowed remote access to a greater number of participants than with other methods (Curtis *et al.* 2014, p.105) in a relatively short period of time. In addition, the multipurpose nature of questionnaires permitted the collection of quantitative and qualitative data through the use of closed and open-ended questions.

The questionnaire was adapted from Borg and Al-Busaidi's (2012) work on teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy. The main advantage of using a pre-existing questionnaire was that the instrument had already been tested. Notwithstanding, adaptations were made so that it could fit the context of the current study and address the research questions.

The questionnaire contained a total of 42 questions divided into five main parts. The first section confirmed the participants' consent. The next two sections used Likert scales and open-ended questions. The former are commonly used to measure attitudes (Jamieson 2004) as they "build in a degree of sensitivity and differentiation of response while still generating numbers" (Cohen *et al.* 2018, p.480). As they provide response categories, they can be answered and analyzed quicker and easier than open-ended questions (Ibid., p.476). However, the open-ended questions enabled participants to add remarks and explanations to their answers. As described by Cohen *et al.* (Ibid., p.475), open-ended questions can "catch the authenticity, richness, depth of response, honesty and candour" that closed questions may not provide. The last two sections gathered the participants' demographic information and invited them to participate in a follow-up interview. A detailed description of the organization of the questionnaire and a copy of the applied questionnaire can be found in Appendix A and Appendix B respectively.

2.6.2 The interview

Interviews are considered a versatile instrument that enable the collection of relevant information that is likely to be accessible only through one-to-one interaction. Their use in qualitative research is widespread, since they allow researchers to "obtain descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena" (Kvale 1996, p.5).

This research used semi-structured interviews, allowing some flexibility in the issues discussed. Although the researcher had a set of pre-prepared questions, she was keen to follow up interesting autonomy-related issues raised by the participants. As Curtis *et al.* (2014, p.115) stress, providing interviewees the opportunity to add their own thoughts is central to the interview approach which seeks to “identify what is most significant for the participants”.

In order to obtain information, building rapport during the interview was crucial. As Curtis *et al.* (Ibid.) assert building trust, listening to the interviewees’ experiences with respect and empathy and conducting interviews as a one-to-one conversation between colleagues can allow interviewees to feel comfortable sharing their thoughts. A copy of the interview indicative questions and their corresponding research questions can be found in Appendix C.

2.7 Pilot study

The questionnaire and the pre-prepared interview questions were piloted with a teacher of English who has similar characteristics to the participants. This enabled the researcher to estimate the time commitment required for the completion of the instruments and make the suggested changes in the order and wording of some of the questions. The questionnaire was completed in around 20 minutes, while the interview questions and additional autonomy-related topics were covered in around 35 minutes. As the interviewees would be given time to ask questions and give their verbal consent before proceeding with the interview and another five minutes for debriefing at the end, the estimated time commitment required of participants was around 45 minutes.

2.8 Language options

Participants could use English or Spanish in both the questionnaire and the interview. The reasons for giving a language option were based on research findings suggesting that, when more than one language is available, the chosen language can considerably impact the quality of the data obtained (Cortazzi *et al.* 2011, Lee 2001). According to Cortazzi *et al.* (Ibid.), participants tend to be more open to share their thoughts and express themselves better when using their first language (L1); even when they are proficient in an L2. Consequently, the information obtained could be more accurate. Furthermore, these researchers suggest that participants tend to take longer when answering questions in their L2. This is an important factor considering that teachers’

time is limited. In this case, the use of Spanish could help participants to answer quicker without compromising the quality of their responses.

Despite the benefits of using Spanish, it was important to give participants the possibility to use English, since this is their area of expertise. Moreover, the opportunity to practice English could motivate teachers to participate in the study.

2.9 Ethical considerations

The process of data collection started after receiving approval from the School of Education Ethics Committee in April 2019. To inform participants, they were sent a Plain Language Statement explaining the purpose and procedures of the study which they could read at their own time. Before answering the questionnaire and, in a later stage, proceeding with the interview, the participants were requested to give their informed consent. In the questionnaire, the procedures and conditions of the research were explicitly restated in its introduction. The participants confirmed their consent by returning the completed questionnaire. For the interview, teachers signed and returned the Interview Consent Form. They confirmed their agreement as the researcher read the consent form to them and recorded their verbal consent at the beginning of the interview. Hence, those who participated in the research consented for their data to be used in this investigation. A copy of the Plain Language Statement and Interview Consent Forms can be found in Appendix D and Appendix E respectively.

In order to protect the participants' identity and maintain confidentiality, the questionnaire was completed anonymously. However, those who agreed to be interviewed needed to provide their contact details which were only used for the purpose of arranging and personalizing the interviews. As participants were assured that their participation would be confidential, their names were replaced with codes (e.g. T1, T2).

In order to minimize the risk of breach associated with online activities, the questionnaire was created using Microsoft Forms, an application available under the university Office365 service which complies with the current Cloud Policy and allows to safely store and process data. In addition, the researcher recorded the interviews with a separate stand-alone voice recorder. The audio and the data obtained for this research has been stored in the university's system and it is only accessible by password.

2.10 Data analysis

The quantitative data from the questionnaire were statistically analyzed using features of Microsoft Forms and Excel, while a hybrid approach to thematic analysis was followed combining deductive and inductive processes to analyze the qualitative information obtained through both the questionnaire and the interviews.

Braun and Clarke (2006, p.79) describe thematic analysis as a flexible and accessible process of “identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data” that is particularly suitable for novice researchers (Ibid., p.81). The deductive analysis used a set of a priori codes or start list (Azungah 2018) generated from the research questions, while the inductive analysis was based on a bottom-up examination of the data. To conduct the thematic analysis, the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006, p.87) were followed: the researcher familiarized herself with the data through transcription and subsequent re-reading. After that, she identified relevant information related to the pre-specified codes and created new ones which were grouped into themes. Then, the themes were reviewed to see their relation to the data set. The researcher selected examples as evidence of the different themes and related them to the research questions. Finally, the qualitative analysis was compared with the quantitative data to check validity. An example of the analysis procedure can be found in Appendix F.

As some participants used Spanish, their answers were analyzed in the language they were produced to prevent the original meaning from being lost in translation. As Behr asserts (2015, p.286), findings may be biased due to translation problems:

Subjective interpretation may shift translation in one direction or the other...words may have no equivalents, or direct equivalents—even though available—may not convey the set of connotations implied by a term in the original language.

English translations of quoted extracts are provided in **Chapter 3**.

2.11 Limitations

This research has several limitations to acknowledge. Firstly, the data collection period coincided with the end of the school semester in Chile which is a very busy period for teachers; therefore, gathering data took extra work. Secondly, due to the nature of the research and the small number of participants, its findings may not necessarily be

representative of the entire community of Chilean EFL teachers working in the contexts studied. Thus, the research results cannot be generalizable.

Thirdly, the study was conducted remotely; therefore, observations of teachers' classroom practices could not be carried out. For this reason, the researcher had to trust the respondents' accounts regarding whether and how they promoted learner autonomy in their teaching contexts.

Finally, the remote nature of the research led to the use of a questionnaire that was only available online. This might have prevented teachers with no internet access from participating in the study. A hardcopy version of the instrument could have been provided to survey a wider number of participants. However, due to location and time constraints, this was not possible.

2.12 Conclusion

This chapter presented the research methodology and described the advantages of using mixed methods for collecting and analysing data. The research questions, data collection instruments and analysis procedures were detailed as well as the ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

The methodology followed allowed the researcher to obtain in-depth information about the participants' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy. The results of the conducted analysis will be discussed in the following chapter.

Chapter 3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the collected data to answer the research questions. Each question is analysed individually combining the quantitative and qualitative data obtained through the questionnaire and subsequent interviews. Descriptive statistics for the closed questionnaire items are provided in Appendix G.

3.2 Research question 1: What does “learner autonomy” mean to participant Chilean EFL teachers working in public and subsidized schools?

To answer this question, the first 21 questionnaire items were considered as they were focused on capturing teachers' interpretation of learner autonomy. The items were grouped according to the represented orientation of autonomy discussed earlier (i.e. technical, psychological, political and social dimensions). Then, the mean of each group was calculated using Excel to see what dimensions were most supported. As Figure 1 shows, the participants favoured the psychological dimension of autonomy which relates to learners' attitudes and abilities that allow control of learning processes (Benson 1997). In this regard, 100% of the participants agreed that learning how to learn, learners' capacity to evaluate their learning and motivation were essential for the development of learner autonomy. Students' ability to monitor their own learning was also highly valued. In a similar way, mental attributes were also highlighted in the interviews as key elements of learner autonomy, for example, T2 affirmed that an autonomous learner “must have interest, motivation, and research skills”. Likewise, T3 asserted:

An autonomous learner must be someone motivated to learn. That's fundamental. If students really want to learn, they will look for ways to do it. They won't stay only with what they learned in class, but they will investigate more.

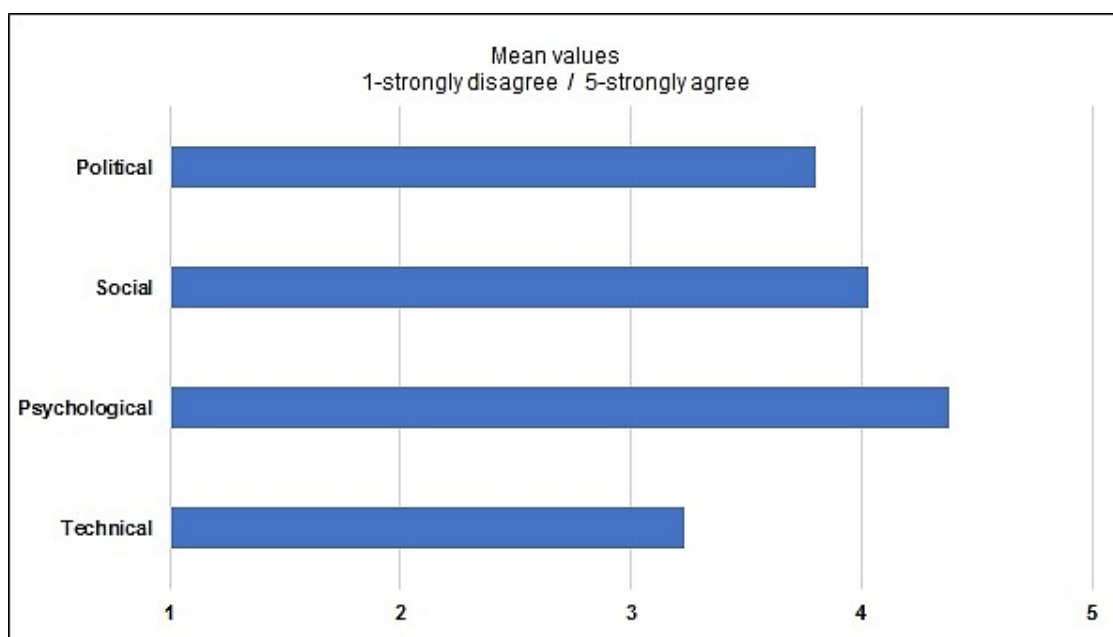


Figure 1: Mean levels of support for the different dimensions of learner autonomy

The social dimension of autonomy was the second most supported. According to the teachers' answers, learner autonomy is best developed in cooperation with others, such as peers and teachers. In this sense, 100% of the teachers agreed that their role is fundamental in the development of their students' autonomy. Also, they showed very positive views about co-operative group work, 100% of the participants believed this can positively influence the development of learner autonomy. Similarly, 93% of the respondents asserted that giving learners opportunities to learn from each other promotes learner autonomy. These beliefs match Little's (1996, p.211) argument on the relevance of collaboration for developing autonomy. He suggests that active participation in social interactions enhances the individual's capacity for reflexion and analysis which are essential for autonomy. This view was also reflected in the interviews. For example, T3 stressed that collaborative work can enhance students' autonomy as well as their learning:

I believe group work helps a lot, because students have to make decisions and take responsibilities...they have to look for different ways to solve problems, using their creativity. So, I think it's a good opportunity for students to help each other and increase their autonomy.

Another interesting finding is that even though teachers believed their role in fostering learner autonomy is crucial, their opinions were divided when asked if learner autonomy could not be developed without the help of the teacher. While 43% believed students need teachers' support to develop their autonomy, 43% said that their help is not necessarily essential. The other 14% of teachers were unsure. Teachers' split opinions could represent the debate about the innate or acquired nature of learner autonomy

discussed in section 1.2. In this case, participants who stated that students did not need teachers' help, may consider autonomy as an inherent capacity; whereas the other group may see it as an ability that needs to be taught. Participants' answers could also be an indication of the generally accepted view of autonomy as a multi-dimensional capacity which can have an individual as well as a social dimension (Murray 2014). The social and individual aspects of autonomy were also found in T1's interview. According to him, autonomous students can perform learning tasks alone and also ask for support when needed:

[Learner autonomy means] the learner is able to perform tasks without constant supervision from the teacher...they are able to ask for help instead of the teacher being all the time asking whether they need help.

In relation to the political orientation of autonomy, teachers mostly agreed that a learner-centred classroom is essential for the development of learner autonomy. In this regard, participants' answers emphasized the importance of involving learners in classroom decisions and empowering them to make choices on how and what to learn. However, when asked about assessment, only 20% of participants agreed that autonomy can be promoted by involving learners in decisions about assessment. This could indicate that most participants may not see assessment as a matter of students' concern, probably because this area has been mostly delegated to teachers and external bodies that measure students' performance in high-stake tests.

Overall, the technical orientation of autonomy that Benson (1997) relates to learning outside the school context and without the intervention of a teacher was the least supported version of autonomy. However, opportunities for independent learning (see section 1.2), such as learning to work alone and creating opportunities for individual work, received considerable support as shown in Figure 2. Thus, it appears that participants value activities in which learners' can actively use their mental capacity to undertake activities on their own. The least supported statement was related to learning without a teacher. This view is consistent with the participants' beliefs on the relevance of their role in the promotion and development of autonomy and the importance of social interaction stated earlier. In this regard, in her interview T2 suggested that learners would need the assistance of teachers even when they have obtained high levels of autonomy:

Students may need some guidance as they develop their capacity to be autonomous, but it doesn't need to be constant. Even when students have reached good levels of autonomy, I think they will need the teacher's guidance to go higher up in the autonomy ladder.

This view matches Nunan's (1997) assertion about the variability of learner autonomy presented in section 1.2. In this case, T2 does not consider autonomy as an absolute concept, but as a capacity that has different degrees (Ibid.).

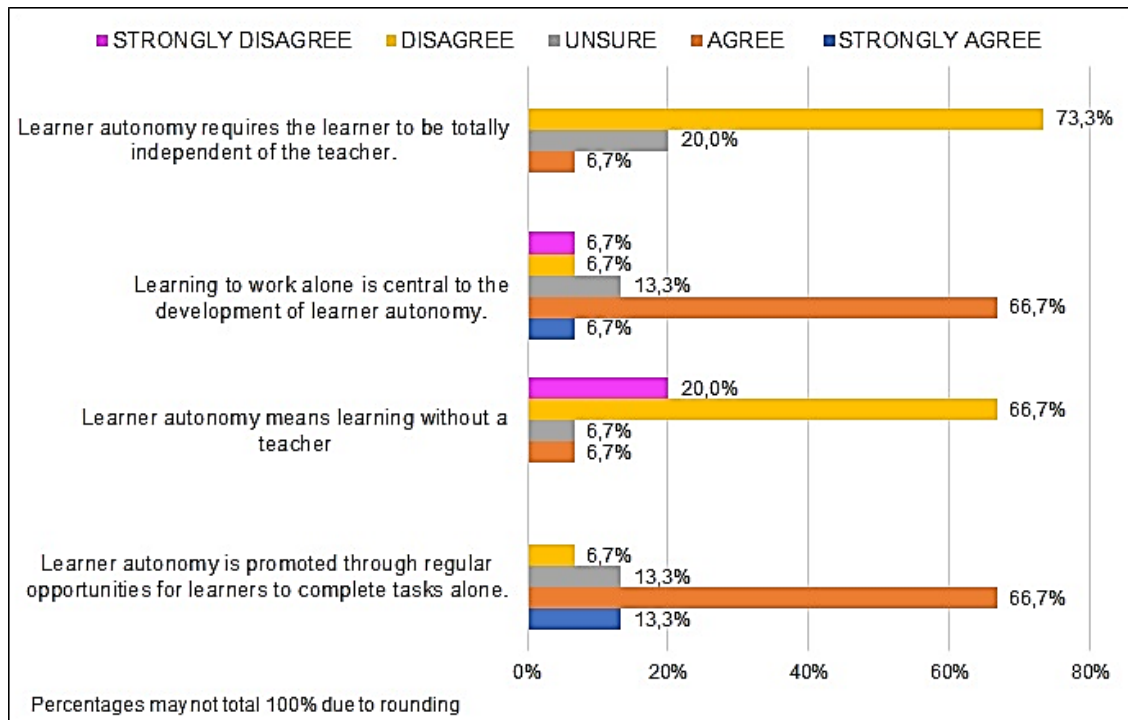


Figure 2: Levels of support for the technical orientation to learner autonomy

Further insights into participants' interpretation of learner autonomy were obtained through the interviews. For example, the participants argued that learners were more autonomous when they were interested in the subject matter. This reflects Little's (1991) idea that autonomy is domain specific. In this regard, T1 explained:

In high school, I was an autonomous learner in terms of learning English, but there were subjects in which I was not autonomous at all, probably because I was not interested in them.

Regarding types of autonomy, the interviewees demonstrated a tendency towards a reactive autonomy (Littlewood 1999), discussed in section 1.2.1. This means that students engage in autonomous practices once a direction has been given by the teacher. For instance, T3 asserted:

Autonomy does not mean students can do whatever they want, but it means they can follow their own path once the instructions are given.

Another interesting finding is that interviewees related autonomy with opportunities for learning outside the classroom. This tendency, as it will be discussed in section 3.5, may be related to the limitations they have to develop autonomy inside their school context.

In short, participants' answers supported a psychological dimension of autonomy, emphasizing the importance of motivation, learning how to learn, monitoring and evaluating learning. Participants also supported the social aspect of autonomy, agreeing that collaboration is essential for the development of this capacity. The additional themes identified in the interviews suggest that participants consider learner autonomy as a context-dependent and variable capacity that is frequently associated with learning outside the classroom.

3.3 Research question 2: To what extent do participants believe learner autonomy contributes to students' language learning?

As Figure 3 shows, all the participants agreed that learner autonomy contributes positively to language learning. Most of them indicated that learner autonomy enables students to learn more efficiently than they otherwise would. However, teachers were less supportive of the idea that students who lack autonomy are not likely to be successful language learners. While six participants agreed, five were unsure and four disagreed. This could indicate, from the teachers' point of view, that autonomy may not be the only factor determining successful language learning.

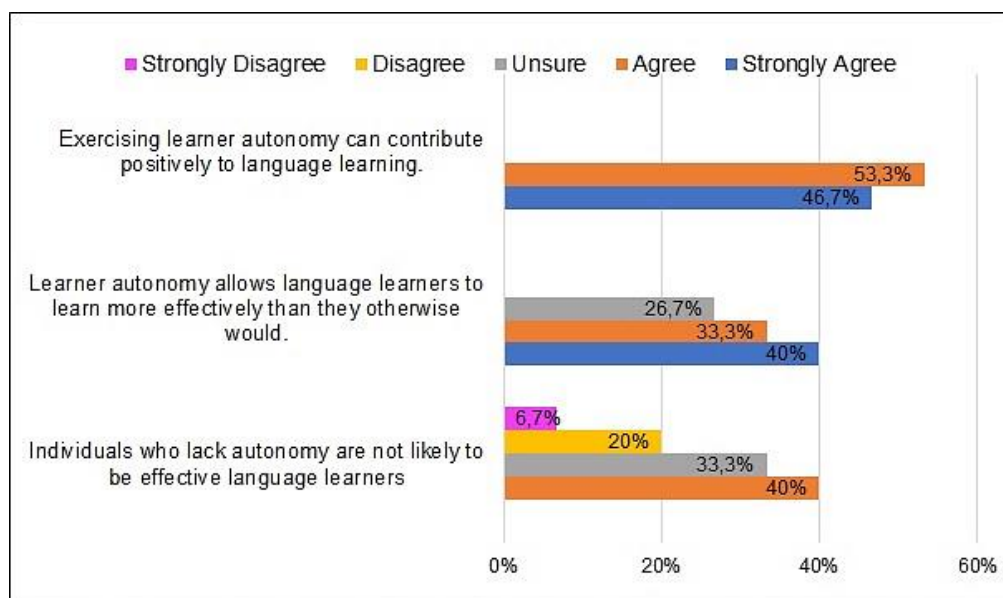


Figure 3: Participants' beliefs about the influence of learner autonomy on language learning

In the questionnaire, teachers could elaborate on their answers. In general, they suggested three ways in which autonomy can contribute to successful language learning. These are listed below.

1. Six participants considered that autonomous learners have more exposure to the language and more opportunities for language use:

Much of the knowledge and skills required to understand and speak a foreign language fluently comes from both intensive and extensive exposure and practice, to which students have limited access within a classroom setting, especially given the large number of them in Chilean classrooms. Learner autonomy can allow them to seek extra exposure and practice by themselves, both with and without the teacher's guidance.

2. Five participants suggested that autonomy relates to affective factors that facilitate learning, such as motivation, interests and confidence:

Students feel empowered when they have the tools to learn on their own, which sometimes makes them feel more motivated towards learning.

3. Two participants suggested that autonomy can strengthen students' cognitive abilities:

Autonomy allows students to strengthen their executive functions and metacognitive skills. This definitely enhances language learning.

Similar views were expressed by the three interviewees who stressed that a language cannot be fully learned in the classroom, as many aspects of it are left aside. Therefore, additional exposure and constant practice outside the teaching hours are fundamental for enhancing learning:

Your learning of a language comes more through exposure and practice than through explicit teaching. And teaching hours are always limited...when you're teaching a language, there's so many aspects of the language that will not fit into the teaching hours. So then, if the student only learns from what is being taught in class, what they will learn will always be limited.

Overall, teachers hold a very positive view about the contribution of learner autonomy to their students' language learning. The benefits of autonomy noted here have also been discussed in the literature: the relevance of language use (Swain 1995, 2000), the enhancement of cognitive abilities through autonomy (Little 1996), and the impact of motivation on learning (Ushioda 2011). Regarding the origins of these beliefs, the

participants explained that their personal experiences as autonomous language learners as well as language teachers have influenced their views on the subject.

3.4 Research question 3: To what extent have participants exercised their learner autonomy to improve their language skills since they became EFL teachers?

To answer this question, the participants were first asked whether they had exercised language learning autonomy since they became EFL teachers. In this regard, eleven of them stated they usually engaged in autonomous language learning practices, while only one teacher admitted he or she did not. The other three participants were unsure. In relation to the reasons for exercising autonomy, most participants acknowledged that language learning is a never-ending process that requires constant effort, exposure and practice. For example, in the questionnaire T9 said:

I always try to do things on my own to continue learning. I finished university long ago and I think it's important to continue practising and updating my knowledge. For instance, I read books or comics in English, watch TV series and movies, and interact with native English speakers as frequently as I can.

In the interviews, the three interviewees mentioned professional and personal reasons for exercising autonomy to sharpen their language skills. For example, T1 said:

On the one hand, it's a sense of continuing perfecting myself as a professional. I think that if my profession is teaching the language; then, to me it only makes sense that I should be as good as possible with the language. On the other hand, it's a personal thing. I tend to think that most people would have things that they like to keep improving.

Similarly, T2 expressed that her interest in the language and her motivation for improving her teaching practices have motivated her to continue learning through autonomous practices. These answers suggest that these participants are willing to exercise learner autonomy. As discussed in section 1.2, willingness is an indispensable component of learner autonomy (Littlewood 1996). In the interviews, participants clearly stated their goals and explained the decisions they had made about their learning. In this sense, it appears that the interviewees have engaged in proactive autonomy (Littlewood 1999) by creating their own agenda and taking full charge of their learning. Regarding the effectiveness of their autonomous language learning experiences, the three interviewees affirmed their autonomous practices have been successful, for instance, T3 said:

Considering that I graduated long time ago, I believe my level of English is still good mainly because of these [autonomous language learning] activities.

In terms of types of activities, participants mentioned similar practices in both the questionnaire and the interviews. Most respondents reported doing activities on their own and in collaboration with others; such as extensive reading, watching movies; studying in groups for international exams and joining conversational English clubs. These activities could indicate that teachers value the individual as well as the social dimension of autonomy. For instance, T1 indicated:

After graduating as an EFL teacher, I've continued seeking every opportunity to have exposure and practice with those aspects of the language which are hard even for advanced non-native speakers, or which were not part of the curriculum during my education. In addition to regularly reading literature and consuming media in English, I have studied by myself and in self-organised study groups to obtain the Cambridge Advanced and subsequently the Cambridge Proficiency certifications, and I have been actively involved in a public-speaking club in English for over five years.

In relation to the reasons for not exercising language learning autonomy, T5 said that he or she did not have time to engage in autonomous activities. Although the respondent did not provide further information, two participants mentioned that their jobs leave them little time for doing extra activities; however, they use this time to do simple tasks, as T8 explained:

I've always tried to improve my language skills through simple things. Since I don't have much free time due to my job, I try to do little things that I enjoy and that don't take me long, like reading books in English, watching movies in English and chatting with my English-speaking friends.

In summary, participants' answers indicate that most of them frequently exercise learner autonomy to improve their language skills. Their answers reflect willingness and awareness of the need to improve their skills for professional and personal reasons. To continue learning, they have adopted a proactive approach in setting their own goals and taking all the relevant decisions about their learning process. They have engaged in different activities that include individual and collaborative work and they consider autonomy an effective way to continue mastering their skills in the language.

3.5 Research question 4: To what extent do participants experiences as self-directed language learners influence their efforts to foster learner autonomy in their classrooms?

According to the questionnaire results, fourteen participants agreed that their autonomous language learning experiences had motivated them to promote learner autonomy among their students. The participants reported they believed in the benefits of autonomous language learning; therefore, they encouraged their students to be autonomous learners, as T1 and T13 explained:

How far my own autonomy as a learner has taken me is one of the main reasons why I believe in learner autonomy.

As I've experienced the benefits of autonomous learning myself, I give my students as many opportunities to practice autonomy as I can.

As Figure 4 shows, a slightly different result was obtained when participants were asked whether they gave their students opportunities to develop learner autonomy in the classroom. Only eleven participants said they created those opportunities, while two answered they did not, and the other two were unsure. From the results obtained in these two questions, there appears to be a difference between promoting learner autonomy and creating real opportunities for its development in the classroom. As participants' answers suggest, this difference may be related to the difficulties they have in incorporating autonomy in their practices. As it will be discussed in section 3.6, the participants identified a number of constraints limiting the development of learner autonomy in their classrooms. Notwithstanding the participants reported they often encouraged students to take responsibility for their learning by engaging in autonomous language learning activities mainly outside the school context, as T8 commented:

I use my own experience as an example to tell my students that what they learn in class is not enough. They have only a few hours of English per week, so they need to make an extra effort to obtain results and engage in activities of their interest outside the classroom. Promoting autonomy in the classroom is not easy because of the constraints of the educational system.

In this example, the participant uses his or her experience as an example to encourage students to be autonomous learners. The participant seems to have positive views about learner autonomy; however, due to constraints of the Chilean education system, these positive beliefs may not be translated into substantial opportunities to develop autonomy in the classroom. Similar findings were described in previous studies on teacher's beliefs

about learner autonomy (see section 1.5) in which internal and external constraints were identified as factors hindering the development of learner autonomy in the classroom (Borg and Al-Busaidi 2012; Bullock 2011; Szócs 2017).

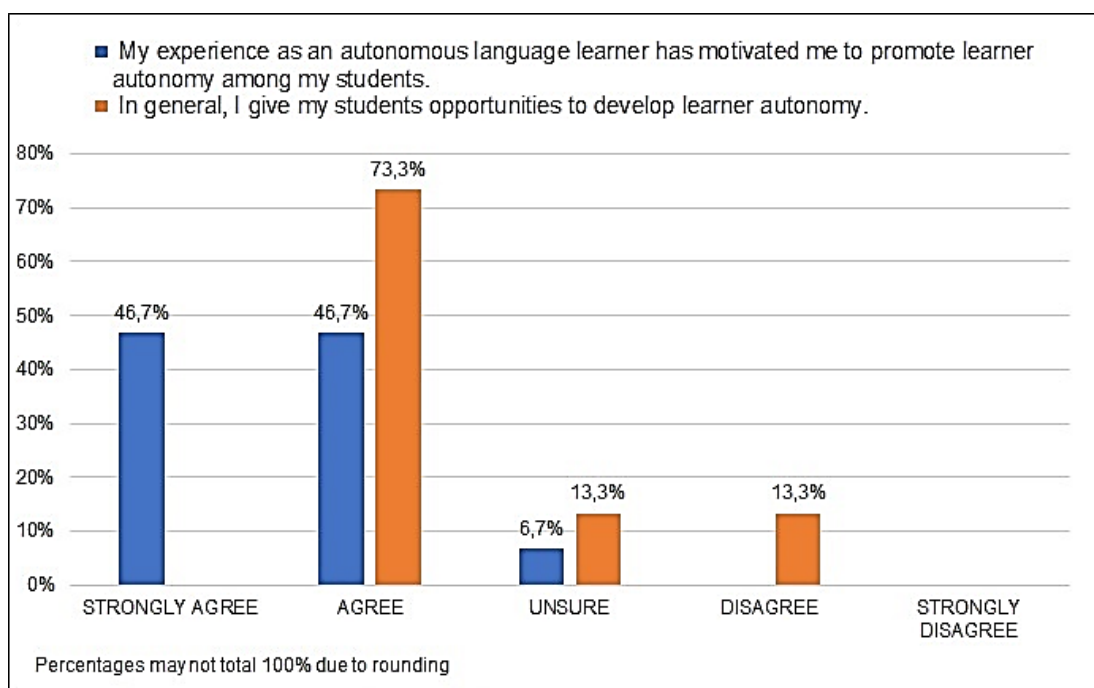


Figure 4: Difference between promoting learner autonomy and giving opportunities for its development

In the interviews, participants shared similar views. They often talked about encouraging students to look for additional opportunities to be exposed to and practice the language outside the classroom. The three interviewees mentioned instances in which they gave advice on improvement strategies, recommending similar approaches to the ones they have used (see section 3.4). In this case, the participants acted as advisers, guiding students into self-directed learning. For example, T3 explained:

I explicitly tell my students what things they can do at home in order to keep improving. I don't I mean assigning them specific tasks. I mean, outside of any pieces of homework that I may give them, I tell them "okay, if you're finding difficult to keep up with what you're learning, some things that you can do is read stuff in English, but not stuff that I am forcing you to read, look for stuff that you are interested in, watch things in English that you're interested in..."

Regarding the activities to develop autonomy inside the classroom, the participants mentioned similar strategies in the questionnaire and the interviews. These activities were classified into three different types which are listed below with supporting evidence after each.

1. Seven participants reported giving students choices. In this sense, students could be involved, to a certain extent, in decisions about their learning:

When doing presentations, I often give them a list of topics and they can select the one that they like the most.

2. Six participants mentioned opportunities for working in groups, stating that when working in collaboration, learners have to make decisions, reach agreements and organize their work on their own:

When students work in groups, they have to make decisions and not just perform the tasks that they are given. Students have to decide together on the topic and see who is going to do what. So, there you have a lot of things where students have to make decisions, where I am not, as a teacher, making those decisions for them.

3. Three participants mentioned negotiation as a way to involve students in classroom decisions and promote their autonomy:

I often hear my students' suggestions. I like involving them in decisions about activities and assessments.

Regarding the effectiveness of these activities, the three interviewees agreed they were more effective and engaging than traditional tasks, as T3 stated:

In general terms, I would say that [my students] tend to respond to these kinds of activities better than to more traditional ones in which they just solve exercises in their book.

This description matches Ushioda's (2011) claim that autonomy can positively impact students' intrinsic motivation and enhance their learning.

Overall, the number of teachers who said they encouraged learner autonomy and the examples they gave for its development inside and outside the classroom suggest that they are positively disposed towards autonomy. However, many of them felt that their activities were not enough to successfully develop autonomy, as T14 expressed:

In general, I give opportunities for learner autonomy. However, I believe they are not enough to help my students become truly autonomous. The government and the school expect teachers to cover a pre-specified and very extensive curriculum that does not leave enough room for innovations in terms of topics and contents. In this context, I try to give my students as many opportunities to make decisions on their own.

In relation to the participants who did not promote autonomy in their teaching, only one of them provided reasons. T5 explained that he or she works with students with serious behavioural issues who have difficulties to learn English and that promoting learner autonomy in such context is very difficult. However, as discussed in section 1.4, learner autonomy could possibly address these difficulties, helping students to improve their learning.

In short, participants' responses showed that their experiences as self-directed language learners have influenced them to encourage autonomy among their students. This result matches Benson's (2013, p.189) claim that teachers' experiences of self-direction are conducive to the promotion of autonomy in their teaching. However, due to the constraints imposed by the structured system the participants work in, they experience difficulties to incorporate activities to develop autonomy inside the classroom; therefore, they tend to encourage their students to be autonomous language learners outside the school context. Notwithstanding, they identified a number of in-class activities, suggesting that they are positively disposed to the concept.

3.6 Research question 5: What challenges do participants face in promoting learner autonomy in their teaching context?

As it was mentioned, the participants identified a number of difficulties hindering the development of learner autonomy in their teaching contexts. According to the questionnaire results, ten respondents stated that it was difficult to promote learner autonomy in their schools, two participants said they did not have difficulties to do so and the rest were unsure. To have a better understanding of the issue, participants were invited to comment on the challenges they faced in fostering autonomy. They identified multiple limiting factors related to the Chilean education system, the students and the school community.

Regarding the constraints imposed by the education system, participants mentioned the curriculum as one of the major challenges for the development of autonomy in the classroom. The participants have to follow a pre-specified curriculum, designed by the Ministry of Education, which they believe is very extensive considering that students only have a few hours of English each week. In this situation, one participant (T12) has taken a teacher-centered approach, giving students limited opportunities to work autonomously:

We are "obligated" to continue delivering teacher-centered lessons, because it's the only way that we can cover the contents of the curriculum in such short period of time...So, in general, most teachers in the school cannot promote autonomy extensively or as much as they would like to.

Similar views were shared by the interviewees. Additionally, they described the curriculum as inappropriate and demotivating, containing contents that do not relate to the students' interests and needs. These findings were also reported by Glas and Cárdenas (2013) on their study about teaching English in Chile. In this regard, T2 asserted:

The curriculum is very extensive. I have to follow a plan that gives me little opportunities to develop autonomy. In addition, the contents are not motivating for the students. There is a strong focus on grammar and vocabulary, and students do not have many opportunities to really use the language. This may be the reason why some of my students think that English is boring and don't feel motivated to learn it.

Another factor affecting the development of autonomy has to do with the characteristics of the students. As reported by some participants, their students lack the ability and the motivation to be autonomous learners, two indispensable components of learner autonomy (Littlewood 1996). Moreover, some participants mentioned their students are used to traditional teaching methods in which all the relevant decisions are made by the teacher. Examples of such views are provided by T4, T10 and T5.

Most students are used to traditional approaches of language teaching, so it's hard for them to make decisions.

Most of my students depend too much on what I teach them and are not able to learn the language by themselves mainly outside the classroom...They don't have much interest in learning English, since they don't find it meaningful.

The difficulty of fostering learning autonomy in the classroom is that the English subject is seen as an obligatory subject and not as something beneficial. Only, some students feel motivated to learn it.

Considering the results of the previous section, the lack of students' ability to be autonomous may be related to the limited opportunities they have to extensively develop their autonomy inside the classroom. In addition, the traditional teaching methods mentioned in the first example may affect students' motivation to learn the language and be autonomous learners.

As regards the school community, the participants identified two areas of concern: lack of parents' support and lack of collaboration among teachers. Some participants believed

that parents are unsupportive of practices that require students to take charge of their own learning. In relation to this, T1 explained:

I think that one of the biggest challenges is that there are way too many parents who are doing everything in their power to make their children not autonomous. So, if you spend a certain number of hours in the classroom with the kids, and then when they go back home, their parents are undoing what you're trying to do, then it's really hard to get them to be autonomous at all...Parents would do everything for the kids, they would not let the kids make any effort at all.

In this example, T1 was referring to primary school students and their parents. From T1's point of view, the development of learner autonomy in children would require the support and encouragement of parents and teachers. This view was also shared by T2. She mentioned that many parents still believe that teachers are responsible for all students' learning and often question activities in which students have to construct their own knowledge. T2 considered that the development of her students' autonomy could be facilitated if parents supported autonomous learning practices:

Many parents don't encourage their children to be autonomous learners. They still see teachers as "providers of all knowledge", when we should be seen as "guides". Then, when you ask your students to take control of their learning, many parents think that you're not doing your job as a teacher. They hand over full responsibility for educating their kids to the school...I believe parents should get involved in their children's education and support the development of autonomy at home. Parents could take the role of the teacher, encouraging their children to engage in autonomous learning practices.

The interviewees considered collaboration between teachers and parents a key element for developing autonomy. Similarly, some participants mentioned the need for collaboration among teachers to effectively promote learner autonomy and explained that in their current teaching context, the lack of collaborative work among teachers represented a challenge to foster autonomy. The answers of T8, T13 and T14 exemplify this view:

The lack of autonomous practices in other subjects can contribute to students feeling more dependent on teachers.

The lack of coordination and collaboration of the school community, including parents, in the promotion of learner autonomy are all factors that make the development of autonomy a difficult task.

Students should work on their autonomy in other subjects as well.

In these examples, the participants appear to believe that autonomy could be enhanced if all the different teachers created opportunities for autonomous learning in their classrooms. As T2 suggested in her interview, fostering learner autonomy should be a common practice among teachers and also part of the aims and objectives of the school:

To successfully promote learner autonomy, teachers should work collaboratively. If we want our students to be truly autonomous, we all have to work together as a school.

In addition to the challenges discussed earlier, the interviewees suggested that teachers working in public and subsidized schools may not be fully aware of suitable approaches and strategies to develop autonomy, as T3 explained:

It is likely that many teachers working in highly complex contexts don't know how to develop autonomy in such circumstances. Those teachers who have worked in such contexts for many years usually continue using traditional methodologies.

This and earlier comments about the use of traditional methodologies can be connected to a lack of awareness of contextually-relevant approaches to develop autonomy in difficult circumstances. As discussed in section 1.4 traditional teacher-centered methodologies may not be very effective in complex teaching contexts as in Chilean public and subsidized schools. Considering this situation and the benefits that learner autonomy could bring to students' language learning, it seems appropriate to suggest the creation of opportunities for teachers to reflect on suitable methods that could help their students take more responsibility for their own learning.

In summary, the participants identified several adverse factors that constrain the development of learner autonomy inside the classroom. These challenges are related to the Chilean education system, the students and their lack of motivation and abilities to learn autonomously; and the lack of collaboration of the school community, including parents, to support autonomous learning practices in the school and at home. In addition, some participants identified a lack of awareness of suitable strategies to foster autonomy in difficult teaching circumstances. In relation to this, opportunities for reflection about culturally and contextually appropriate methods to foster autonomy were suggested.

Conclusion

The aim of this research was to explore the beliefs and practices of a group of fifteen Chilean EFL teachers regarding learner autonomy. Their perspectives as language learners and language teachers were investigated using a mixed-methods approach which included the completion of an online questionnaire and the respondents' voluntary participation in follow-up interviews. The methodology followed allowed the collection of in-depth information that enabled the researcher to answer the five main questions of this study.

The study revealed that participants' definitions of learner autonomy reflected widely accepted ideas in the literature; such as autonomy as a variable and context-dependent capacity that can be developed in collaboration with others. The study showed that participants favoured the psychological and social dimensions of autonomy over the political and technical orientations. In this regard, motivation, learning to learn and providing opportunities for independent and collaborative work were considered essential elements for the development of learner autonomy. The participants agreed that their role in fostering autonomy was fundamental; however, they showed divergent views when asked if students could develop their autonomy without their help, somewhat reflecting the long debate in field of autonomy over the innate or acquired nature of this capacity.

The participants demonstrated positive views about the contribution of learner autonomy in their students' language learning. Their experiences as self-directed language learners and language teachers had led them to believe that learner autonomy could (1) provide their students with more opportunities to be exposed to and practice the language, (2) increase their students' motivation, interest and confidence and (3) strengthen their cognitive abilities.

Due to personal and professional reasons, most participants have engaged in a range of autonomous language learning activities since they graduated as EFL teachers, such as extensive reading, studying in groups and joining conversational English clubs. Their responses showed that they possessed the willingness and the necessary abilities to successfully self-direct their learning. Although most participants believed these autonomous experiences had motivated them to promote learner autonomy in their teaching; not all of them actually created substantial opportunities to foster autonomy inside the classroom. As in Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), Bullock (2011) and Szócs (2017), the participants identified a number of constraints limiting the possibilities to incorporate

autonomy in the language classroom. Therefore, it was suggested that participants' positive views about learner autonomy were not necessarily indicative of their practices. In this context, the participating teachers encouraged their students to engage in autonomous practices outside the school and provided as many opportunities as they could to develop their students' autonomy through in-class activities which mostly reflected a reactive type of autonomy.

Factors related to the Chilean education system, the characteristics of the learners, and the school community were identified as restricting the extent to which the participants could promote autonomy in their classrooms. The participants felt hindered by an overloaded curriculum with defined contents which were considered irrelevant to the students' needs and interests. In relation to this, some participants felt their students were not interested in learning English and lacked the abilities to be autonomous learners as they were used to traditional teacher-centered methods. The lack of parental support, the absence of collaboration among teachers to promote autonomy in the different subject matters, and the lack of teachers' awareness of suitable approaches to foster autonomy in difficult teaching circumstances were also identified as adverse factors.

Overall, the participants in this study demonstrated familiarity with some of the concepts used to describe autonomy in the literature and they were positively disposed towards the concept as they had experienced the benefits of autonomous language learning themselves; however, a number of internal and external constraints imposed by their teaching context made them feel less positive about the extent to which they could efficiently promote autonomy inside the language classroom. Considering these findings and the positive impact that learner autonomy can have in students' motivation and language learning, it seems appropriate to suggest the creation of opportunities for teachers to reflect on educational strategies that can help them address the constraints of their complex teaching contexts. In-service professional development courses and teacher-training programmes could provide these opportunities and help teachers develop contextually appropriate approaches to successfully involve students in classroom decisions and give them more responsibility and control over their language learning process.

Certainly, further research on teachers' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy is needed in order to bridge the existing gap in the literature, particularly in the Chilean context. As previously discussed, understanding teachers' beliefs and their impact on teachers' practices is crucial for creating initiatives to improve teaching and learning. Furthermore, future studies could focus on developing bottom-up practices and

pedagogies to develop autonomy in the contexts studied. This could help to inform professional development programmes designed to prepare teachers to foster autonomy in their classrooms.

The limitations of this remote research could be taken into consideration for future studies. Observing teachers in their day-to-day practices could help future researchers gather more information about teachers' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy. Moreover, the use of different means for collecting information, online and in print, could possibly help to survey a wider number of teachers than in this small-scale project. Notwithstanding the limitations, the current study was conducted rigorously and its findings could stimulate greater interest in the field of ELT in Chile.

References

Agencia de Calidad de la Educación (2018) *Estudio Nacional de Inglés 2017*, available: http://archivos.agenciaeducacion.cl/ppt_ingles_III_medio.pdf.

Agencia de Calidad de la Educación. (2019) *Agencia de Calidad entregó los resultados del Estudio Nacional de Inglés*, available: <https://www.agenciaeducacion.cl/noticias/agencia-calidad-entrego-los-resultados-del-estudio-nacional-ingles/>

Azungah, T. (2018) 'Qualitative research: deductive and inductive approaches to data analysis', *Qualitative Research Journal*, 18(4), 383-400.

Barahona, M. (2015) *English Language Teacher Education in Chile: A Cultural Historical Activity Theory Perspective*, 1st edn., Oxon; New York: Routledge.

Barcelos, A.M.F. (2000) *Understanding teachers' and students' language learning beliefs in experience: A Deweyan approach*, Doctoral Dissertation, University of Alabama, retrieved from: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ana_Barcelos2/publication/34768968_Understanding_teachers'_and_students'_language_learning_beliefs_in_experience_A_Deweyan_approach/links/55a17f4708aea54aa814485f/Understanding-teachers-and-students-language-learning-beliefs-in-experience-A-Deweyan-approach.pdf

Barcelos, A.M.F. (2006) 'Researching beliefs about SLA: A critical review' in P. Kalaja and A.M.F. Barcelos, eds., *Beliefs about SLA: New Research Approaches*, New York: Springer, 7-33.

Behr, D. (2015) 'Translating answers to open-ended survey questions in cross-cultural research: A case study on the interplay between translation, coding, and analysis', *Field Methods*, 27(3), 284-299.

Benson, P. (1996) 'Concepts of autonomy in language learning' in R. Pemberton, E. Li, W. Or and H. Pierson, eds., *Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 27-34.

Benson, P. (1997) 'The philosophy and politics of learner autonomy' in P. Benson and P. Voller, eds., *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning*, London: Longman, 18-34.

Benson, P. (2007) 'Autonomy and its role in learning' in J. Cummins and C. Davison, eds., *International Handbook of English Language Teaching*, Boston, MA: Springer US, 733-745.

Benson, P. (2013) *Teaching and researching autonomy*, 2nd edn., London: Routledge.

Borg, S. (2011) 'The impact of in-service teacher education on language teachers' beliefs', *System*, 39(3), 370-380.

Borg, S. and Al-Busaidi, S. (2012) *Learner Autonomy: English Teachers' Beliefs and Practices*, London: British Council, available: https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/b459%20ELTRP%20Report%20Busaidi_final.pdf

Boud, D. (1988) 'Moving towards autonomy' in D. Boud, ed., *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*, London: Kogan Page, 17-39.

Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) 'Using thematic analysis in psychology', *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.

Breen, M. (1985) 'The social context for language learning: a neglected situation?', *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 7(2), 135-158.

British Council (2015) *English in Chile: An Examination of Policy, Perceptions and Influencing Factors*, available: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/English%20in%20Chile.pdf>.

Bryan, L. (2012) 'Research on science teachers' beliefs' in B.J. Fraser, K.G. Tobin and C.J. McRobbie, eds., *Second International Handbook of Science Education*, Dordrecht; New York: Springer, 477-495.

Bullock, D. (2011) 'Learner self-assessment: An investigation into teachers' beliefs', *ELT Journal*, 65(2), 114-125.

Camilleri, G. (1999) *Learner autonomy: the teachers' views*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

Camilleri Grima, A. (2007) 'Pedagogy for autonomy, teachers' attitudes and institutional change: a case study' in M.J. Raya and L. Sercu, eds., *Challenges in Teacher Development: Learner Autonomy and Intercultural Competence*, Frankfurt: Peter Lang.

Candy, P. (1988) 'On the attainment of subject-matter autonomy' in D. Bound, ed., *Developing Student Autonomy in Learning*, 2nd edn., New York: Kogan, 59-76.

Candy, P. (1991) *Self-Direction for Lifelong Learning: A Comprehensive Guide to Theory and Practice*, San Francisco, CA: John Wiley and Sons.

Clark, V. and Ivankova, N. (2016) *Mixed Methods Research: A Guide to the Field*, Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.

Cohen, L., Manion, L. and Morrison, K. (2018) *Research Methods in Education*, 8th edn., London: Routledge.

Cortazzi, M., Pilcher, N. and Jin, L. (2011) 'Language choices and 'blind shadows': investigating interviews with Chinese participants', *Qualitative Research*, 11(5), 505-535.

Curtis, W., Murphy, M. and Shields, S. (2014) *Research and Education*, Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.

Dam, L. (1995) *Learner Autonomy 3: From Theory to Classroom Practice*, Dublin: Authentik Language Learning Resources.

Dam, L. and Legenhausen, L. (1996) 'The acquisition of vocabulary in an autonomous learning environment-the first months of beginning English', *Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning*, 1, 265-280.

Dickinson, L. (1987) *Self-instruction in Language Learning*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dörnyei, Z. (2007) *Research Methods in Applied Linguistics: Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methodologies*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Glas, K. (2008) 'El inglés abre puertas . . . ¿a qué? Análisis del discurso sobre la enseñanza del inglés en Chile 2003–2006', *Revista Educación y Pedagogía*, 20(51), 11–122.

Glas, K. and Cárdenas, M. (2013) 'New English cultures and learner autonomy for intrinsic motivation and democratic empowerment in the Chilean context', *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, 12(3), 23-40.

Gobierno de Chile (2014) *Estrategia Nacional de Inglés 2014-2030*, available: <https://www.economia.gob.cl/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/140307-Documento-Estrategia-Nacional-de-Ing%C3%A9s-2014-2030.pdf>.

Holec, H. (1981) *Autonomy and Foreign Language Learning*, Oxford: Pergamon Press.

Jacobs, G. and Farrell, T. (2003) 'Understanding and implementing the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) Paradigm', *RELC Journal*, 34(1), 5-30.

Jamieson, S. (2004) 'Likert scales: how to (ab)use them', *Medical Education*, 38(12), 1217-1218.

Jenkins, J. (2009) *World Englishes: A Resource Book for Students*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge.

Johnson, R. and Christensen, L. (2014) *Educational Research: Quantitative, Qualitative and Mixed Approaches*, 5th edn., London: SAGE Publications.

Johnson, R., Onwuegbuzie, A. and Turner, L. (2007) 'Toward a definition of mixed methods research', *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 1(2), 112-133.

Jones, J. (1995) 'Self-access and culture: retreating from autonomy', *ELT Journal*, 49(3), 228-234.

Jorgensen, R., Grootenboer, P., Niesche, R. and Lerman, S. (2010) 'Challenges for teacher education: The mismatch between beliefs and practice in remote indigenous contexts', *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(2), 161-175.

Kalaja, P. and Barcelos, A.M.F. (2006) *Beliefs about SLA: New Research Approaches*, New York: Springer.

Kalaja, P. and Barcelos, A.M.F. (2011) 'Introduction to beliefs about SLA revisited', *System*, 39(3), 281-289.

Knowles, M. (1975) *Self-directed Learning: A Guide for Learners and Teachers*, New York: Association Press.

Kohonen, V. (1992) 'Experiential language learning: second language learning as cooperative learner education' in D. Nunan, ed., *Collaborative Language Learning and Teaching*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 14-39.

Kuchah, K. and Smith, R. (2011) 'Pedagogy of autonomy for difficult circumstances: from practice to principles', *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 5(2), 119-140.

Kumaravadivelu, B. (2003) *Beyond Methods: Macrostrategies for Language Teaching*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

Kvale, S. (1996) *Interviews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*, London: SAGE Publications.

Lee, T. (2001) 'Language-of-interview effects and latino mass opinion', *John F. Kennedy School of Government Faculty Research Working Paper Series*, 1-41.

Levin, B. (2015) 'The development of teachers' beliefs' in H. Fives and M. Gill, eds., *International Handbook of Research on Teachers' Beliefs*, New York: Routledge, 48-65.

Levin, B., He, Y. and Allen, M. (2013) 'Teacher beliefs in action: A cross-sectional, longitudinal follow-up study of teachers' personal practical theories', *Teacher Educator*, 48(3), 1-17.

Lim, C. and Chai, C. (2008) 'Teachers' pedagogical beliefs and their planning and conduct of computer mediated classroom lessons', *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 39(5), 807-828.

Little, D. (1991) *Learner Autonomy 1: Definitions, Issues and Problems*, Dublin: Authentik.

Little, D. (1994) 'Learner autonomy: A theoretical construct and its practical application', *Die Neueren Sprachen*, 93(5), 430-442.

Little, D. (1996) 'Freedom to learn and compulsion to interact: Promoting learner autonomy through the use of information systems and information technologies' in

Little, D. and Dam, L. (1998) 'Learner autonomy: What and why?', *The Language Teacher Online*, 22(10), 7-15.

Little, D., Dam, L. and Legenhausen, L. (2017) *Language Learner Autonomy: Theory, Practice and Research*, Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.

Littlewood, W. (1996) "'Autonomy": An anatomy and a framework', *System*, 24(4), 427-435.

Littlewood, W. (1999) 'Defining and developing autonomy in East Asian contexts', *Applied Linguistics*, 20(1), 71-94.

Liu, S. (2011) 'Factors related to pedagogical beliefs of teachers and technology integration', *Computers and Education*, 56(4), 1012-1022.

Matear, A. (2006) 'Barriers to equitable access: Higher education policy and practice in Chile since 1990', *Higher Education Policy*, 19(1), 31-49.

Matear, A. (2008) 'English language learning and education policy in Chile: Can English really open doors for all?', *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, 28(2), 131-147.

Ministerio de Educación (2004) *Decreto N° 81*, available: <https://www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idNorma=226283>.

Ministerio de Educación (2012) *Decreto N° 439*, available: <https://www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idNorma=1036799>.

Ministerio de Educación (2014) *Decreto N° 614*, available: <https://www.leychile.cl/Navegar?idNorma=1059966>.

Ministerio de Educación (2018) *Bases Curriculares: Primero a Sexto Básico*, available: https://www.curriculumnacional.cl/614/articles-22394_bases.pdf.

Ministerio de Educación (2019) *The English Opens Doors Program*, available: <http://centrodevoluntarios.cl/the-english-opens-doors-program/> [accessed 21 May,2019].

Moreno, A. and Gamboa, R. (2014) 'Dictadura Chilena y sistema escolar: a otros dieron de verdad esa cosa llamada educación', *Educar em Revista*, 51, 51-66.

Murray, G. (2014) *Social dimensions of autonomy in language learning*, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.

Nation, P. (1975) 'Teaching vocabulary in difficult circumstances', *English Language Teaching Journal*, 30(1), 21-24.

Navarro, D. and Thornton, K. (2011) 'Investigating the relationship between belief and action in self-directed language learning', *System*, 39(3), 290-301.

Nunan, D. (1997) 'Designing and adapting materials to encourage learner autonomy' in P. Benson and P. Voller, eds., *Autonomy and Independence in Language Learning*, Essex: Longman.

OECD (2017) *Education in Chile: Reviews of National Policies for Education*, OECD Publishing, available: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/education-in-chile_9789264284425-en#page4.

Oxford, R. (2003) 'Toward a more systematic model of L2 learner autonomy' in D. Palfreyman and R. Smith, eds., *Learner Autonomy Across Cultures: Language Education Perspectives*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 75-91.

Pajares, M. (1992) 'Teachers beliefs and educational research: Cleaning up a messy construct', *Review of Educational Research*, 62(3), 307-332.

Palfreyman, D. and Smith, R. (2003) *Learner Autonomy across Cultures: Language Education Perspectives*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Palfreyman, D. and Benson, P. (2018) 'Autonomy and Its Role in English Language Learning: Practice and Research' in X. Gao, ed., *Second Handbook of English Language Teaching*, Cham: Springer International Publishing, 1-21.

- Pereira, H. and Rosas, M. (2017) 'Enseñanza de Idiomas en Chile: Perspectivas, Desafíos y Proyecciones', *El Mostrador*, available: <https://www.elmostrador.cl/noticias/opinion/2017/10/07/ensenanza-de-idiomas-en-chile-perspectivas-desafios-y-proyecciones/> [accessed 21 May, 2019]
- R. Pemberton, E. Li, W. Or and H. Pierson, eds., *Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 203-218.
- Rebolledo, P., Smith, R. and Bullock, D. (2016) *Champion Teachers: Stories of Exploratory Action Research*, British Council, available: https://englishagenda.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/attachments/british_council_champion_teachers_1.pdf.
- Riley, P. (1988) 'The ethnography of autonomy' in A. Brookes and P. Grundy, eds., *Individualization and Autonomy in Language Learning*, London: Modern English Publications/British Council.
- Said, C. (2019) 'Solo 30% de quienes se inscribieron para la PSU en el sector municipal quedó seleccionado', *La Tercera*, available: <https://www.latercera.com/nacional/noticia/solo-30-quienes-se-inscribieron-la-psu-sector-municipal-queda-seleccionado/484973/> [accessed.21 May, 2019]
- Sarwar, Z. (2001) 'Adapting individualization techniques for large classes' in D. Hall and A. Hewings, eds., *Innovation in English Language Teaching: A Reader*, London: Routledge, 127-136.
- Shahsavari, S. (2014) 'Efficiency, feasibility, and desirability of learner autonomy based on teachers' and learners' point of views', *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 4(2), 271-280.
- Sinclair, B. (1997) 'Learner autonomy: the cross-cultural question', *IATEFL Issues*, 139, 12-13.
- Sinclair, B. (2000) 'Learner autonomy: The next phase?' in B. Sinclair, I. McGrath and T. Lamb, eds., *Learner Autonomy, Teacher Autonomy: Future Directions*, Harlow: Longman, 4-14.

- Skott, J. (2014) 'The promises, problems and prospects of research on teachers' beliefs' in H. Fives and M. Gill, eds., *International Handbook of Research on Teachers' Beliefs*, New York: Routledge, 13-30.
- Smith, R. (2003) 'Pedagogy for autonomy as (becoming-) appropriate methodology' in D. Palfreyman and R. Smith, eds., *Learner Autonomy Across Cultures: Language Education Perspectives*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 129-146.
- Smith, R. (2011) 'Teaching English in difficult circumstances: A new research agenda' in T. Pattison, ed., *IATEFL 2010 Harrogate Conference Selections*, Canterbury: IATEFL.
- Smith, R., Kuchah, K. and Lamb, M. (2018) 'Learner autonomy in developing countries' in A. Chik, N. Aoki and R. Smith, eds., *Autonomy in Language Learning and Teaching: New Research Agendas*, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 7-27.
- Swain, M. (1995) 'Three functions of output in second language learning' in G. Cook, and B. Seidlhofer, eds., *Principle and Practice in Applied Linguistics: Studies in Honour of H.G. Widdowson*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 125-144.
- Swain, M. (2000) 'The output hypothesis and beyond: Mediating acquisition through collaborative dialogue' in J. Lantolf, ed., *Sociocultural Theory and Second Language Learning*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 97-114.
- Szöcs, K. (2017) 'Teachers' and learners' beliefs about language learning autonomy and its implications in the classroom: A mixed method study', *Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 11(2), 125-145.
- Thomson, C. (1996) 'Self-assessment in self-directed learning: Issues of learner diversity' in R. Pemberton, E Li, W. Or and H. Pierson, eds., *Taking Control: Autonomy in Language Learning*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 77-91.
- Thornbury, S. (2006) *An A-Z of ELT: A Dictionary of Terms and Concepts*, Oxford: Macmillan Education.
- Ushioda, E. (2011) 'Why autonomy? Insights from motivation theory and research', *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 5(2), 221-232.

Van Hout-Wolters, B., Simons, R. and Volet, S. (2000) 'Active learning: Self-directed learning and independent work' in R. Simons, J. Van der Linden and T. Duffy, eds., *New Learning*, Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 21-36.

Vygotsky, L. (1978) *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Wedell, M. (2009) *Planning for Educational Change: Putting People and Their Contexts First*, London; New York: Continuum.

West, M. (1960) *Teaching English in Difficult Circumstances*, London: Longmans, Greens.

Appendix A: Organization of the Questionnaire

Table 1: Organization of the questions in the applied questionnaire.

Question number	Type of question	Data	Area of interest	Research questions
Questions 2 to 21	Likert Scale	Quantitative data	Teachers' interpretation of learner autonomy	RQ1: What does "learner autonomy" mean to participant Chilean EFL teachers working in public and subsidized schools?
Questions 22 and 23	Likert Scale	Quantitative data	Teachers' beliefs about the relation between learner autonomy and language learning	RQ2: To what extent do these teachers believe learner autonomy contributes to students' language learning?
Questions 26 and 27	Likert Scale and Open-ended question	Quantitative and qualitative data		
Questions 24 and 25	Likert Scale	Quantitative data	Teachers' opinions about the difficulties in promoting learner autonomy in Chilean public and subsidized schools	RQ5: What challenges do they face in promoting learner autonomy in their teaching context?
Questions 34 to 37	Likert Scale and Open-ended questions	Quantitative and qualitative data		
Questions 28 and 29	Likert scale and open-ended question	Quantitative and qualitative data	Teachers' experience as self-directed language learners	RQ3: To what extent have these teachers exercised their learner autonomy to improve their language skills since they became EFL teachers?
Questions 30 to 33	Likert scale and open-ended questions	Quantitative and qualitative data	Whether, or not, teachers' experiences as autonomous language learners are conducive to the promotion of learner autonomy in the language classroom	RQ4: To what extent do their experiences as self-directed language learners influence their efforts to foster learner autonomy in their classrooms?
Questions 38 to 40	Open-ended questions	Qualitative data	Demographic information and criteria for participation	

Questions 1, 41 and 42 are not included in this table as they provide information about consent and participation in follow-up interviews.

Appendix B: Questionnaire

Exploring Chilean EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy

You are being invited to participate in a research study titled "Exploring Chilean EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy as language learners and language teachers". This study is being done by [REDACTED] from the MEd TESOL programme at the [REDACTED]. The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' beliefs about learner autonomy and to study the possible relations between their previous experience as autonomous language learners and their efforts to promote learner autonomy in their classrooms.

The following questionnaire contains closed and open-ended questions that you can answer in English or Spanish. It will take you around 20 minutes to complete. Please note that in the last section of the questionnaire you will be invited to participate in a follow-up online interview to further explore your beliefs about learner autonomy and the links with your professional practice. If you consent to be interviewed, you will need to provide your contact details which will be used for the sole purpose of arranging the interview and personalising the interview questions. You can use English or Spanish to answer the questions. The interview will be audio-recorded and it will take approximately 45 minutes.

By agreeing to take part in the study, you confirm (1) you have read and understood the Plain Language Statement and have had the opportunity to ask questions, (2) you understand that your participation is voluntary and that you are free to withdraw at any time, (3) you understand the information provided will be kept anonymous and will remain confidential, (4) you understand the material may be used in future publications and (5) you understand you can contact the researcher for this project by e-mail to receive more information.

Thank you for your time.

1. Please confirm that you have read the information above and that you agree to take part in the study. *

Yes, I have read the information and I agree to participate in the study.

2. Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

3. Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

4. Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

5. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

6. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

7. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

8. Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

9. Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

10. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

11. Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

12. Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

13. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

14. Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

15. Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

16. The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

17. Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

18. Learner autonomy can be exercised inside and outside the classroom.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

19. To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

20. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

21. The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

22. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

23. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

24. Learner autonomy is a concept which is suited to Chilean public and subsidized school learners.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. It is difficult to promote learner autonomy in my classroom.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

26. For the following open-ended question, please use the space provided in question 27 to comment on your answer.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Exercising learner autonomy can contribute positively to language learning.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

27. Please use the box below to comment on your previous answer. You may want to refer to your personal experience to support your answer.

28. For the following open-ended question, please use the space provided in question 29 to comment on your answer.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

Since I became an EFL teacher, I frequently exercise learner autonomy to improve my English language skills.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

29. Please use the box below to comment on your previous answer. You may want to support your answer with examples of the autonomous language learning activities you have engaged in. If do not usually practice learner autonomy for language learning purposes, please explain why.

Escriba su respuesta

30. For the following open-ended question, please use the space provided in question 31 to comment on your answer.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

My experience as an autonomous language learner has motivated me to promote learner autonomy among my students.

Strongly disagree Disagree Unsure Agree Strongly agree

31. Please use the box below to comment on how your personal experience as an autonomous language learner has influenced your efforts to foster learner autonomy in your teaching practices. If it has not, please explain why.

32. For the following open-ended question, please use the space provided in question 33 to comment on your answer.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

In general, I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

33. Please use the box below to comment on your previous answer. You may want to explain why and how you promote autonomy, if you do, or to explain why developing learner autonomy is not an issue you focus on in your work.

34. For the following open-ended question, please use the space provided in question 35 to comment on your answer.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

In general, my students have a fair degree of learner autonomy.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

35. Please use the box below to comment on why you feel the way you do about your students' general degree of autonomy.

Escriba su respuesta

36. For the following open-ended question, please use the space provided in question 37 to comment on your answer.

To what extent do you agree with the following statement?

In general, it is difficult to promote learner autonomy in my teaching context.

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

37. Please use the box below to comment on the difficulties of fostering learning autonomy in your context, if any. If you do not have difficulties, please comment on the aspects that facilitate the promotion of learner autonomy.

38. Years of experience as an English language teacher in Chile.

39. Years of experience as an English language teacher in Chilean public or subsidized schools. *

40. At what school level are you currently teaching?

Questionnaire adapted from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) *Learner Autonomy: English Teachers' Beliefs and Practices*, London: British Council

Appendix C: Indicative Interview Questions

Research question 1: What does “learner autonomy” mean to participant Chilean EFL teachers working in public and subsidized schools?

Indicative questions:

1. What does learner autonomy mean to you?
2. How would you describe an autonomous learner?

Research question 2: To what extent do these teachers believe learner autonomy contributes to language learning?

Indicative questions:

1. a.1) Your answers in the questionnaire show that you agree/disagree with the idea that learner autonomy may contribute to language learning. Can you tell me more about how you see the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning?

a.2) What affordances/disadvantages do you think the development of learner autonomy can have in your teaching context?
2. How have you come to develop this view? (through personal experience, research on the topic)

Research question 3: To what extent have these teachers exercised their learner autonomy to improve their language skills since they became EFL teachers?

Indicative questions:

1. How confident do you feel about your English language abilities? Are there any areas that you would like to improve?
2. You mentioned in the questionnaire that you usually/rarely engage in autonomous language learning activities to improve your language skills. Can

you tell me what kind of language learning activities you usually do or have done in the past? How effective do you think these activities are?

3. Can you tell me the reasons you do /do not practice learner autonomy?

Research question 4: To what extent do their experiences as self-directed language learners influence their efforts to foster learner autonomy in their classrooms?

Indicative questions:

1. To what extent do you give your students opportunities to develop learner autonomy inside and outside the classroom?
2. a) What kind of activities do you use to foster learner autonomy? How do they help your students to become more autonomous?

b) Can you explain the reasons why you do not incorporate learner autonomy in your practice?
3. In what ways do you think your experiences as an autonomous language learner may have influenced your efforts to promote learner autonomy among your students?

Research question 5: What challenges do they face in promoting learner autonomy in their teaching context?

Indicative question:

1. What challenges have you faced when trying to promote learner autonomy in the language classroom?

Appendix D: Plain Language Statement

Plain Language Statement

Title of project and researcher details

Project title: Exploring Chilean EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy as language learners and language teachers.

Researcher: X

Supervisor: X

Programme: MEd TESOL

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Please take time to read the following information carefully and decide whether or not you wish to take part.

1. What is the purpose of the study?

This research aims to explore the beliefs and practices in learner autonomy of Chilean teachers of English working in public and subsidized schools. For this study, the researcher will collect information about (1) the meanings teachers attach to learner autonomy, (2) their previous experiences as autonomous language learners, (3) the relation between learner autonomy and language learning, (4) the potential influence that their experience as autonomous language learners may have in their professional practice and (5) the challenges of exercising learner autonomy in their teaching contexts.

2. How will I be chosen?

You are invited to participate in this study if you are an English as a Foreign Language teacher in Chile and have at least a year of experience working in public and subsidized schools.

3. Do I have to take part?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and as a participant you are free to withdraw at any point without providing reasons for your withdrawal.

4. What will happen to me if I take part?

If you decide to take part in the study, you will be asked to anonymously answer an online questionnaire containing a Likert scale in which you can indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statements provided. The questionnaire also contains open-ended questions that require you to expand on some of your answers and give examples. It will take you around 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

In the last section of the questionnaire, you will be invited to take part in a follow-up interview with the researcher to explore your beliefs on learner autonomy. If you would like to be interviewed, you will be asked to provide your contact details which will be used for the sole purpose of arranging the interview and personalising the interview questions according to your answers in the questionnaire.

If you accept to be interviewed, the researcher will contact you within 5 days after completing the questionnaire to arrange the interview which will be held online and audio-recorded. The interview can be conducted in English or Spanish, as you prefer. In terms of location, it is advisable that you choose a place where you feel comfortable expressing your thoughts about the topic.

The total participation time will be around 45 minutes. You will be given 5 minutes before the interview to look through the consent form and ask any questions before you continue. The interview will not be conducted unless verbal consent has been given. After the interview, you are free to ask any questions to the researcher who will answer them honestly and as fully as possible.

5. Benefits for participating in the study

Your participation in the study will give you the possibility to reflect on your personal experience with language learning autonomy, its impact on your professional practice, and the challenges that you may encounter when promoting learner autonomy in your teaching context.

6. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

Your personal details will be kept confidential and your name and the name of anyone you mention in the interview will be replaced with a different name to protect your anonymity. Please note that the research may be used in future publications, both print and online.

To minimize the risk of breach of the online research, the information will be stored in a university computer accessed by password only. The online interview will be recorded using a separate stand-alone voice recorder.

Please note that confidentiality will be maintained as far as it possible, unless during our conversation I hear anything which makes me worried that you or someone else might be in danger of harm.

7. Contact for Further Information

If you have any further questions about this project, feel free to contact the researcher, X, MEd TESOL, School of Education, University X, email: X or the supervisor X, email: X

If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the School of Education Ethics Officer, Dr X, at X.

Appendix E: Interview Consent Form

Interview Consent Form

Title of Project: Exploring Chilean EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in learner autonomy as language learners and language teachers.

Name of Researcher: X

Name of Supervisor: X

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

Yes No

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

Yes No

3. I understand that the interview will be audio-recorded.

Yes No

4. I understand that any information recorded in the investigation will be made and kept anonymous and will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.

Yes No

5. I understand that the material may be used in future publications, both print and online.

Yes No

6. I understand that I can contact the researcher for this project by e-mail to receive more information.

Yes No

7. I agree to take part in the above study.

Yes No

Name of Participant:

Signature: Date:

Name of Researcher:

Signature: Date:

.....**End of consent form**.....

Appendix F: Example of Analysis Procedure

Hybrid Thematic Analysis of T1's interview

List of themes generated from the research questions

● Meanings of learner autonomy	● Influence of autonomous language learning experiences in teaching practices
● Influence of autonomy in language learning	● Challenges to promote autonomy inside the classroom
● Participants' autonomous language learning experiences	

Interview extract and comments

The next section is about the relation between learner autonomy and language learning. Your answers in the questionnaires showed that you agree with the idea that learner autonomy contributes positively to language learning. Can you tell me more about how you see this relation?

Oh, yeah, sure. Well, basically, a lot of the things that you learn when you're learning a language come more through exposure and practice than through explicit teaching. And teaching hours are always limited. And no matter how many teaching hours we have a week, when you're teaching a language, there's so many aspects of the language that will not fit into the teaching hours. So then, if the students only learn from what is being taught in class, what they will learn will always be limited. And the chances of them really developing fluency and eventually reaching mastery of the language become narrower. **Whereas in autonomy, students will keep reading stuff, listening to stuff in the language outside the classroom, they will keep practicing. And that means that they will be exposed to a lot of the language that there was no time to expose them to in the classroom or that was not explicitly considered in the curriculum. So, learner autonomy will be useful for them to continue developing their skills and to use the language in**

Similar to the other interviewees, T1 believes autonomy can benefit language learning because of the **extra exposure and practice that students** get when engaging in autonomous language learning **mainly outside the classroom**. Could this indicate **limited opportunities to promote autonomy inside the classroom**?

the real world. So, that's basically why I think that learner autonomy definitely boosts language learning.

How have you become to develop this view. Is it through personal experience or have you read about it?

Basically, through personal experience. I haven't really done or read any research about the relationship between learner autonomy and language learning. But I have read research about language learning in general, and how much exposure and practice you need to develop language skills. So, from that I can already see that having limited number of classroom hours doesn't allow students to fully develop all the skills and all the knowledge that they need or want to develop. And also from my personal experience, both as a learner and as a teacher. So first, when I was a teenager, and even when I was a university student, as a young adult, a lot of what I learned, even though I did learn a lot from classes, of course, they were really important. I wouldn't have been able to reach the level that I've reached without attending classes. But there were a lot of things that I learned from my contact with the language outside the classroom

T1 demonstrates sound knowledge of **language learning theories**. This seems to have influenced his beliefs about the relation between learner autonomy and language learning.

T1's **personal experiences as a language learner and later as a language teacher** seems to have also influenced his beliefs on the benefits of autonomy in language learning.

Once again, T1 relates learner autonomy to **learning outside the classroom**

There were a lot of things that I learned from my contact with the language outside the classroom **There were tons of new vocabulary, also I was able to consolidate a lot of the things that I had learned in class by practicing the language outside the classroom** I read literature in English, I played video games in English, watched films and listened to music. Whenever I had the chance, I talked to native speakers and used English with my university classmates. **I tried to practice whenever I could. And that was a key factor in developing my language skills.** And then as a teacher, **I have also noticed with my students that those who are really interested in developing their skills and continue practicing outside of the classroom, are the ones who then do best in tests and exams. They are the ones who grasp things faster in the class as well.**

From his personal and professional experience, T1 affirms that learner autonomy has a **positive impact on language learning**.

Learner autonomy as learning outside the classroom. This could probably be an **emerging theme**

So, you said you've been an autonomous learner since you were in high school? Can you tell me the reasons why you developed autonomy at such an early age?

Well, that requires quite a bit of thinking. I haven't thought about it before. I'm not sure why or how I developed autonomy. I just know that I did. I suppose that I had encouragement from my teachers **And I guess there was also a little bit in me. I was very curious about the language. In high school, I was an autonomous learner in terms of learning English, but there were subjects in which I was not autonomous at all, probably because I was not interested in them**

Could this be an indication of the inherent nature of autonomy?

This could indicate he developed autonomy in collaboration with his teachers (social dimension). In that sense, **teachers' role could be seen as essential for the development of learner autonomy**. This matches participants' answers in the questionnaire.

This comment reflects Little's (1996) idea that **autonomy is domain specific**.

He also mentions "**interest**" as an important factor to engage in autonomous practices, matching Littlewood's (1996) claim of the importance of "willingness".

Appendix G: Questionnaire Descriptive Statistics

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of the questionnaire's quantitative data

Statement	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
2. Learner autonomy is promoted through regular opportunities for learners to complete tasks alone.	0%	6.7%	13.3%	66.7%	13.3%
3. Autonomy means that learners can make choices about how they learn.	0%	0%	13.3%	60%	26.7%
4. Autonomy can develop most effectively through learning outside the classroom.	0%	33.3%	33.3%	26.7%	6.7%
5. Involving learners in decisions about what to learn promotes learner autonomy.	0%	6.7%	6.7%	60%	26.7%
6. Learner autonomy means learning without a teacher.	20%	66.7%	6.7%	6.7%	0%
7. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners have some choice in the kinds of activities they do.	0%	0%	13.3%	73.3%	13.3%
8. Learner autonomy is promoted through activities which give learners opportunities to learn from each other.	0%	6.7%	0%	60%	33.3%
9. Learner autonomy cannot develop without the help of the teacher.	14.3%	28.6%	14.3%	21.4%	21.4%
10. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners are free to decide how their learning will be assessed.	6.7%	40%	33.3%	20%	0%
11. Learner autonomy requires the learner to be totally independent of the teacher.	0%	73.3%	20%	6.7%	0%
12. Co-operative group work activities support the development of learner autonomy.	0%	0%	0%	53.3%	46.7%
13. Learner autonomy is promoted when learners can choose their own learning materials.	0%	6.7%	13.3%	80%	0%

14. Learner-centred classrooms provide ideal conditions for developing learner autonomy.	0%	6.7%	0%	60%	33.3%
15. Learning how to learn is key to developing learner autonomy.	0%	0%	0%	26.7%	73.3%
16. The ability to monitor one's learning is central to learner autonomy.	0%	0%	13.3%	66.7%	20%
17. Learning to work alone is central to the development of learner autonomy.	6.7%	6.7%	13.3%	66.7%	6.7%
18. Learner autonomy can be exercised inside and outside the classroom.	0%	0%	0%	46.7%	53.3%
19. To become autonomous, learners need to develop the ability to evaluate their own learning.	0%	0%	0%	66.7%	33.3%
20. Motivated language learners are more likely to develop learner autonomy than learners who are not motivated.	0%	0%	0%	40%	60%
21. The teacher has an important role to play in supporting learner autonomy.	0%	0%	0%	60%	40%
22. Individuals who lack autonomy are not likely to be effective language learners.	6.7%	20%	33.3%	40%	0%
23. Learner autonomy allows language learners to learn more effectively than they otherwise would.	0%	0%	26.7%	33.3%	40%
24. Learner autonomy is a concept which is suited to Chilean public and subsidized school learners.	20%	46.7%	20%	6.7%	6.7%
25. It is difficult to promote learner autonomy in my classroom.	0%	13.3%	6.7%	80%	0%
26. Exercising learner autonomy can contribute positively to language learning.	0%	0%	0%	53.3%	46.7%
28. Since I became an EFL teacher, I frequently exercise learner autonomy to improve my English language skills.	0%	6.7%	20%	53.3%	20%
30. My experience as an autonomous language learner has motivated me to promote learner autonomy among my students.	0%	0%	6.7%	46.7%	46.7%
32. In general, I give my students opportunities to develop learner autonomy.	0%	13.3%	13.3%	73.3%	0%
34. In general, my students have a fair degree of learner autonomy.	0%	21.4%	28.6%	50%	0%
36. In general, it is difficult to promote learner autonomy in my teaching context.	0%	13.3%	20%	33.3%	33.3%

Questionnaire adapted from Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012) *Learner Autonomy: English Teachers' Beliefs and Practices*, London: British Council